**Study Series: A Long Obedience in the Same Direction**

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**Lesson Title: “Humility” (pp. 53-63)**

October 4, 2020 Session 05

**The main point of this lesson is:** Humility is confidence in God, the contented space between thinking too much of ourselves and thinking too little of ourselves.

**Focus on this goal:** To help adults move to a more centered, contented place of humility than they currently are.

**Key Bible Passage:** Psalm 131

Before the Session

Display a map of the USA with a star taped in the middle. (Steps 1 and 7)

During the Session

**Step 1. Introduction / Discussion Starter**

**Draw attention** to the map.

**Request adults imagine** they are halfway through traveling cross-country and state some thoughts they might have at that point.

**Note** the group is halfway through the study of eight Songs of Ascents that challenge believers to practice a long obedience.

**Urge adults to recall** the four aspects of discipleship the group has explored so far (work, happiness, perseverance, hope).

**Ask:** What are some thoughts we might have at this halfway point?

**State:** We might think we’re doing pretty good in some areas and feel so discouraged in other areas we want to give up. Basically, we may think too much of ourselves or too little of ourselves. (**Write** those two phrases on the northern and southern borders of the USA map.)

**Declare:** Psalm 131 teaches us how to move to a more centered state of confident and contented humility.

**Step 2. Day One – “I’ve Kept My Feet on the Ground”**

**Invite a volunteer to read** Psalm 131 from Day One (p. 53).

**Read** the Day One paragraph (p. 54) beginning “Psalm 131 is a maintenance psalm.”

**Explore** why physical and spiritual pruning are painful, misunderstood, and necessary.

**Discuss** Day One, activity 1 (p. 54).

**Declare:** God is a master gardener who wants His people to function at maximum productivity. There will be times of radical pruning in our lives when God cuts away so much, we feel He is ruining us, when in fact He’s helping.

**Request adults** **consult** the Day One margin/pull quote (p. 54) **and identify** two things Psalm 131 prunes away.

**Step 3. Day Two – Aspiration Gone Crazy, Part 1**

**Ask adults** why they agree or disagree with the author’s assertion that ambition is a great stumbling block to Christian discipleship in our culture.

**Discuss** Day Two, activity 1 (p. 56).

**Explain** some scholars believe Isaiah 14:12-15 describes the fall of a Babylonian king, not Lucifer, but regardless, the truth is that the heart of ambition is to be like God.

**Ask:** When do we all make the unruly ambitious statement of Isaiah 14:14b? (**Sample responses:** when we sin, think too highly of ourselves and our abilities to do life in our own strength.)

**Briefly relate** the legend of Faustus (p. 56).

**Discuss** Day Two, activity 2 (p. 56).

**Request adults read** Isaiah 46:9 **and identify** God’s answer to the Faustian mentality.

**State:** Psalm 131 reminds us when we think and live like “I am, and there is none besides me,” God will prune us so we remember He alone is God and there is none besides Him. How is that an act of grace on His part?

**Step 4. Day Three – Aspiration Gone Crazy, Part 2**

**Examine** why it is difficult to recognize ambition as sin.

**Compare and contrast** aspiration and ambition.

**Request a volunteer read** Psalm 131:1 from a different translation like the CSB, NASB, or ESV).

**Ask:** Did the psalmist saying he didn’t get involved with things that are too great or difficult for him mean Christians are to stick our heads in the sand and avoid all the hard stuff in life? What does it mean?

**Explain** this psalm prunes away our presumptions that we have answers to all life’s hard questions or the ability to navigate life’s difficulties in our own strength.

**Invite a volunteer to read** the last paragraph of Day Three (p. 58).

**Step 5. Day Four – As Content as a Child**

**Ask:** Can we cure the arrogance of thinking too much of ourselves by thinking too little of ourselves? Why is that?

**Note** that C. S. Lewis said, “Humility is not thinking less of yourself, it’s thinking of yourself less.”\*

**Discuss** the first question of Day Four, activity 1 (p. 59), **using** the second and third paragraphs of Day Four (p. 59) to add to the discussion.

**Ask a volunteer to read** Psalm 131:2 from a different Bible translation.

**Analyze** how the image of a weaned child illustrates the relationship God desires to have with His children.

**Determine** how weaning, like pruning, is misunderstood, painful, and necessary.

**Read** the last line of the psalm.

**Discuss** Day Four, activity 2 (p. 61).

**Step 6. Day Five – The Plain Way**

**Summarize** the first paragraph of Day Five.

**Discuss** Day Five, activity 1 (pp. 61-62).

**Note** that a weaned child rests peacefully in mom’s lap but doesn’t stay there indefinitely. Rather, he or she gets up and goes about the business of growing and living, confident in mom’s care and love.

**Read** the last paragraph of Day Five (p. 63).

**Invite responses** to the first question of Day Five, activity 2 (p. 63).

**Step 7. Live Out the Lesson**

**Draw attention** to the map.

**Ask:**

1. At this point in your spiritual pilgrimage, are you thinking too much or too little of yourself?
2. How can you move toward a more centered, contented place of humility?

**Close in prayer.**

**\***<https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/7288468-humility-is-not-thinking-less-of-yourself-it-s-thinking-of>