

## Want a Calm and Quiet Soul? Psalm 131 Can Help.

by Sarah J. Hauser

*“O LORD, my heart is not lifted up;  
my eyes are not raised too high;  
I do not occupy myself with things  
too great and too marvelous for me.  
But I have calmed and quieted my soul,  
like a weaned child with its mother;  
like a weaned child is my soul within me.  
O Israel, hope in the LORD  
from this time forth and forevermore.”* Psalm 131

In Psalm 131, King David writes about having “a calm and quiet soul.” Calm and quiet. Those certainly aren’t words I typically use to describe my soul.

My husband and I relocated from Illinois to North Carolina last summer, and if you’ve ever moved, you know that the process is chaotic. In the weeks following, it felt like our home was constantly cluttered with moving boxes, bubble wrap, and all the mess that comes with kids out of school for summer break. Life at that time felt busy and joyful, but there was nothing tranquil about my home—which made it harder to find tranquility in my soul.

David was no stranger to chaos or change or grief or challenges. He suffered through far more than I can imagine, yet he experienced peace. He knew that deep, lasting rest doesn’t depend on us or our circumstances. It depends on God.

So, what would it take for us to have a calm and quiet soul as David did?

### Rest Requires Humility

The answer is found in Psalm 131:1: “O LORD, my heart is not lifted up; my eyes are not raised too high; I do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvelous for me.”

This verse demonstrates a posture of humility. David isn’t shoving forward with blind ambition. He’s not trying to do more than God has called him to do. He’s not arrogant or above others. Instead, he accepts what God created him to be and to do—not someone meant to know everything or do everything. Therefore, he can rest like a weaned child in his mother’s arms.

Humility is a prerequisite for rest. We won’t have a calm and quiet soul if we never admit we’re fearful or insecure or frantic or arrogant. We won’t find rest if we don’t think we need it. And when we finally confess we need it, the only place to find it is through Christ.

## But how does our lack of humility keep us from finding rest? Here are four ways.

### 1. We refuse to ask for help.

Exodus 18 tells us that when Moses was serving alone as a judge for the Israelites, his father-in-law said to him,

What you are doing is not good. You and the people with you will certainly wear yourselves out, for the thing is too heavy for you. You are not able to do it alone. (vv. 17–18)

How many of us are wearing ourselves out because we're trying to do everything on our own? We don't want to bruise our fragile egos by admitting we need something.

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Proverbs 12:15 says, “The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man listens to advice.” We all need God and others. That's not a flaw—it's by design.

### 2. We believe we're entitled to information.

Our arrogance can come out in believing we have a right to know everything or wanting to find safety and security in information. When David talks in Psalm 131:1 about not occupying himself with things too great and marvelous, he's choosing to accept that his knowledge is limited. He isn't privy to every detail in the universe.

It's not that David is forgoing his responsibilities. Rather, he's refusing to take up what was never his to carry.

Our angst can stem from our need to be fully informed about everything. We subconsciously think that if we know it, we can control it. This can come out in helicopter parenting, incessant googling, doomscrolling, constantly refreshing the news, or gossip.

Instead of believing we can find security in more information, we need to humbly surrender our anxieties to the all-knowing God. We need to trust God enough not to have to know every detail.

### 3. We habitually overcommit.

Overcommitting sometimes comes from the mentality that it all depends on us. Other times, we fear what people will think if we say no. Whatever the reason, many of us are frantic and harried because of deadlines and projects and events we think we *have* to do, when we may be running at a pace God never asked of us.

*“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.*

*For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.”* Romans 12:2-8

In Romans 12:2–8, Paul talks about how we all have different gifts we use to serve—but he prefaces this section by warning us not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought. In other words, be humble.

We’re the body of Christ, and when we’re truly humbled by the gospel, we recognize we’re finite and dependent. We work together with other parts of the body, doing what we’re called to do and leaving room for others to do what God has called them to do.

### 4. We make our own way.

Remember the story in Genesis 16? God’s promise to give Abraham and Sarah an heir seemed to be taking a while, so the couple agreed they should have a child by Sarah’s servant, Hagar. But in Genesis 17, God clarified that it’d be the son of Abraham and Sarah through whom God would establish his covenant.

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Like those Old Testament saints, we sometimes try to get ahead of God's plans. Our impatience leads us to try to make our own way instead of waiting on God. But God's timing isn't ours. God has never been—and will never be—in a rush.

Joshua 21:45 says, "Not one word of all the good promises that the LORD had made to the house of Israel had failed; all came to pass." We serve that same God. Not one of his promises will go unfulfilled. In the meantime, our job is to be faithful to do what he's asked—*not* to make our own way when his seems to be taking too long.

## Held by a Good God

When my family moved, I worried about all the little details, and I wanted every task to get done yesterday. But when I stop to consider my worry and impatience, I realize those vices ultimately come from pride. I didn't trust God to provide, so I thought I had to figure it out on my own, and I wanted everything done on my timeline.

True and lasting rest comes not from a finished to-do list or orderly circumstances but from trusting God and humbly recognizing our place before him.

Like a weaned child in his mother's arms, we can have a calm and quiet soul because we're held by a good and gracious God.

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