



LOVE PEOPLE

HUMILITY

This exercise will involve 3 parts: an inward evaluation, an outward evaluation, and an upward evaluation.

Part 1: Inward Evaluation (Growing in humility through understanding who you are and who you're not). Psalm 131 is a psalm of David that depicts what humility looks like. This person is nothing more or less than who they were created to be.

1. Read slowly through Psalm 131 taking it in and letting the words wash over you. It might be helpful to read through a few different versions to get a full picture of what the Psalm is saying, especially the English Standard Version and the Message.

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.

2. Read through it slowly again, paying attention to, what is the attitude or posture of the speaker?
3. What are the characteristics of the speaker?
4. Why is this a good picture of a humble person who is sure of who they are and who they are not?

Now, let's walk through the psalm, phrase by phrase and let it examine our own hearts in regards to humility.

- Vs.1a *My heart is not proud, Lord, my eyes are not haughty*
 - The heart is the seat of our nature, the center of our longings, desires, and emotions. We must begin with our hearts to find the root of pride in our lives-where pride originates. If pride is there at all, it will manifest in what our eyes are searching for.
 - What things do you find your eyes looking toward?
 - Looking down (superior form of pride): For the approval or praise of others? For glory and authority over others? For self-promotion in other ways?

 - Looking up (inferior form of pride): Or are you looking enviously at others in authority over you? Are you jealous of others' gifts or status? Are you constantly comparing yourself to others? How?

- Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal what prideful things your eyes are looking to that you may not be aware of.

- *Vs. 1b I do not concern myself with great matters or things too wonderful for me.*
 - The humble person does not seek selfish ambition. Beyond what may be going on in their heart and what they see with their eyes, the humble person is aware of how they spend their time and talents. The humble person knows who they are, what their limits are and is satisfied with what God has entrusted them. Remember David, he was a shepherd when he was chosen by God to be king over God's people. He didn't seek it out or fight for that power or position. He didn't rush God's timing, he didn't grab at the Kingdom when he had opportunities, but he waited patiently and was content with what God had entrusted to him.
 - Many of us may have grown up hearing, "You can do whatever you want to do and be whoever you want to be. Don't let anyone tell you otherwise." How might this advice be more harmful than helpful and breed more pride than humility?
 - What talents or roles do you consider to be great or more valuable in the eyes of God? Why do you view those things as having greater value than others?

Quote: "Many through wishing to be great have failed to be good: they were not content to adorn the lowly stations which the Lord appointed them, and so they have rushed at grandeur and power, and found destruction where they looked for honour." - C.H. Spurgeon

- *Vs. 2 But I have calmed and quieted myself, like a weaned child with its mother; like a weaned child I am content.*

Growth is not about becoming more autonomous or self-sufficient, but about becoming more and more dependent on God. We will become our true selves the more we seek Him. The humble person is secure in who they are and mature in their relationship with God. The process of weaning a child can be painful for both mother and child. A weaned child is no longer fretful and searching for the next meal, but fully at rest in the mother's arms. The child no longer craves his mother's breast but is content, happy, and filled, not because of what the mother gives her child, but because of who she is. The weaned child is purely satisfied with being in her presence. So, when we have weaned from the things of the world, we rest securely in the Lord's loving arms at peace, not in what we've accomplished or produced, but in God and the goodness and delights that His very presence brings. An arrogant, prideful person is the opposite of a content, satisfied person. You cannot be at peace in the Lord and prideful at the same time.

- Is your soul at rest in the arms of the Lord, or is it fussing for pleasure and contentment elsewhere? What is the evidence in your life of one or the other?

- In what ways do you tend to look to yourself to achieve this kind of peace instead of God?

Humanity was not created to reflect self, but to reflect God. This is why we were made to serve God in community and not alone, in order to reflect who He truly is in creation. If we were made in His image, and that image was broken by sin, we need to be reoriented back into that image. This is why we don't seek our identity in ourselves, we pursue the Creator because that is who we were made to reflect. If you continue to seek your own good, your own success, and for your true self in anything other than God, there will be disastrous results (see James. 3:16). If you live a life that says "He is great" instead of "I am great", you will find who you were meant to be and the peaceful fulfillment that all creation longs for.

Part 2: External evaluation (Growing in Humility through your secondary responses)

Quote: Humility is not low self-esteem, but low self-preoccupation. - David Brooks

If we want to grow in the character of humility, being more others-focused than self-focused, we must be willing to take the small steps of humility that will work to change our hearts in the big. We all struggle with pride and will do prideful things this week. We often aren't aware that we are doing it until it seems too late. But, it's never too late to respond to prideful moments in a humble manner. Make a conscious, prayerful effort to choose a few of these small steps to take this week and record them below.

- Did you lash out at your spouse? Your child? A coworker? Take the step of confessing to that person and ask for forgiveness.
 - How did that go?

- Were you unnecessarily competitive with others? Take the step of pointing out ways you see them thriving and excelling.
 - How did that go?

- Did you struggle to receive critique or criticism without becoming defensive or bitter? Take the step of asking for suggestions regarding how you can improve.
 - How did that go?

- Are you having trouble letting go of an argument or disagreement? Evaluate whether it's because you're feeling insecure (inferior form of pride) or because you need to be right in the situation (superior form of pride). What step do you need to take to either release the argument or seek reconciliation with the person you were disagreeing with?
 - How did that go?

- What authorities in your life do you struggle to submit to? Take the step of praying for them.
 - How did that go?

- Where is pride (whether thinking too highly or lowly of yourself) getting in the way of treating others with equality and love? Take the step of going out of your way to show respect or love to another.
 - How did that go?

- What simple needs do you notice around you that are "beneath you" or "not in my job description"? Take the step to fulfill it, especially when no one is watching. Pick up after someone, give up your seat or place in line, give money to someone in need, etc.
 - How did that go?

Part 3: Upward Evaluation (Growing in humility through prayer)

Ignatian Prayer of Examen

This prayer is a way of reviewing your day with the Lord in order to draw your attention to His presence in the day and how He is working in your heart, and then preparing your heart to be more aware of His activity in the day to come.

1. Become aware of God's presence.

Settle into a comfortable quiet place where you won't be interrupted. Invite the Holy Spirit to come and bring clarity to your day and to help you see where God was present and at work.

2. Review the day with gratitude.

As you picture your day from beginning to end, note the things that happened. Where did you go? Who did you see? Express your thanksgiving to God for each gift that you come across.

3. Pay attention to your emotions.

What emotions did you experience during the day? Did you feel frustration? Elation? Surprise? Anger? Anxiety? Ask the Spirit to reveal what He is trying to say through your emotions.

4. Choose one feature of the day and pray from it.

What event, interaction or emotion stands out the most for you from the day? Was it positive or negative? Allow your prayer to arise from whatever it is. Does it bring up a prayer of confession and repentance? A prayer of praise? A petition?

5. Look toward tomorrow.

Finally, think about tomorrow. What is coming up in the next day? Ask God to prepare your heart to greet the day. Will you need His wisdom? Will you need patience? Grace? Provision? Invite the Lord to go before you in the day to come that it might be an offering of praise to Him.

*If you would like to listen to an audio guide of the examen, you can access it on the youversion app,