

THE LOOKOUT

NOVEMBER 2022

Unit: Psalms (Part 2) Theme: Godly Heart

Overview: If our hearts are rooted in God (October lessons), then they will be godly. November, like February, is a good month to think of “heart” matters. Having a thankful heart, especially during this month of Thanksgiving, helps us develop a godly heart. Students will learn that a godly heart seeks after God, humbles itself before God, strives to be strong and courageous for God, and gives thanks and praise to God.

HOW TO USE

Each week has a **lesson aim**, **lesson text**, and **supplemental text**.

LESSON AIM: Root your life in God's righteous way.

LESSON TEXT: Psalm 112

SUPPLEMENTAL TEXT: Psalm 112, Revelation 22:12, Job 1:6-10

Tabs indicate the week of each lesson.

Each week features three sections: **Study**, **Application**, and **Discovery**.

APPLICATION

GIVING YOU A PIECE OF MY MIND

DISCOVERY

BY NEAR ODDS

- When you have an opportunity to share the gospel, how do you respond?
- How do you respond when you are challenged by someone who is not a Christian?
- How do you respond when you are challenged by someone who is a Christian?
- How do you respond when you are challenged by someone who is a Christian and a member of your church?
- How do you respond when you are challenged by someone who is a Christian and a member of your church and is also a leader in your church?

Use the **Discovery** questions to study, discuss, and apply the Scripture passages in a group or class.

WEEK OF NOVEMBER 13, 2022

LESSON AIM: **Humble yourself
before God; then
he will lift you up.**

UNIT: Psalms (Part 2)

THEME: Godly Heart

LESSON TEXT: Psalm 8; Psalm 131

SUPPLEMENTAL TEXT: Isaiah 66:1-2; Proverbs 3:34; Micah 6:8;
James 4:10; Hebrews 2:6-8

A HEART THAT IS HUMBLE

BY MARK SCOTT

Psalm 8 from the first book of Psalms (chapters 1–41) and Psalm 131 from the Psalms of Ascent (120–134) can easily be juxtaposed. Psalm 8 celebrates the worth and dignity of humankind as cocreators, while Psalm 131 celebrates the humility of humankind. Psalm 8 pictures God as majestic and victorious over his enemies. Psalm 131 pictures God as a tender mother holding a child who climbs up in her lap. King David provides evidence he knew both sides of God.

Exalted Humanity/Majestic God*Psalm 8*

Psalm 8 starts and ends with identical lines. “Yahweh Adonai” is majestic (mighty, famous, superior) in all the earth. This majesty is displayed in the physical universe (vv. 1b, 3, 78). God’s glory (splendor) is set in the heavens. The moon and stars were finger play for God. He set them in place. He allowed humans to take care of flocks and herds, animals, birds, and fish, all of which he created.

The irony is that God chose to share his sovereignty with humans, evident by his working through the tiniest of people (i.e., children and infants—those who were being nursed) and through his Son, who, for a time, would be made a little lower than the angels. One could argue that this made God even more majestic.

Our majestic God worked through rather unimpressive things—like kids (1 Corinthians 1:26–31). Children and infants have hardly any clout. But God worked through them to establish a stronghold against his enemies. Since this is a psalm of David, one might think of his encounter with Goliath (1 Samuel 17). The little guy won even though his adversary had a giant advantage.

Verse 2 is stunning, especially when we consider its use in Matthew 21:15–16. Jesus cited this verse as justification for the children’s reactions to him during his “triumphal entry” into Jerusalem.

Who is the most exalted human being? Jesus, of course. The majesty of God was also revealed through the incarnation of Jesus Christ. In time and space, he was made a little lower than the angels (i.e., during his earthly stay).

The Hebrews writer referenced this text in arguing for Jesus being the “God-Man” for all humanity (Hebrews 2:9). Jesus was the best expression of God on earth (Colossians 2:9), but he also was the best expression of man on earth. Jesus was what humans were to be all the time. In fact, the phrase a little lower than the angels literally means “lower than the gods [Elohim].” (See John 10:37–38.) Humans were intended by God to be like Jesus. They were crowned . . . with glory and honor. God intended for them to reign over creation similar to how he reigned over the universe. Humans will even judge the angels (1 Corinthians 6:3). The *New Century Version* translates Psalm 8:6a, “You put them in charge of everything you made.”

Humble Humanity/Tender God*Psalm 131*

Psalm 131 is one of the Psalms of Ascent, meaning it was to be sung by Israelites as they traveled up to Jerusalem (or maybe more specifically, as they went up to the temple mound). The closer they got to God (with his presence in the Holy of Holies in the temple) the more aware they became of their own smallness. They realized God was great and they were not.

No one can be arrogant in the presence of God. This is why David said, “My heart is not proud . . . my eyes are not haughty [raised too high or exalted].” Since God was so exalted, David did not concern himself with great matters or things too wonderful for me. At first pass, this might seem like David was saying he had no interest in expanding his mind or exploring the intricacies of the universe. But several passages contradict that thinking (e.g., Psalm 19:1–7; Psalm 139; and the other psalm that is part of this lesson).

David actually was saying he was content with letting God be God. David was content to just climb up into God’s lap. The image is that of a weaned child—a child who goes to his mother for closeness rather than nourishment. The best posture for David (and the nation of Israel) was that of hope. We might not understand everything in life, but we can humble ourselves in the sight of the Lord so that he can lift us up (see James 4:10). ■

APPLICATION

LEARNING THE ART OF ONE-DOWNSHIP

BY DAVID FAUST

A Sunday school teacher told her class that God created Adam from the dust of the earth.

"You mean I'm made out of dirt?" a little boy asked.

"Well, in a sense, yes," the teacher replied.

The boy thought for a moment and said, "Mom is not going to be happy about that!"

The biblical account of creation is both ennobling and humbling. Adam was created in the image of God, but he was made from dust. Like *humus* (the dark organic matter in soil), our word *humble* comes from the Latin *humilis*, which literally means "on the ground."

We remain grounded when we pray as David did in Psalm 131:1, "My heart is not proud, Lord, my eyes are not haughty." But that's a difficult prayer because pride is a struggle for most of us.

The Errors of Arrogance

Do you ever try to one-up someone and make yourself feel superior? Have you ever engaged in a competitive conversation where, instead of listening well, everyone tried to outdo each other by telling more impressive stories of their own? One-upmanship even appears in the Bible. Remember how Jesus' apostles quarreled about who was the greatest?

Arrogant people are big on one-upmanship, for they . . .

- Put down others to make themselves look better
- Rarely apologize when they've done something wrong
- Refuse to accept constructive criticism and become angry and defensive when challenged
- Constantly seek the limelight
- Brag excessively about their accomplishments

A healthy amount of confidence is necessary to lead others, but an arrogant attitude diminishes influence and demoralizes followers. Healthy confidence relies on God; arrogance relies on self.

Confidence is the shepherd boy David saying, "In the past God helped me defeat a lion and a bear, so he will help me face Goliath" (1 Samuel 17:34-37, paraphrased). Arrogance is King Nebuchadnezzar boasting, "Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?" (Daniel 4:30).

Leadership specialist John Maxwell says there are two kinds of pride: "'Good pride' represents our dignity and self-respect. 'Bad pride' is the deadly sin of superiority that reeks of conceit and arrogance."

A veteran football player should be confident about his abilities, but he shouldn't act like a prima donna and disrespect the coach. Experience increases a minister's confidence, but if he preaches without praying and refuses to accept any direction from the elders, he has drifted into the danger zone of arrogance.

A Weaned Child

David described his relationship with God by saying, "But I have calmed and quieted myself, I am like a weaned child with its mother; like a weaned child I am content" (Psalm 131:2).

We shouldn't act like babies, whining and crying to get our way. An unweaned child views his mother as a meal ticket. She's there to meet his needs and give him milk whenever he wants it. A weaned child, though, is content simply to be at his mother's side. He begins to see his mother as someone to be loved for her own sake. Likewise, we need to move from selfishly grabbing at the Lord to walking with him in love.

In God's kingdom, we move up by moving down. We gain the world by giving it up. We find life by dying. Jesus introduces us to the humble art of "one-downmanship" where we become concerned with service more than status—loving others more than promoting ourselves.

Personal Challenge: Using Psalm 19:12-14 and 139:23-24 as your guide, spend time in prayerful self-examination. Ask the Lord to reveal any hidden faults, secret sins, or arrogant attitudes present in your heart. ■

DISCOVERY

BY MICAH ODOR

1. Whom did you tell of God's wonderful acts since we last met?
2. Today we'll read about the way creation continues to demonstrate God's majesty. Where have you been struck by the amazing beauty of nature?

Ask two people to read aloud **Psalm 8** one after the other, preferably from different Bible versions. Then ask the same two people to do the same with **Psalm 131**. Finally, ask a third person to paraphrase both psalms, using as much detail as possible.

3. In what ways have you seen God use the weakest of things (such as children and infants, but not only those) to build a stronghold and deter his enemies?
4. Verses 3-4 talk about how small we are, while verses 5-8 talk about how much responsibility we have. This may seem counterintuitive, but it's deeply true. In what other parts of our lives do we see this relationship?
5. Psalm 131 is short but powerful. How does focusing on what's in front of you help you to calm and quiet yourself?
 - Is it easy or hard for you to just sit and be with God?
6. Taken together, what do these two psalms tell us about God?
7. What do these two psalms tell us about ourselves?
8. What is one way you can better obey the Scriptures we read today?
9. Whom will you tell about the glory and majesty of God this week?
10. Based on our study and discussion, complete the sentence: "This week, I will . . ."

For Next Week: Read and reflect on **Psalm 23** and **Psalm 27**. You can also read next week's supplemental texts as well as the Study and Application sections as part of your personal study. 📖