

The Wonderful Knowledge of God

Psalm 139 - NCBC, January 16, 2022

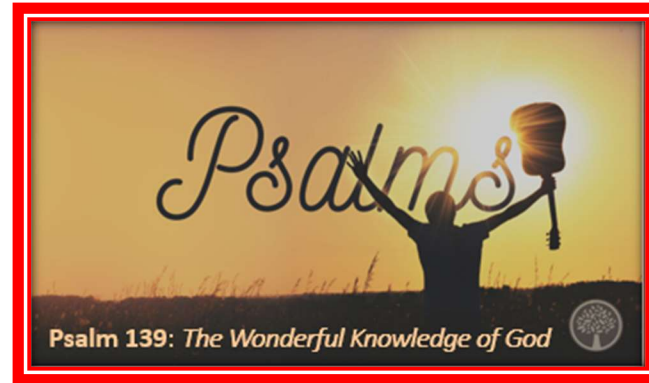
Main Point: **There is no greater gift than to be known by God.**

- Because God knows everything about you (1-6)
 - Rejoice in the infinite wisdom of God!
- Because God is everywhere with you (7-12)
 - Rejoice in the constant presence of God!
- Because God made every part of you (13-18)
 - Rejoice in the creative intentions of God!
- Therefore pursue greater companionship with God (19-24)
 - Rejoice in your everlasting relationship with God!

Opening Announcements:

- Today is **Sanctity of Life Sunday**, so we will be taking an exit offering today to support Living Alternatives Pregnancy Center in Pekin, IL.
- **Ladies' Bible Study begins *this week!*** Tues night, Jan 18th, or Weds morning, Jan 19th. Come and study Acts with us here at New Castle Bible Church!!

<<He Will Hold Me Fast>>



The love of God grips weak hearts...and never lets go.
This truth from **John 10:28-29** gives us great courage and joy as we worship our God together today.

This has been a week filled with mixed emotions for our church family. We've seen two of our loved ones graduate to heaven, we've had several of our loved ones get hospitalized with serious sickness, and we've sent off 70 of our youth and youth workers to Ice Camp for a weekend of spiritual revival and retreat! I admit it's been a busy week for us as pastors, and so late Thursday afternoon I called an audible, and we switched up the preaching plan for today's message.

Instead of preaching on the spiritual discipline of time management as we had planned, today I'm inviting you to open your Bible to **Psalm 139**. **Psalm 139** is one of our favorite psalms, and even though I preached this message a few years ago, I believe it offers a timely voice of truth for our hearts today.



If you don't have a Bible today, simply raise your hand and we'd be delighted to give you one.

And while you're preparing to read **Psalm 139**, just a word of gratitude for all of your faithfulness in prayer together in this ministry season.

Please keep praying for our search for our new Associate Pastor of Care and Discipleship, along with our Outreach Director for Goodfield, and a new administrative assistant for the church office. And keep lifting up one another as right now there are so many of our members suffering through very difficult trials.

God is always glorified whenever we grow in humble dependence on Him, believing that He hears and answers our prayers.



Now please stand in honor of the public reading of God's Word, as I read **Psalm 139** from the **English Standard Translation**.

139 TO THE CHOIRMASTER. A PSALM OF DAVID.

- 1 O LORD, you have searched me and known me!
- 2 You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from afar.
- 3 You search out my path and my lying down
and are acquainted with all my ways.
- 4 Even before a word is on my tongue,
behold, O LORD, you know it altogether.
- 5 You hem me in, behind and before,
and lay your hand upon me.
- 6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
it is high; I cannot attain it.
- 7 Where shall I go from your Spirit?
Or where shall I flee from your presence?
- 8 If I ascend to heaven, you are there!
If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!
- 9 If I take the wings of the morning
and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,
- 10 even there your hand shall lead me,

and your right hand shall hold me.
 11 If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me,
 and the light about me be night,"
 12 even the darkness is not dark to you;
 the night is bright as the day,
 for darkness is as light with you.
 13 For you formed my inward parts;
 you knitted me together in my mother's womb.
 14 I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
 Wonderful are your works;
 my soul knows it very well.
 15 My frame was not hidden from you,
 when I was being made in secret,
 intricately woven in the depths of the earth.
 16 Your eyes saw my unformed substance;
 in your book were written, every one of them,
 the days that were formed for me,
 when as yet there was none of them.
 17 How precious to me are your thoughts, O God!
 How vast is the sum of them!
 18 If I would count them, they are more than the sand.
 I awake, and I am still with you.
 19 Oh that you would slay the wicked, O God!
 O men of blood, depart from me!
 20 They speak against you with malicious intent;
 your enemies take your name in vain.
 21 Do I not hate those who hate you, O LORD?
 And do I not loathe those who rise up against you?
 22 I hate them with complete hatred;
 I count them my enemies.
 23 Search me, O God, and know my heart!
 Try me and know my thoughts!

24 And see if there be any grievous way in me,
 and lead me in the way everlasting!

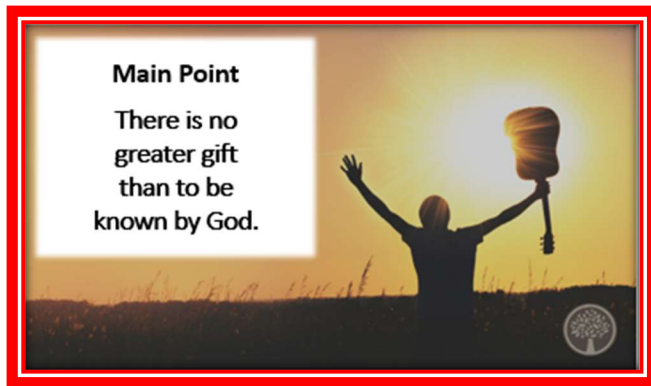
This is the word of our Lord. You may be seated.

Let's Pray.

When life seems overwhelming to you, and you're not sure you can go on, it is important that we turn and clearly see the face of Jesus. For whenever one of God's children look eyes with Jesus, God's child is immediately comforted and strengthened by the realization that God knows, and God cares.

No matter how difficult my present circumstances, God has not left me forsaken. He is here with me, and He is able to make all of His grace abound in my life at just the right time and in just the right way.

And that's the wonderful message of **Psalm 139**. David wrote this song for the congregation to sing as part of their corporate worship together. And **Psalm 139** gives great comfort to our hearts as we look up from our anxieties and cares to see that God knows us. And He's here with us! This song's message has the power to change our perspective in the midst of whatever trouble we are in, since:



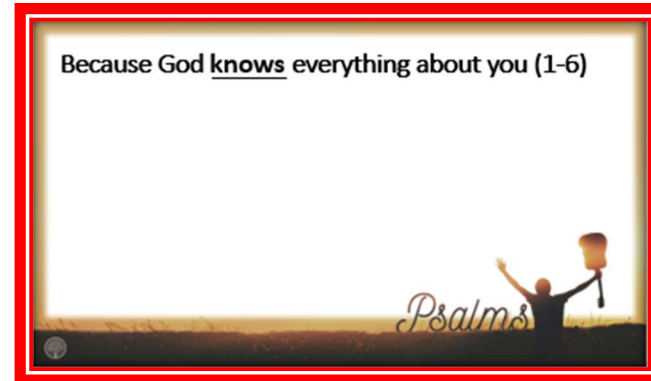
There is no greater gift than to be known by God.

No other assurance compares to being exhaustibly known by God. God knows you. God is with you. God has never left you. He's been with you from before you were born! And this personal knowledge that God has for you compels you to want to know Him better as well.

Psalm 139 can be outlined into four sections of 6 verses. In each of these sections, the first four verses are descriptive, while the last two are responsive. The entire psalm celebrates the wonder of being known by God, with the first 18 verses praising God's all-encompassing knowledge of you. Then starting in **verse 19**, the last section of 6 verses is a prayer to know God more intimately in personal relationship.

In other words, this psalm is much more than a theological study on the extent of God's knowledge. This psalm is personal – full of personal pronouns like me, I, my, you, and your – expressing the wonderful comfort and joy of being known personally by our God.

There is no greater gift than to be known by God, because, in **verses 1-6**,



God knows everything about you (1-6)

After the brief superscription, this psalm begins with the name Yahweh – the LORD. God's name Yahweh emphasizes that He is an eternal and all-powerful God who keeps His promises and delivers His people. He is not distant or far off – rather this all-powerful God is personally and intimately aware of every aspect of your life.

Church – God doesn't just know what you do, or where you've been. God searches your heart. God knows the real you.¹ **Verse 2** says, *You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar.*

In other words, God knows everything about,

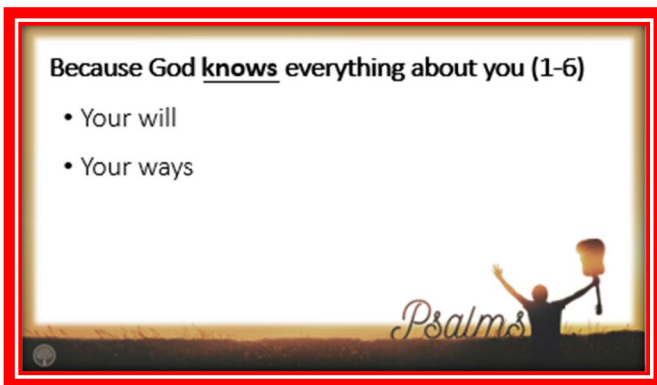
¹ Romans 8:27
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Your will.

Your thoughts and intentions of your innermost heart. There's nothing about who you really are that God doesn't know to the fullest possible extent. There are no privacy clauses in God's relationship with you. Nothing protects the idols of your heart from God's penetrating gaze.

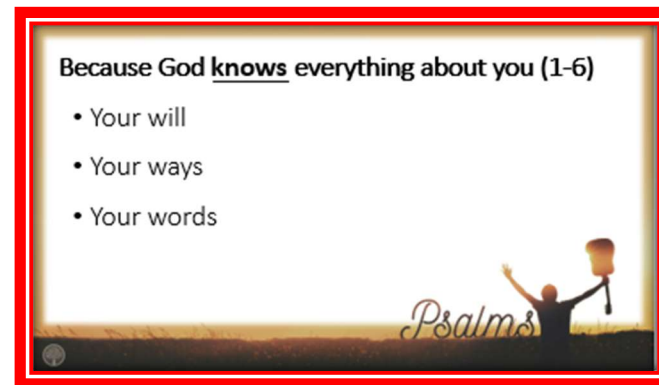
Verse 3 says *You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways.*



In other words, God knows everything about **Your ways**.

It doesn't matter if you are sitting, standing, walking, or lying down – God intimately knows everything you do.

The word for “acquainted” literally refers to the sifting of the wheat from the chaff. Some translations use the word “scrutinize”...emphasizing that nothing about you escapes God's attention. God knows everything about you. Even,



Your spoken and unspoken words are known to God!

For according to **verse 4**, *Even before a word is on my tongue, behold O LORD, you know it altogether.*

Now just take a moment and let this soak in.

When's the last time you realized that the God who brought about all 10 plagues² -- who was powerful enough to deliver His people out of slavery in Egypt – personally knows who you really are – in every visible and invisible reality? There is no part of you that is unfamiliar to your God.

² Exodus 7-12

How does that make you feel? What's your response to God's profound knowing of everything about you?

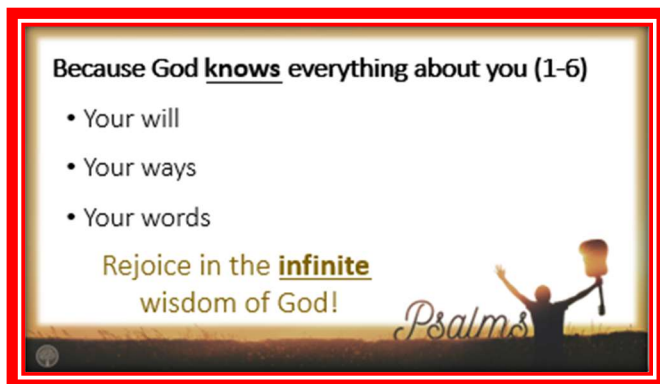
In **verse 5**, David responds,

You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me. Meaning God's knowledge is an active knowledge. David recognizes God's sovereign providence in his life. There's nothing David can think or do or say that God hasn't already known about for all of eternity. Thus David responds in **verse 6**,

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it.

Translation: I've overwhelmed by the fact that God knows everything about me. It short-circuits my computer. It puts me in my place and profoundly humbles me.

Church – be awed by God's personal knowledge of you. And,



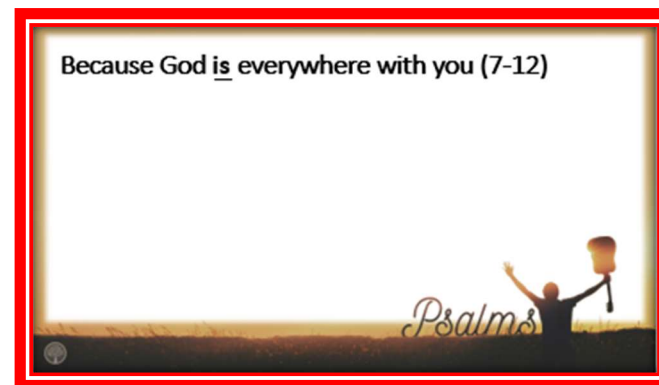
Rejoice in the infinite wisdom of God!

Allow your soul to be humbled and overwhelmed by the love of a God who actually knows everything about you personally.

Now of course if you have a guilty conscience...the truth of God's profound knowledge of you will terrify you. So if you are a modern-day Jonah – wake up and repent. You can't hide your love of sin from your all-seeing God.

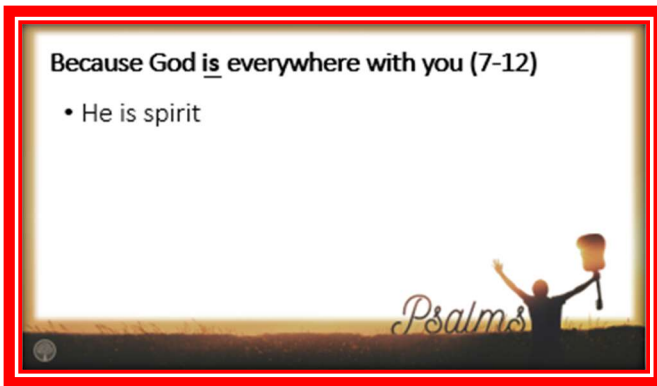
But on the other hand, if you – like David during many seasons of his life – are currently under attack from enemies... If your ex is attacking you ... If you're being treated unfairly at work, or if your reputation is being publicly drug through the mud unjustly in some way – then rejoice that God Himself knows everything about you!! You have not been forsaken! God knows, and He cares.

There is no greater gift than to be known by God, because then in **verses 7-12**,



God is everywhere with you (7-12)

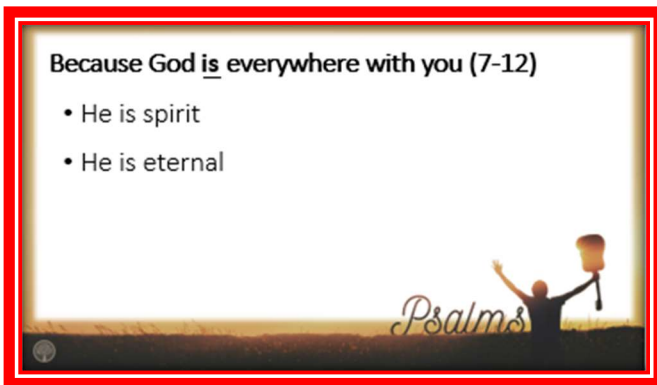
There's no place you will find yourself in life where God Himself has not been first waiting for you.



God is spirit, meaning that He eternally exists outside all limitations of space or location. He is omnipresent – as expressed in **verse 7**,

Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence?

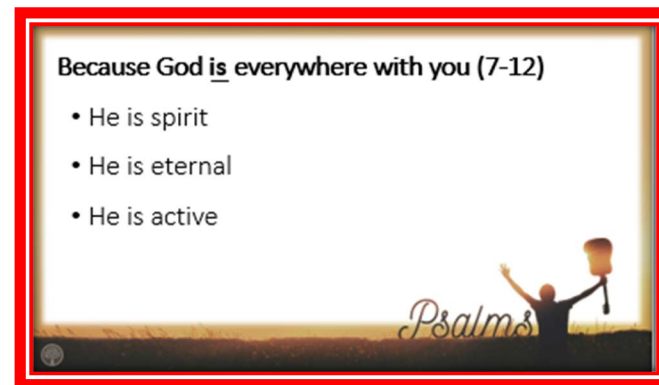
Answer, there's not anywhere you could be separated from God's intimate and personal knowledge of you. God's Spirit is always with you.



He is eternal

Verse 8 says, *If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol³ – referring to the grave or the realm of the dead – you are there.* In other words, God is everywhere with you – whether in this life or the afterlife. He is eternal.

Verse 9 refers to the *wings of the morning* – which is a poetic reference to how quickly light races across the land at sunrise. David is saying – if I could move from the east at the speed of light – at 186,000 miles per second – God would still be with me. If I lived in the farthest west corner of the sea – God would still be right there with me. For God is spirit. And God is eternal. And,

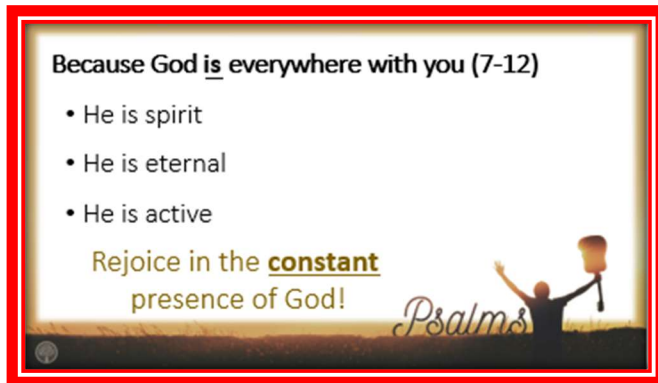


God is active.

Where God is, He *leads* His people **verse 10** says. Our God is not aloof nor distant. The Old Testament God is not passive nor uncaring. His right hand – signifying His strength – is actively holding and comforting and helping you no matter where you are.

³ <https://www.gotquestions.org/sheol-hades-hell.html>

O church, join with David this morning and,

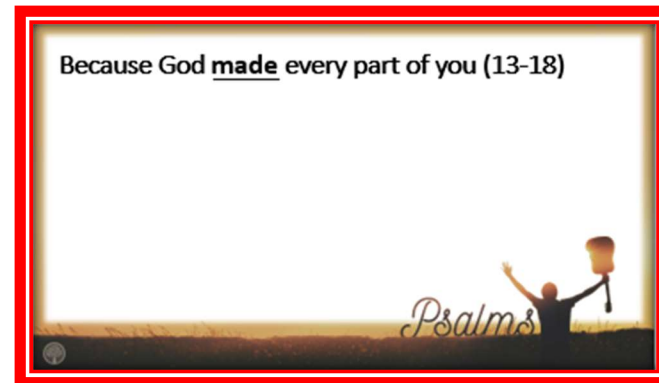


Rejoice in the constant presence of God!

Like David in **verse 11** – you will go through very dark times in life. Perhaps even now it seems like evil darkness has overshadowed your life, and all hope of future light has been snuffed out by evil around you.

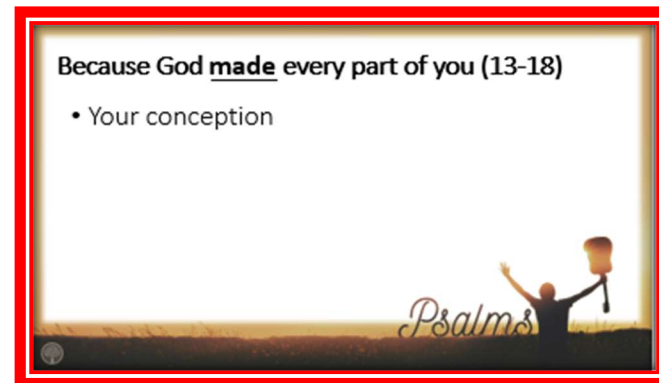
But look again at **verse 12** and rejoice, Christian!

God doesn't need night-vision goggles. He knows perfectly what you are going through right now. No matter how anxious or unsettled you feel in this moment... He's right here with you. He was here waiting for you before you ever arrived. Nothing that you are experiencing can ever be hidden from God's sight. He is with you Himself. Calm your fears this morning with this truth – there is no greater gift than to be personally known by God! Because He knows absolutely everything about you in **verses 1-6**, and He is everywhere with you in **verses 7-12** and,



Because God made every part of you in **verses 13-18**.

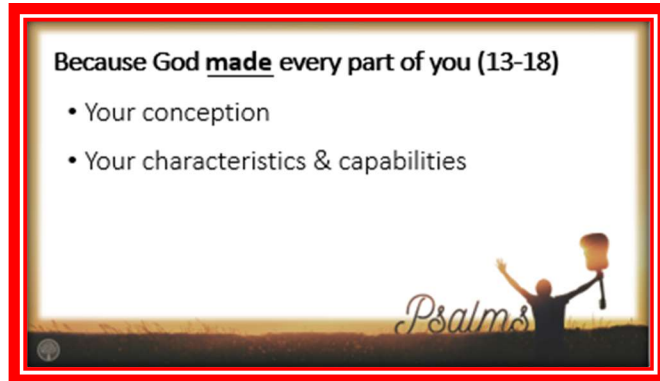
In **verse 13** David praises God for forming his inward parts and knitting him together in his mother's womb. In other words, God is personally responsible for,



Your conception.

Trick question: Were you there when you were conceived? Well, at the moment of conception I began to exist as a person, but no one could see me, and I didn't even have self-consciousness yet...but listen. Before you blow a brain-fuse... God was there. He was the

artist who was sculpting your figure... He was the painter who was creatively determining all,

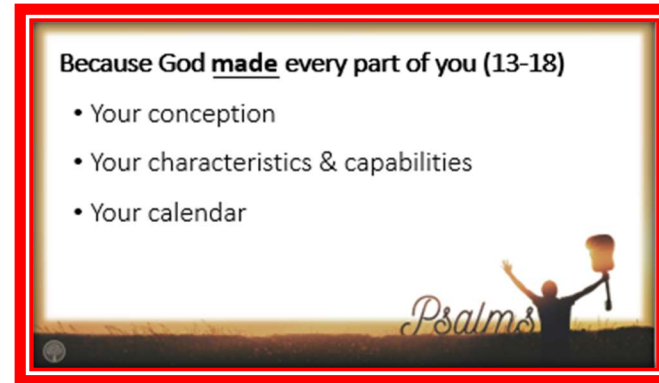


Your characteristics.

Verse 15 says your frame, or your skeletal system, was created fearfully and wonderfully by God. The phrase *intricately woven* uses knitting language – suggesting God put every vein and artery in your body in just the right place, for just the right purpose, according to His wonderfully personal creation of you.

Then in **verse 16**, David notes that, *In God's book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.*

In other words, rejoice that God even personally made,



Your calendar!

Verse 16 is clear – there's nothing that can happen to you in this life that is a surprise to God! He has ordained every one of our days, and we are thereby safe in His knowledge of us!⁴

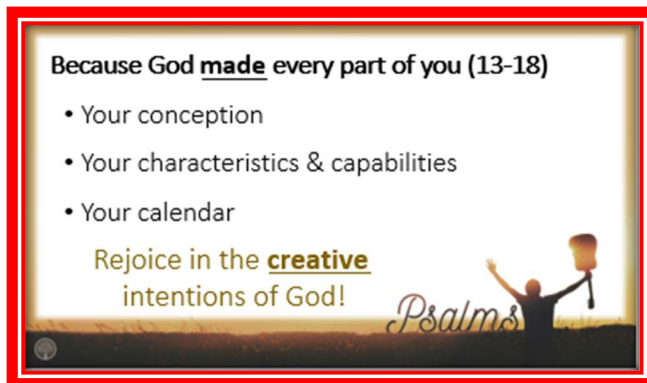
Therefore, in the face of our culture's lies that so quickly justify murder for the sake of a mother's convenience, we must recognize that from the very moment of conception – God's creation is a baby. Not just a piece of tissue. Not only an embryo. But a human soul – created personally by God Himself in the womb.

And second, in these days when public shaming has been normalized by social media, make sure you rest your real identity in **verse 14** rather than in the jealous or self-centered comparisons of this world.

God never makes mistakes. Your birthmarks are God's uniquely personal signature on you. Your handicaps were no surprise to your Creator God. No matter what others may say, or where you believe the mirror

⁴ C.f. Job 14:5
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condemns you and says you're not good enough – **verses 17 and 18** provide a praise-filled response of the heart who understands there is no greater gift than to be personally known by your Creator God.



Rejoice in the creative intentions of God, loved ones. For God knows everything about you, is everywhere with you, made every part of you, and all His thoughts toward you are love!

Here's the point of David's praise throughout all of **verses 1-18**, *Nothing can separate you from God's love.*⁵

How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! God's thoughts are precious – and to be treasured... so have you stopped to ponder just a few of what God's intentions are for you in Christ?

Isaiah 43:7 teaches us that God creates all things for His glory and praise. **1 Peter 5** teaches that God cares for you, and intends Himself to restore, confirm, strengthen and establish you for all of eternity!⁶

Which of God's thoughts towards you are most precious to you? If we had time to go around the room, I'm sure we could list hundreds of biblical promises which reveal God's thoughtful intentions for His redeemed!!

So David poetically writes, *If I would count [all of your precious thoughts toward me], they are more than the sand.*

Now a group of researchers at the University of Hawaii tried to calculate the number of grains of sand on all the beaches of the world. By estimating the size of every grain, and then calculating the number of grains in one teaspoon, and then estimating the total volume of sand on the beaches by the mileage of shoreline and the depth of the sand – and by the way – who knows any of this incomprehensible information anyway? – the researchers estimated that the earth has around seven quintillion, five hundred quadrillion grains of sand.⁷ (And that doesn't even count the sand in the Sierra Desert!!) That's a laughable exercise of human arrogance, right?!

Here's the point: God's knowledge of you is so personal and entire – that it is incomprehensible! There's no possible way you could ever be separated from God. His goodness and His mercy are actively working for you – even during the dark and painful times – for your greatest eternal joy in Christ.

There's no greater gift you could ever receive than to be known by God personally.

⁵ Romans 8:38-39

⁶ 1 Peter 5:10-11

⁷ <https://www.npr.org/sections/kulwich/2012/09/17/161096233/which-is-greater-the-number-of-sand-grains-on-earth-or-stars-in-the-sky>



Therefore, David concludes in **verses 19-24**, pursue greater companionship with God.

When you realize the wonder of God's personal knowledge of you, it compels your desire to know Him better yourself. And you begin to pursue greater companionship with God first by,



Rejecting God's enemies

Interestingly, contemporary songs based on **Psalms 139** don't have us singing **verses 18-22**:

"O slay the wicked, may men of blood depart..."

But when you realize that Yahweh knows you personally and intimately, and has overwhelmingly precious intentions for you eternally for His ultimate glory and praise – you want nothing to hinder your personal knowledge of Him!

So are you careful about your associations? Do not be deceived – there is no greater witness than one who truly knows God intimately! Yet excusing and accompanying God's enemies in their sin will only hinder your ability to know God and shine brightly for Him in this world.

And so David ends this song with a responsive heart cry in **verses 23 and 24**,



Seeking God's refining

Whoever starts to understand the wonderful knowledge of God does not pray for God to give him more health, or wealth, or fame, but rather for God to cleanse and purify all that He sees is hindering His personal relationship with him.

Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me...

Of course God already knows all His thoughts, and all His ways. But David recognizes that he doesn't always see his own sin clearly. Sin, by its very nature, is deceptive, and self-blinding. So David – longing to know God better himself – asks God to test and refine his very heart – transforming anxious thoughts into thankful thoughts.

For wherever God reigns as King, life and peace and joy will result. Just like Aslan's arrival in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, "When Aslan comes ..., we shall have spring again."⁸

So while God already knows our sin, when we invite Him to search us, and know us, and try us, and see all the grievous ways in us... we are inviting Him to come in and purify us with His life-giving Word.

Experience the joy of repentance dear friends. Cry out and ask your all-knowing God to refine you and increase your capacity to know Him as He truly is!! Sin deadens your receptivity to God...but the purifying heat of God's testing opens your soul to know God more personally, and thereby to better,



Follow God's leading

Psalm 139 ends with David's prayer to *lead me in the way everlasting*.

David knows that to follow the way of sin only leads to death. But to be freed from sin's blindness, and to follow God in personal relationship through faith in Christ, is to be led in the way that shall never end. A way of everlasting joy and blessedness.

Do you desire to have your own personal relationship with this amazing God? **John 14:6** teaches clearly that *No one comes to the Father except through* faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus is the only way, the truth, and the life. Will you turn from your sin today, and believe on His death and resurrection for the forgiveness of your sins?

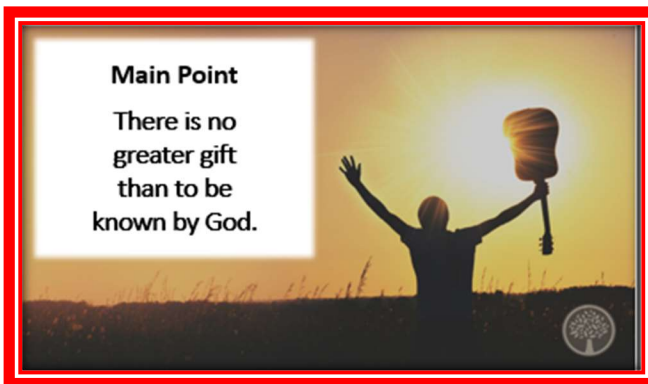
If so then you can,

⁸ C.S. Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*
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Rejoice in your everlasting relationship with God!

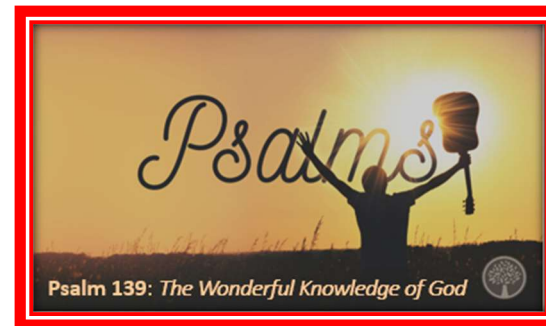
Pursue greater intimacy in your fellowship with God. Pray more fervently. Listen more quietly when you read His Word. For,



There is no greater gift than to be personally known by God.

May we all hunger and thirst more and more to know God fully, even as we have been fully known.⁹

⁹ 1 Corinthians 13:12
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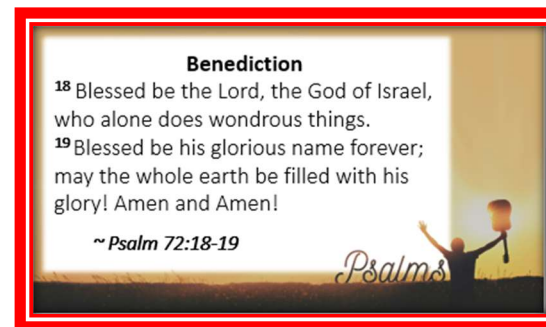
Let's pray.

<<Take My Life and Let it Be>>

This week we're reading Ephesians chapter 1-6 together. One chapter per day. Join us!!

<<Exit Offering for Living Alternatives TODAY>>

Let's pray our benediction together as we dismiss.



Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, who alone does wondrous things. Blessed be His glorious name forever; may the whole earth be filled with His glory! Amen and Amen! Psalm 72:18-19



Recommended Resources on The Wonderful Knowledge of God:

- 1 Samuel 2:3
- Job 7:17-18; 10:8-12
- Psalm 11:4-5
- Proverbs 15:11
- Jeremiah 17:9-10; 23:24
- Amos 9:2-4
- Obadiah 4
- Romans 11:33
- Ephesians 5:1-21
- Hebrews 4:12-13

- <https://www.desiringgod.org/books/god-is-the-gospel>
- <https://www.crossway.org/tracts/no-greater-gift-2787/>

- *Knowing God*, J.I. Packer
- *The Holiness of God*, RC Sproul
- *No One Like Him*, Feinberg

Growing Deeper: Life Group Questions

1. Read Psalm 139. Note the main theme of each of the 4 sections of six verses each. Note as well the book-end thematic “inclusio” of verses 1 and 23 which help us understand this song’s main point.
2. Review Psalm 139:19-24. How does this last section of verses fit into the rest of the psalm?
3. Review Psalm 139:23-24. Why would David want an all-knowing, all-present, and all-powerful God to search his heart and thoughts? Do you want God to search you like this? Why or why not?
4. Review Psalm 139:13-18. How do these truths inform your perspective on abortion? Physical handicaps? Birthmarks?
5. Review Psalm 139:17-18. What is most precious to you about God’s thoughts? Go around the room and share what you believe to be some of His thoughts, and what Scripture(s) reveal those thoughts to you.
6. How does God’s inexhaustible knowledge of you affect your desire to know Him? Explain.
7. What is the greatest gift of God’s gospel to you? What makes this the greatest gift of all gifts?