

Theme: God invites us to hope in Him by shaping souls that are characterized by humility and quiet calm.

I. Intro - The Skill To Shape Beautiful Art

- A. The skill of making the David statue (photo)
- B. “The sculpture is already complete within the marble block, before I start my work. It is already there, I just have to chisel away the superfluous material.” - Michelangelo
- C. The skill of making pottery (photo)
- D. Inspired, I tried to make pottery this week!
- E. Here is what was in my lump of clay (joke photo)
- F. How do we build a life that looks more like the beautiful pottery and not that misshapen mess?

II. The Goal - A Life That Hopes In God Always

- A. The Psalm ends with the goal: hope in the Lord!
 - 1. The ultimate beautiful outcome is given in v3
O Israel, hope in the LORD from this time forth and forevermore. Psalm 131:3
 - 2. This is where we want to be - a life full of hope!
 - 3. We all want to live in hope, not despair!
 - 4. We all want to have hope at all times - from this time forth and forevermore!
 - 5. We want a life that looks like a beautiful piece of pottery, not a misshapen lump! (photo)
- B. Forming a hope-filled life by shaping my soul
 - 1. Good news: all of us can form a hope-filled life!

- 2. The clay of your life does have a beautiful piece of pottery waiting to come out!
- 3. But notice the Psalm does not begin with the hope-filled life - that is the end result!
- 4. The key to forming a hope-filled life is shaping my soul in particular ways to allow hope to come forth.

III. Shaping A Humble Soul

- A. The first step is shaping my soul to be humble
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. Psalm 131:1
 - 1. The highlighted words all point to pride.
 - 2. A proud soul can never lead to a life of hope!
 - 3. To live with hope in all circumstances, I need to shape my soul so that it is humble, not proud.
- B. Different aspects of a humble soul
 - 1. The first part of humility is embracing my limitations
I do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvelous for me. Psalm 131:1
 - a. We live in a world that shouts “no limits.”
 - b. But we are created by God with inherent limits, and true freedom and flourishing require that we embrace these limits rather than denying or fighting against them!
 - c. I did an entire 7-week series, “The Freedom of Limits” in 2021 that you can find on the website.

- d. Since the Enlightenment, we demand that everything must be quantifiable and controllable by us, but this is sheer folly. The most important things in life are beyond our ability to quantify and control.
- e. Far from giving freedom, the quest to exceed our God-given limits leads to bondage and restlessness.

2. Humility also recognizes things I can control and things I can not control

- a. There are things I may be able to understand, but which I can not control or affect.
- b. It is not wrong to be aware of these, but they can not “occupy” me.
- c. But our news cycle of politics, culture, sports, and leisure demands our constant attention. My attention is the air they must have to live - to survive and justify their existence, they MUST occupy my mind and heart.
- d. Humility includes a willingness to place limits on things that are not central, that are not my vocation, and that I can not control, so that I can give my focus and energy to things that are my vocation and that I can have a great effect on.
- e. Example - my blood pressure while reading political and cultural controversies incessantly last week.

3. Humility recognizes that I can not accurately predict or control the future.

- a. The future is known and controlled by God, but it is far too great and marvelous for humans!
- b. A humble soul recognizes that the present is where we live. I can not change the past, nor can I accurately see or control the future, so I let the present occupy my attention.

- c. This does not mean I don’t plan for the future - Scripture calls us to do this. But I plan for the future not by letting it “occupy” awe or worrying over it, but by doing the things God calls me to do in the present and trusting in Him for the future.

- C. We need to form and fashion a humble soul that recognizes we can not understand or control all things, especially the future, but God can, and so we look to Him in hope and faith.

IV. Shaping A Quiet Soul

- A. The second step is shaping a soul that is quiet and calm
But I have **calmed** and **quieted** my soul,
like a **weaned child** with its mother;
like a **weaned child** is my soul within me. Psalm 131:2

1. The highlighted words all point to calm and quiet
2. The vivid example of a weaned child with its mother, not screaming but trusting even what it can’t see.
3. Once we have humbled our souls, we can then work to quiet the turbulent voices and bring calm.
4. Before weaning, a child is subject to every craving and can not live in quiet trust that the needs will be met by the loving and caring mother.
5. A soul that is not quiet and calm can not live in hope and trust in all circumstances, but is blown by every wind of change and never finds peace and rest.

B. Shaping A Quiet Soul

1. The importance of a quiet soul
 - a. We know the importance of humility - but quietness?
 - b. But noise is the enemy of meditation and growth

Music and silence—how I detest them both!...[Hell] has been occupied by Noise—Noise, the grand dynamism, the audible expression of all that is exultant, ruthless, and virile—Noise which alone defends us from silly qualms, despairing scruples and impossible desires. We will make the whole universe a noise in the end....The melodies and silences of Heaven will be shouted down in the end. (CS Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*, 119-120)

- c. This is as true pop internal noise as it is of external noise - a noisy soul gives us time to reflect, to meditate, to hear from God, and to grow in hope.
 - d. Therefore, Satan, his demons, and the world want to keep our mind and heart full of noise, turmoil, and constant worry so that we will not be able to see through the smoke and hear through their noise to be able to trust like a weaned child.
 - e. This is really spiritual warfare!
2. The first step in developing a quiet soul is humility
- a. A person who is full of pride will never have a calm, quiet soul.
 - b. A person whose mind and heart are occupied by things that are outside of their vocation or control will never have a quiet, calm soul.
 - c. This is why the Psalm begins with the step of humbling my soul before speaking of calming and quieting my soul - it is not possible to do this in reverse order.
3. I must notice the things that produce turbulence and noise in my soul and learn to restrict them
- a. This might be a relationship, an activity, or even a job that always produces stress and turbulent emotions - we must do what we can to restrict this.
 - b. We live in a culture in which a thousand voices clamor for our attention.

- c. These voices don't want our occasional attention but to become our consuming passion.
- d. This is true of politics, culture, sports, marketing, and the future - we live in the "attention economy", which leads to a noisy, turbulent soul.
- e. The algorithms reward the outrageous, the negative, and the inflammatory, but this produces a noisy, turbulent soul for anyone who does not restrict them.
- f. Modern media - TV, YouTube, TikTok, social media, news, advertising - are engineered to be addictive, to draw us into the ever-deepening hole.
- g. But this addiction leads to a noisy, turbulent soul, which makes living in hope in the Lord impossible.

V. Applying the Word - Practices To Shape the Soul

A. Shaping the soul requires deliberate effort

1. Our natural bent is to pride, not humility!
2. Remember Screwtape's words - there is a devilish plot to prevent a quiet soul!
3. Thus, this will not "just happen" anymore than I just make beautiful art - it will require training and effort!

B. Seasons to shape our soul

1. This is part of why we are fasting and seeking God with other churches right now - to give space to shape a humble, quiet soul.
2. Our church is going to encourage this to continue for the season until Easter.
3. I will introduce the idea further next week, but we are going to read through the Gospels together, from Monday, January 26 to Easter Sunday, April 5.

4. Each week, we will read an average of 9 chapters in the Gospels - just over a chapter a day.
5. The teaching each Sunday will come from the reading, and we will announce all of the in advance.
6. I encourage you to use this time to humble yourself and learn to set aside a quiet time each day to read and let God speak to you.
7. Especially look to find sources that attempt to “occupy” your heart and mind - this might be news, social media, politics, sports, the financial markets, the future, etc. - and take time to fast from them, either partially or fully.
8. I will talk about ways to practice ‘fasting’ in AfterHours this week.

C. Come To the Quiet - The Table

1. This Table is a place that shapes my soul!
2. Here I am humbled, for I remember my sin!
3. Here I am humbled because how God works here is too marvelous for me to fully explain - so I don’t try to explain, I merely come and receive.
4. Here, I quiet my soul to hear from God and have my hope restored!
5. Here, I receive strength from God to resist the pride and noise of this fallen world, and to sit like a weaned child in the lap of God to receive comfort, strength, and hope.

January 18, 2026

Communion

2 Peter 1:2

Teaching keywords: Sanctification; humility and pride; meditation and silence; hope; fasting; spiritual warfare

May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. 2 Peter 1:2

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.

2 But I have calmed and quieted my soul,
like a weaned child with its mother;
like a weaned child is my soul within me.

3 O Israel, hope in the LORD
from this time forth and forevermore. Psalm 131

Shaping A Humble, Quiet Soul

Psalm 131