

# Moving Through the Psalms of Ascent

## Week 5: Psalm 130 - 131

### Day 1 – Psalm 130:1-4

Read Psalm 130 once all the way through and then read verses 1-4 in ESV, CSB, AMPC, and NIV or NLT. As you're reading jot down what stands out to you.

1. Look up the word "*penitent*" in a dictionary or google. Note what you learn about the definition.

This psalm is called a penitential psalm. My ESV Study Bible says Psalm 130 is "*geared toward helping worshipers to see themselves as forgiven people...*" Oh my. Don't we need this reminder? When you consider who you are because of God, does the word "forgiven" rise to the top of the list? It should. Penitent People should be one of our core defining traits. I don't know how many t-shirts it would sell, but just writing the word and considering it for a few minutes should soften our hearts to the remaining comfort in this chapter. What humbling gratitude this brings out.

The list below is copied and pasted from biblegateway.com. These are the suggested cross-references for the entire chapter. Feel free to choose your favorite verses the column on the left and dig deeper into how other passages support and clarify.

2. I've highlighted the cross-references for Psalm 130:4, read that verse again and then look up the verses highlighted and write down what you learn.
  - A. Psalm 130:1 : [See Ps. 120, title]
  - B. Psalm 130:1 : Ps. 69:2, 14; Lam. 3:55; Jonah 2:2
  - C. Psalm 130:2 : Ps. 86:6; 2 Chr. 6:40
  - D. Psalm 130:2 : Ps. 140:6
  - E. Psalm 130:3 : [Ps. 90:8]; See Job 10:14
  - F. Psalm 130:3 : Ps. 76:7; Amos 2:15; Nah. 1:6; Mal. 3:2; Eph. 6:13; Rev. 6:17; [Ps. 143:2]
  - G. Psalm 130:4 : ver. 7; Isa. 55:7; Dan. 9:9; See Ps. 86:5, 15
  - H. Psalm 130:4 : 1 Kgs. 8:39, 40; Jer. 33:8, 9; [Rom. 2:4]
  - I. Psalm 130:5 : Ps. 40:1; Isa. 8:17; 26:8
  - J. Psalm 130:5 : See Ps. 33:20
  - K. Psalm 130:5 : Ps. 119:74, 81
  - L. Psalm 130:6 : [Ps. 123:2]
  - M. Psalm 130:6 : [Ps. 63:6; 119:147]
  - N. Psalm 130:6 : See Ps. 5:3
  - O. Psalm 130:7 : Ps. 131:3
  - P. Psalm 130:7 : ver. 4
  - Q. Psalm 130:8 : Ps. 111:9; Luke 1:68; Titus 2:14; [Matt. 1:21]; See Ps. 25:22

3. How does what you learn from cross-referencing support the message of Psalm 130:4?

As the psalmist pours out his heart, he begs God to hear; not because He thinks God isn't listening, but because he is confessing to God what he himself remembers and claims about God's character and promises. This is the intimate essence of praise:

- Telling God the truth you know and remember about Him and His ways,
- Telling God the truth about you, your struggles and your ways.

I think this honesty is why Psalm 130 turns quickly into repentance and gratitude for forgiveness.

4. What is the cry of your heart today?
5. Using the definition of praise above, what is the truth you know and remember about God and His ways in relation to the deepest cries of your heart today?
6. Using the definition of praise above, what is the truth about you, your struggles, and how you're coping with the deepest cries of your heart today?

In Psalm 130:4, the word forgiveness means *"to forgive, pardon, or spare"* and is used in this form only here and in Nehemiah 9:17 and Daniel 9:9.

7. Read Nehemiah 9:17 and Daniel 9:9 and note what these verses say about God first and then about people.
8. Now read Psalm 86:5, Psalm 103:3, and Micah 7:18-20 adding what these verses teach you about God's forgiveness.

As we finish today's look at the first 4 verses of Psalm 130, let's flip to the New Testament. There is just no way to consider the gift of forgiveness without talking about our Jesus.

9. According to Ephesians 1:7 and Colossians 1:14 we have two things because of Jesus, what are they?
10. How does 1 John 2:1-2 describe Jesus? What does this mean to you in your own struggle with sin?
11. According to Romans 2:4, what should we pay attention to when we are struggling with sin and repentance?

As you look prayerfully back over your answers to the last three questions, you see the beauty of acceptance in the reality of hopelessly damaging sin. Because of Jesus we have redemption and forgiveness, we have an Advocate, we have the upside-down miracle of kindness that leads us TO Him instead of deserved judgement that sends us AWAY.

12. Read Matthew 6:12 and then the story in Luke 7:36-50. What is true of people who know God has forgiven them?

Close your day with the humility that comes from being forgiven and the freedom that comes from forgiving. Make a note here of how you will walk in obedience today.

⇒ **Daily Pilgrim Progress:**

- What does this psalm teach you about where your heart is set?
- How does this psalm encourage you to move toward God?

## **Day 2 – Psalm 130:5-8**

Read Psalm 130:5-8 in ESV, CSB, AMP, and NIV or NLT. As you're reading jot down what stands out to you.

1. As review, write down what you learned from Psalm 130:1-4 yesterday in one sentence.
2. What is your attitude toward waiting? Why?
3. Read Psalm 130:5 in the Amplified (not classic) version and notice the words in [ ] brackets. What are they?

You should've seen the words *patiently* and *expectantly*. Consider what each of those words mean to you. I find it interesting and more than a little challenging that Psalm 130 starts with "bottom of the pit" distress -> followed by gratitude shaped by the fact that God forgives -> followed now in verse 5 with a statement of willingness to wait patiently and expectantly. When I feel like I've hit rock bottom and am disgusted with my own part in the downfall, could it be that an acceptance of God's gracious forgiveness could give me what I need to wait on His timing with patience and hope?

4. What about you? Does waiting on God erode or build your trust in Him? Jot down quickly anything you've learned about waiting in your own spiritual journey.
5. Still in verse 5, what does the psalmist do while waiting?
6. Brainstorm some practical habits you have learned to help you put your hope in God's Word. Make a list here to share with your small group.
7. What phrase is repeated in verse 6? Why do you think the psalmist chose this imagery? Take a look at the study notes in your Bible and write down what you learn.
8. Before we move on, read Micah 7:7 answering these questions; what 2 things does man do? What 1 thing does God do?
9. Now go back and skim the context of Micah 7:1-6. Summarize his circumstances with one word: \_\_\_\_\_. How does this deepen your understanding of what it means to wait on God?
10. Who is the psalmist calling out to hope in Psalm 130:7? How does that apply to us?

Again, we have the *"togetherness"* of spiritual journey, as you travel through the ups and downs represented in verses 1-6 of Psalm 130, consider how you can call your brothers and sisters toward greater trust and faith.

11. What reasons does the psalmist share for calling his fellow travelers to hope in the Lord in Psalm 130:7-8?

The ESV Study Bible says, *"Waiting proceeds to assurance, as each singer invites everyone else to hope."* We see that with God there is steadfast love and plentiful redemption (7). The passage goes on to say God will redeem from \_\_\_\_\_. *(fill in the blank from verse 8)*. There's that beautiful and impossible forgiveness from yesterday.

With God there is **steadfast love**. This word in Hebrew is **chesed** (*you might also see it as hesed*). I want you to see and begin to recognize this word, it's used 250 times and is translated as love, loving-kindness, mercy, goodness, kindness, depending on context. I'm including a LONG definition from my favorite Word Study Dictionary:

*"Kindness, love, or mercy shown to someone. The quality of the kindness shown is usually that reserved for close friends and family members but can be show to anyone...chesed presupposes the existence of a relationship between the parties involved. Where no formal relationship has previously been recognized, the person exercising chesed has chosen to treat the recipient as if such a relationship did exist...Chesed is central to God's character. It is closely tied to His covenant*

*with his chosen people...[but] God's chesed is not bound by the covenant itself and though men may prove unfaithful to this relationship, God's chesed is everlasting."*

I often close letters or notes or texts with the phrase "You are loved," and this word is one of the reasons why. Although we will be talking about this in our group teaching time, I wanted you to be able to read it, meditate on it, take it apart, and consider it. Our God loves us this way. He is full of this, He **IS** this. I am convinced that I am completely inadequate to speak to the depth of this part of God's character, so I'm just going to beg you not to rush through it. Please pray, praise, confess, and receive this from Him to you. Take as much time as you need and stay with it until you're convinced.

You.

Are.

Loved...with His chesed.

12. What is your response to God's lovingkindness today?

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### **Day 3 – Psalm 131**

Read Psalm 131 in ESV, CSB, AMPC, and NIV or NLT. As you're reading jot down what stands out to you.

The obvious theme of Psalm 131 is our great need for humility. The less obvious one is our need for contentment. I wish I could remember when Psalm 131 became precious to me. I've tried to look through old notes and previous studies to find where I first learned it, what I do remember is being absolutely startled in the best way with the imagery of the contented weaned child in verse two. This has become one of my life passages. I think of it and share it often. It was the breakthrough to maturity I needed; to learn that I could stay close to God, just be with Him gladly, even when He wasn't giving me what I wanted. We will get there, but let's start with verse 1 and our enemy, pride. The first half of Psalm 131:1 is about pride and arrogance.

1. What is pride?  
What would say is the opposite of pride?
2. What are the words or phrases from various translations that describe pride and arrogance in verse 1?

3. As I was studying Psalm 131, I wrote down Scripture references shared by commentators regarding verse one. See if the following list matches your own cross-references in your Study Bible or on biblegateway.com. Look them up and summarize what they teach.

- Psalm 18:27
- Psalm 101:5
- Proverbs 6:16-19
- Proverbs 16:5
- Proverbs 21:4
- Proverbs 30:13
- James 4:6

4. Specifically, what do the above passages tell you about God's view of man's pride?

*"Pride is self-absorption, whether we're absorbed with how miserable we are or how wonderful we are. Humility is God-focused not self-focused...if we're not deliberately taking measures to combat pride, it's probably doing something to combat humility."* (Beth Moore, Living Free p. 44-45). We will go deeper into the definitions of pride and arrogance in our large group teaching time; today I want THIS to stand out. Pride is your enemy. We must learn to recognize it. It is the opposite of humility, and humility is the only place where true spiritual fruit can grow.

5. Where are you battling pride and arrogance today? Write it out into a prayer.

It's not hard to understand (*although it is a little hard to take*), the warning against pride and arrogance in the first half of verse 1. The meaning of the second half is a little less obvious.

6. Which translation of verse 1 gave you the best understanding of *"I do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvelous for me"* (ESV)? How would you teach this part of the verse?

7. Read Psalm 111 looking specifically for references to God's works. What does this chapter say about God's works?

When David says in Psalm 131 that he doesn't occupy himself with things that are too wonderful, I think he's talking about the kinds of things God does in Psalm 111. Instead, *I* want to be the one doing the best most wonderful and impressive things; *I* want my magnificent accomplishments to be good, *I* want to create good, wonderful lives for my family and friends, and maybe even some strangers. And in my pride *I* actually believe *I* can! The thing is, *I* don't have the power or the perfection to create what the Bible defines as wonderful. My efforts on my own will always come from a place of selfish need, I have to follow God through transformed relationship, in

submissive obedience, through affliction and difficulty, living a calmed, contented life. The wonders are an overflow of that connection, and they truly are wonderful.

8. Read Philippians 2:2-4 and Philippians 3:12-14. How does Paul describe and instruct a believer's actions and attitudes?
9. According to Philippians 2:5, whose example are we following?  
How do these passages in Philippians support what you're learning from Psalm 131?

Psalm 131:2 is the contrast to the pride and arrogance of verse 1, and I'm quite sure that no Bible Study gathering understands this imagery better than those in a women's Bible Study. Think of your own experiences with the process of weaning a baby as you consider this verse.

10. What do you think God is trying to teach us by using the weaned child image described?
11. The words *calmed* and *quieted* in verse 2 are verbs not adjectives. What are some actions you have learned to help calm your soul?
12. When are we to be hoping in the Lord according to verse 3? What does that look like right now for you?

One of the commentaries described a proud person (verse 1) as one who "*looks, compares, competes, and is never content.*" This description, contrasted with a quieted child who has learned that the best comfort is not actually what she receives from her parent, but the loving presence of a trusted parent is so shocking. We are weary, desperate for soul rest and contentment. Psalm 131 paints the most powerful picture of habitual hope. Stick with Him, trusting and resting.

13. Close your time reading Psalm 46:10. We can be still; we can know Him. The wonders He does from this place will have a reach we could never imagine.

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## Day 4/5 – Weekly Travel Journal

Review your notes, and study question answers from this week. Summarize each psalm below in a couple of sentences:

- Psalm 130:
- Psalm 131:

What have you learned most about God this week?

Now look at your daily Pilgrim Progress journal prompts:

- What did you learn about yourself this week?
- What changes do you need to make in what you're thinking or what you're doing to stay close to God?