



The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond V27 N35 August 31, 2025

PSALMS: CELEBRATING CHRIST IN GOD'S HYMNBOOK

"Psalm 131"

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Humility

I choose to esteem others
above myself.

*"Do nothing out of selfish
ambition or vain con-
ceit. Rather, in humility
value others above your-
selves, not looking to your
own interests but each of you
to the interests of the others."*

Philippians 2:3-4



Is humility a
path to true
contentment?



Psalm 131 is clearly related to the Central Virtue Humility — a relationship made explicit in its opening words, "My heart is not proud, LORD" — that is to say, "My heart is humble, LORD." One commentator elaborates on the link between the two, and comments on a number of correlative passages in the New Testament. He writes: "The sin rejected in 1a is *pride* (cf. the little portrait of the supercilious in Prov. 30:13), while the sin of 1b is *presumption*. By the first of these, one undervalues other people (unless they seem worth cultivating); by the second, one overestimates and overreaches oneself, forgetting, e.g., Deuteronomy 29:29. In Philippians 2 we are shown the constructive answer to the first of these temptations, in the honour [*sic*] of being a servant; and in Philippians 3, 1 Corinthians 2, the answer to the second, not by stifling adventurousness but by rightly directing it" (Derek Kidner, *Psalms* 73-150, TOTC, 483-84, italics added). To these one might add Paul's advice given in Romans 12:3, "Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith (i.e., abilities) God has distributed to each of you."

Humility is a central virtue in Scripture, yet it cannot be attained by simply trying hard to be humble. True humility flows from a right relationship with God and others, grounded in the recognition of who God is and who we are before him. The Bible shows that humility is not self-deprecation but living in truth — acknowledging our dependence on God's grace.

While humility can't be developed by *trying hard* to be humble, it can be developed by *training wisely* to be so. In other words, certain practices can indirectly foster a humble spirit. One way humility can be developed is through remembering God's greatness and

our dependence on him. Passages like Isaiah 6 and Job 38 remind us of our smallness before the majesty of the Creator. Reflecting on God's holiness and power naturally humbles the heart, leading us to say with the psalmist, "What is man that you're mindful of him?" (Ps 8:4). Or better yet, "What am I that you're mindful of me?" We all know the effect a starry, starry night has on us.

Humility also grows through obedience to Christ's example. Philippians 2:5-8 calls believers to have the same mind as Christ, who humbled himself by taking on human form and becoming obedient to death on the cross. By meditating on Christ's sacrificial love and seeking to imitate him, we are shaped into people who consider others above ourselves.

Another biblical path to humility is service. Jesus taught that "whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant" (Mk 10:43). Serving others without seeking recognition trains the heart to value God's approval above human praise. Washing another's feet is an antidote to pride and promotes humility. Jesus told his disciples, "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them" (Jn 13:13-17).

Finally, gratitude nurtures humility. James 1:17 remind us that "every good and perfect gift is from above." When we recognize that our abilities, opportunities, and blessings come from God, we are guarded against pride and filled with thanksgiving.

Read Psalm 131:1-3

A song of ascents. Of David.

1 *My heart is not proud, LORD,*

my eyes are not haughty;

I do not concern myself with great matters

or things too wonderful for me.

2 *But I have calmed and quieted myself,*

I am like a weaned child with its mother;

like a weaned child I am content.

3 *Israel, put your hope in the LORD*

both now and forevermore.

Read another translation

A song of ascents, by David.

1 *O LORD, my heart is not proud,*

nor do I have a haughty look.

I do not have great aspirations,

or concern myself with things that are beyond me.

2 *Indeed, I have calmed and quieted myself*

like a weaned child with its mother;

I am content like a young child.

3 *O Israel, hope in the LORD*

now and forevermore! (NET)

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Underline "A song of ascents" in superscription.
- Circle "heart" in v. 1.
- Circle "haughty" in v. 1.
- Bracket "concern myself" in v. 1.
- Circle "great matters" in v. 1.
- Underline "things too wonderful for me" in v. 1.
- Box "But" indicating *contrast* in v. 2.
- Bracket "calmed and quieted" in v. 2.
- Box "like" (2x) indicating *comparison* in v. 2.
- Circle "weaned child" (2x) in v. 2.
- Circle "hope" in v. 3.

What one word would you use to describe the **TONE** of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What one thing do you not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the **THEME** of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about _____."



DIG DEEPER

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. What does the superscription of Psalm 131 tell us about it?
 2. The psalmist uses the term “heart” *figuratively* in verse 1a. How so?
 3. Express *positively* what the psalmist expresses *negatively* in verse 1a.
 4. Describe the significance of “haughty eyes” (v. 1b).
 5. The psalmist writes, “I do not have great aspirations or concern myself with things that are beyond me” (NET). Does that mean he lacks all ambition? If not, what does it mean?
 6. Explain the *contrast* introduced in verse 2a.
 7. Explain the *comparison* in verse 2b-c.
 8. Identify the *source* of the psalmist’s contentment (v 2c). In other words, explain why he is contented.
 9. *Paraphrase* verse 3.
 10. **Discussion:** Talk about what “put your *hope* in the LORD” looks like *practically* speaking; what does it imply?
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Commentary On The Text

Psalms 131 is one of the fifteen songs of ascent found in the fifth book of the Psalter. Pilgrims most likely sang these songs as they made their way to Jerusalem to observe various festivals and celebrations, such as Passover, the Feast of Weeks, and the Feast of Booths or Tabernacles. About it one commentator writes: "This psalm, modest and reserved in character, is one of the great gems of the Psalter. Because of its very unpretentiousness it may easily be overlooked. Yet it throws light upon one of the cardinal Christian virtues, which is always intimately linked with trust, the virtue of humility. It is parallel to passages like Matt. 19:3; Jas. 4:6; 1 Pet. 5:5" (H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of the Psalms*, 907).

The psalm's superscription tells us two things. It identifies the psalm as a psalm of ascent, and somewhat ironically, it identifies its author as David. "The name of David at the head of this psalm exposes his character to comparison with the profession he makes. This has its ironies in light of his middle and later years, but it also wakens memories of his early modesty, simplicity and lack of rancour [*sic*], among the qualities which helped to make him great" (Derek Kidner, *Psalms 73-150*, TOTC, 483).

The psalm unfolds in three stanzas. The first contains a declaration of the psalmist's humility (v. 1). By way of contrast, a declaration of his trust in the LORD follows (v. 2). The final stanza concludes with a call to Israel to trust in him (v. 3)—which explains why one author identifies 131 as "an individual psalm of confidence" (Willem A. VanGemeren, *Psalms*, vol. 5, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, rev. ed., 923) and another "a hymn of trust" (Nancy deClaisse-Walford, Rolf F. Jacobson and Beth Laneel Tanner, *The Book of Psalms*, NICOT, 930).

The first stanza (v. 1) opens with three negative declarations: "My heart is not proud" and "my eyes are not haughty." The psalmist does not esteem himself above others, nor does he look with disdain upon others. What's more, he is not preoccupied with "bigger than life" deeds far beyond his abilities: "I do not concern myself with great matters or things too wonderful (i.e., difficult) for me." He is not overly ambitious. He is not a person with an inflated view of himself and his abilities (cf. Ro 12:3) coupled with a demeaning view of others. One commentator puts it nicely: "The proud person looks, compares, competes, and is never content. He plans and schemes in his heart as to how he can outdo and outperform. The godly know that true godliness begins in a

'heart' that is not proud (cf. Pr 18:12), with eyes that do not envy (cf. 18:27; 101:5; Pr 16:5), and with a walk of life (MT, 'I do not walk'; NIV 'I do not concern myself') that is not preoccupied with 'greatness' (cf. Jer 45:5) or accomplishments ('wonderful,' i.e., 'difficult' or 'arduous'; cf. Dt 17:8; 30:11)" (VanGemeren, 924).

The second stanza (v. 2) introduces a *contrast*. Unlike the frenetic, frenzied overreach that comes with pride, the psalmist declares that his humility has brought him contentment. He states that he has "calmed and quieted" himself. The two words likely form a *hendiadys*, namely, a figure of speech that comes from the Greek *heis* ("one"), *dia* ("by"), and *duo* ("two"), thus meaning "one [idea] by means of two [words]." The figure occurs when two words connected by "and" express one single yet more complex idea. Here the combination of "calm" and "quiet" denotes "tranquility" or "serenity." It seems humility has a pacifying side effect; it brings with it peace and contentment. The psalmist describes that contentment in terms of that experienced by a child resting in its mother's arms. The Hebrew term translated "weaned" can have different connotations. It can connote a child around three years old who no longer desires its mother's milk, only her comfort; it can also connote a well-fed, sated child, resting in its mother's arms. In either case, the term pictures contentment—perhaps the contentment of a child traveling to Jerusalem in its mother's arms.

The words of the third stanza (v. 3) echo those of 130:5-6, another psalm of ascent, thus tying the two psalms together, suggesting that they be read together. In closing, the psalmist invites Israel to "hope" in the LORD, that is, to *trust* in the LORD based on the testimony he has just given. "David called on the nation of Israel to follow his example and rest in confidence that the LORD would provide what His people needed. This dependent trust is a need that God's people never outgrow" (Thomas L. Constable, "Notes on Psalms," 2025 ed., 475, soniclight.com/tcon/notes/pdf/psalms.pdf).

The point of Psalm 131 is simple. Pride and haughtiness, accompanied by an inflated view of one's abilities marked by seeking to do "bigger than life" things, will not bring the contentment that comes with humility.

Word Studies/Notes

Superscription of *ascents* “Psalms 120-134 have been called pilgrim songs. These all have the heading, ‘A song of ascents.’ Though this designation in the superscription has been given a variety of interpretations, it most likely refers to Israel’s ‘goings up’ to Jerusalem for the three festivals (cf. 1 Sam. 1:3 Ps. 122:4; Isa. 30:29; also see Ex. 23:17; Ps. 42:4). The contents of many of these psalms appear to be well suited to a visit up to Jerusalem” (Allan P. Ross, “Psalms,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*, 786).

v. 1 *heart* The term is used figuratively to refer to the center of the human self “from which spring emotions, thoughts, motivations, courage and action—‘everything you do flows from it’ (Pr 4:23)” (*The NIV Study Bible*, note on Ps 4:7). “My heart is not proud” simply means, “I am not proud” (cf. Pr 18:12).

v. 1 *haughty* According to dictionary definitions, *haughty* means having or showing arrogance, and a disdainful pride. It implies a sense of superiority and a tendency to treat others with contempt or scorn—essentially, acting like you’re better than everyone else—cf. “I don’t see myself as better than others” (ERV).

v. 1 *concern myself* “Lit. ‘I do not walk in . . .’, i.e., my life does not revolve round ambitions and schemes which are impossible (because they are not right?)” (A. A. Anderson, *The Book of Psalms*, NCBC, 2:878).

v. 1 *great matters* . . . Cf. “I do not have great aspirations, or concern myself with things that are beyond me” (NET); “I do not get involved with things too great or too difficult for me” (HCSB); “I am not concerned with great matters or with subjects too difficult for me” (GNT). “These two words are used in Pss. 84:10; 136:4; and 145:5-6 to describe he works of God in the world. The psalmist has not sought to do or take credit for Godlike acts in this world . . . David, the great king of Israel’s past, states that he is not *proud*, *haughty*, or caught up in performing ‘bigger than life’ deeds” (Nancy deClaissé-Walford, Rolf F. Jacobson and Beth Laneel Tanner, *The Book of Psalms*, NICOT, 931). “The focus seems to be on not claiming godlike powers (thus trusting in God for deliverance and blessing) rather than on seeking (or claiming) godlike understanding” (*The NIV Study Bible*, note on Ps 131:1).

v. 2 *like* (2x) “In the simile of verse 2, the speaker is likened to a mother and his soul to a weaned child. This describes an act of self-composure” (Craig C. Broyles, *Psalms*, NIBC, 470). “Verse 2 likens the evenness and quietness of the psalm-singer to a *sated* (*qal* passive participle of *gāmal*) child at its mother’s breast. NRSV, NIV, NASB, and NJPS translate the second colon of v. 2 as ‘like a weaned child’ . . . If we understand ‘weaned’ as the meaning of the verb, then the metaphor suggests a child who no longer cries out in hunger for the mother’s breast, but who seeks out the mother for her warm embrace and nurturing care. The verb, however, might also describe a suckling child who is well-fed (i.e., *sated*) and fully satisfied, resting peacefully in the mother’s embrace. Both metaphors are a powerful image of one who finds calmness and quiet in the embrace of God” (deClaissé-Walford, 931). Weaning usually took place when a child was around three years old.

v. 2 *weaned child* (2x) Cf. “But I have calmed and quieted my soul, *like a weaned child* with its mother; *like a weaned child* is my soul within me” (ESV). “The essential picture is that of contentment, regardless of age. So the psalmist feels a deep sense of peace, tranquility, and contentment with his God . . . Gotfried Quell suggests that the psalmist speaks of the experience of children being carried by their mothers on the pilgrimage to Jerusalem” (Willem A. VanGemeren, *Psalms*, vol. 5, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, rev. ed., 924)—cf. “like a young child carried by its mother” (NET).

v. 3 *hope* To put one’s *hope* in the LORD is to trust in him—cf. “Israel, trust in the LORD now and forever” (GNT, ERV). “Based on his wonderful relationship and walk with the Lord, David calls on Israel to trust in the Lord forevermore (cf. 130:7)” (VanGemeren, 924).



APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THIS PASSAGE

Putting aside pride, haughtiness, and attempts to do “bigger than life” things beyond your abilities, humble yourself by simply trusting the LORD, for humility brings true contentment.

CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The “Living Questions” are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?
2. What does this passage teach me about myself?
3. What does this passage lead me to do?



PARENT CONNECTION

In *The Purpose Driven Life*, Rick Warren writes, "Humility is not thinking less of yourself; it is thinking of yourself less. Humility is thinking more of others. Humble people are so focused on serving others, they don't think of themselves." We want our kids to be humble. We want them to see a need to hold the door open for another person and without question or prompting act on it. We hope our child will willingly offer the larger piece of their favorite cake to their guest or sibling. We want them to be the sibling that takes the higher road and gives up their right to be right. But the bottom line is your seven-year-old child is still entirely self-centered. Honestly, I'm still entirely self-centered; I want the biggest piece of cake! If we want humility to increase in the lives of our kids, we must help them chip away at pride and discontentment. Humility is trained behavior that starts first with seeking the Lord. When our eyes are fully focused on God, our needs, demands, and desires decrease while all of who He is increases. As we seek to practice gratitude for the many blessings He has bestowed, we find ways to be open-handed and share His goodness. As we pray for an increasing desire and hunger for Him and His Word, He is faithful to hear our prayer and we notice our hunger for things of this world diminishing. The first step in teaching your kids humility is to lead them to the Lord.

What Does The Bible Say?

Read Psalm 131.

1. Describe David's attitude in verse 1.
2. How does David describe the state of his soul in verse 2?
3. What does David tell the Israelites to do in verse 3?

What Do You Think?

How does humility lead to contentment?

What Do You Do?

Pay attention to when are you discontent this week? How will you focus on the Lord instead of your discontentment?

CORE COMPETENCY: Humility

I make others more important than myself.

MEMORY VERSE: James 1:19-20

"My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires."

KidPIX COUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRAL Kids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: kids@wearecentral.org

- _____ I completed my Bible Study
- _____ I memorized this week's verse
- _____ I brought my Bible to church
- _____ I brought a friend



CHILD'S NAME

GRADE

PARENT SIGNATURE

OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

CENTRAL BELIEFS

Authority of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Church (Ephesians 4:15-16)
I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Eternity (John 14:1-4)
I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)
I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

Humanity (John 3:16)
I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Identity in Christ (John 1:12)
I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4)
I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.

Life Purpose (Acts 20:24)
I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.

Personal God (Psalm 121:1-2)
I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Salvation by Grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)
I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.



CENTRAL VIRTUES

Love (1 John 4:10-12)
I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Joy (John 15:11)
I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace (Philippians 4:6-7)
I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.

Patience (Proverbs 14:29)
I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness (1 Thessalonians 5:15)
I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others

Faithfulness (Proverbs 3:3-4)
I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)
I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13)
I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Grace (Colossians 3:13)
I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.

Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)
I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.

Humility (Philippians 2:3-4)
I choose to esteem others above myself.



CENTRAL PRACTICES

Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12)
I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Biblical Community (Acts 2:44-47)
I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4)
I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.

Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2)
I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.

Evangelism (Acts 1:8)
I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.

Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)
I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.

Prayer (Psalm 66:16-20)
I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-Mindedness (Matthew 6:33)
I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts (Romans 12:4-6)
I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Worship (Psalm 95:1-7)
I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

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The Scrolls Bible Study is a spiritual growth resource of Central Bible Church, Fort Worth, Texas.

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BIBLE CHURCH**

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OUR MISSION
Making God known by making disciples who are changed by God to change their world.