

The Wonderful Knowledge of God

Psalm 139 - NCBC, December 16,
2018

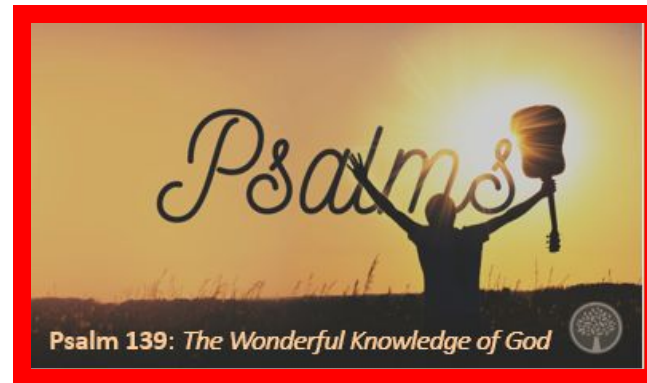
Main Point: **There is no greater gift than to be known by God.**

- 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:

- Highlighting various volunteer opportunities to serve, see church website for more details.
- Honoring Denny Sieger for years of faithful AWANA ministry

<<O Come All Ye Faithful>>



Church – let's continue to adore our Lord and Savior by opening our Bibles to **Psalm 139**. Come adore the wonderful knowledge of God, as we conclude our study of New Castle's top 5 favorite psalms today. **Psalm 139** is often referred to as the crown of the psalms, for its majestic themes are held dear by so many.



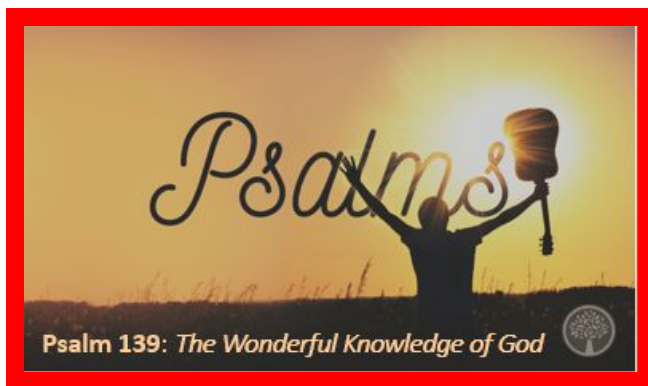
If you don't have a Bible today, simply raise your hand and we'd be delighted to give you one. **Psalm 139** is on page ____ in the giveaway Bibles today.

And while you're preparing to read **Psalm 139**, just a friendly reminder that this year-end provides extra opportunities for us to grow in the humble dependence of prayer together as a church.

Please pray for God to lead our elders as we desire to effectively shepherd our church through several recent staff transitions, and best determine how to address the vacancies left behind.

Keep praying for our search for our new Associate Pastor of Music and Worship. Pray for God's financial provision as we approach year-end with a budget deficit. And keep lifting up one another – as it seems like right now there are so many of our members suffering very difficult health or relational challenges.

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.

Last Sunday I thoroughly enjoyed our Children's Sunday School Christmas program. It's precious to see children
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get all dressed up, and stand (or jump!) up in front of everyone, and share the songs and Scriptures they have practiced for so long to celebrate Jesus' birthday.

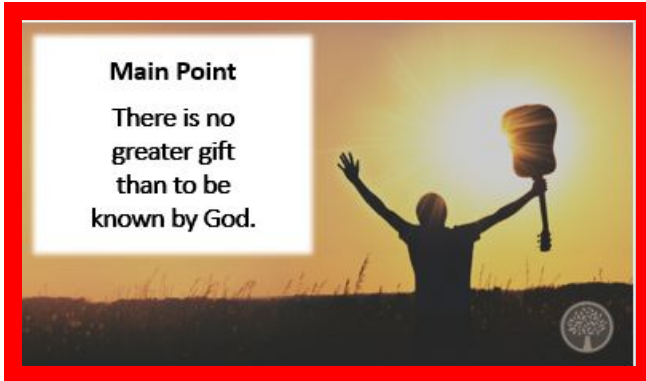
But let's be honest. It's not easy to go up on stage! Some of you still get an ache in your gut when you think of being in front of everyone. And that's why I was so touched by something I saw happen last week at the beginning of our children's Christmas program.

The little ones were being ushered onto the stage and finding their places, and I was watching this one little girl. She was looking intently into the crowd...looking for someone. Who do you think she was looking for?

Her parents. Right! She was looking for her parents. And then all of the sudden her face lit up, and she started waving wildly and said, "Hi Dad and Mom!" I followed her gaze to see her parents proudly waving back and smiling at her. Her joy was contagious! She had been seen! You could see an immediate change in this little girl. She no longer seemed nervous and timid. She was now full of life. Daddy and mommy were here, and they were watching her. She was loved, she was known...her parents were here – and they were watching her, and that made all the difference in the world to this little girl getting ready to sing in front of hundreds of people.

This morning we turn our attention to **Psalm 139** – a song David wrote for the congregation to sing as part of their corporate worship together. And as I meditated upon the main point of this song, I found myself thinking about that little girl from last week's program. Just as her joy was immediately increased by knowing that her

parents were watching her ... **Psalm 139** gives great comfort to our hearts as we look up from our anxieties and cares to see that God is here with us. He 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:



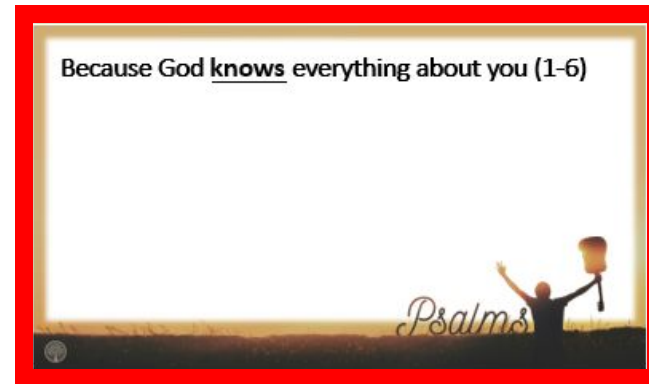
There is no greater gift than to be known by God.

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,



Your will.

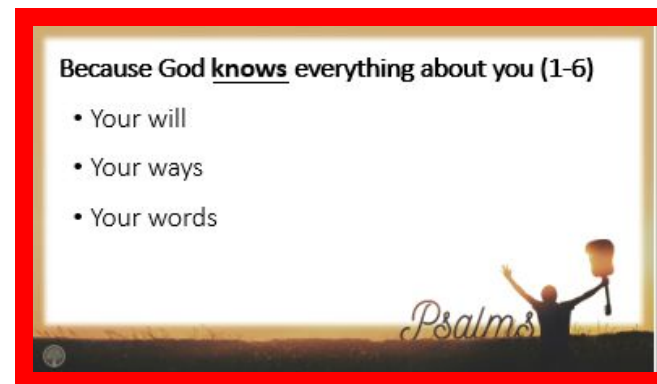
Your thoughts and intentions of your innermost heart. There's nothing about who you really are that God doesn't know to the fullest possible extent. There are no privacy clauses in God's relationship with you. Nothing protects the idols of your heart from God's penetrating gaze.

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**,

¹ Romans 8:27
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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.

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 I believe that 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,

² Exodus 7-12
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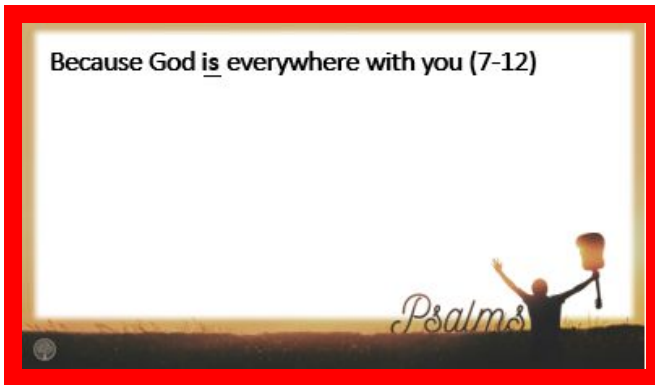
Rejoice in the infinite wisdom of God!

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.

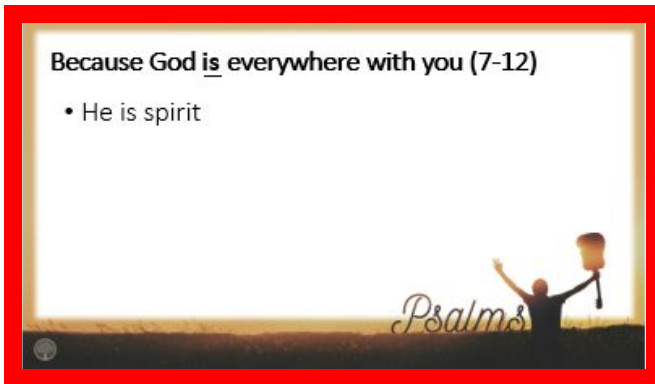
But on the other hand, if you – like David during many seasons of his life – are currently under attack from enemies... If your ex is attacking you this Christmas... If you're being treated unfairly at work, or if your reputation is being publicly drug through the mud unjustly in some way – then rejoice 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)

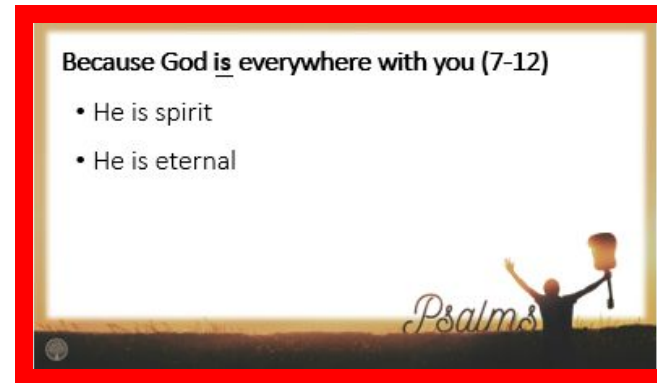
There's no place you will find yourself in life where God Himself has not been first waiting for you.



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.

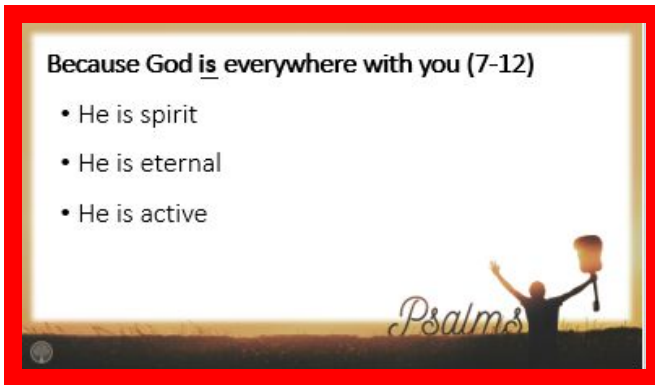


He is eternal

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 180,000 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,

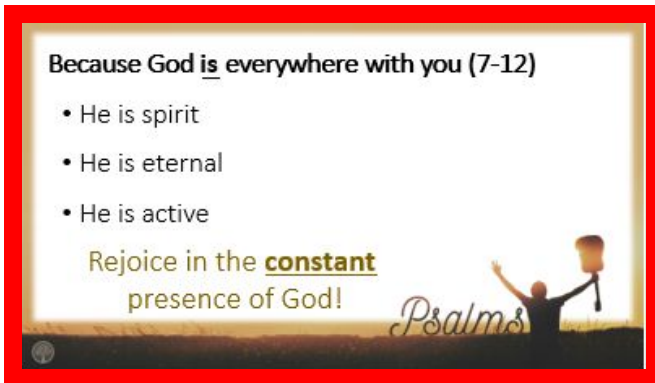
³ <https://www.gotquestions.org/sheol-hades-hell.html>



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.

O church, join with David this morning and,

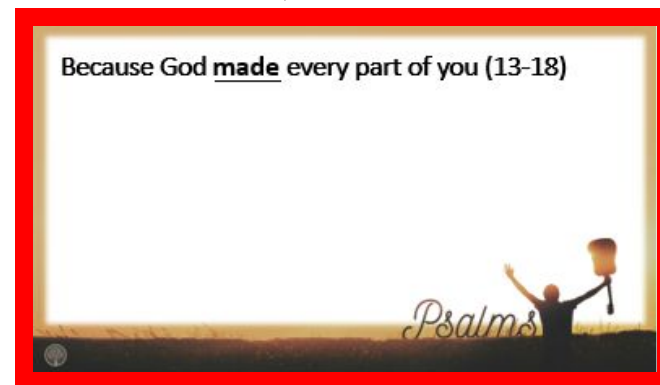


Rejoice in the constant presence of God!

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.

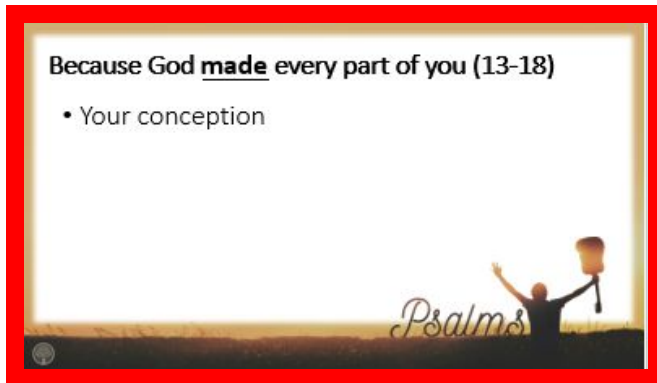
But just like the little girl who immediately experienced joyful confidence when she saw that her parents were watching her, and were present in the room with her...read **verse 12** and rejoice!

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,



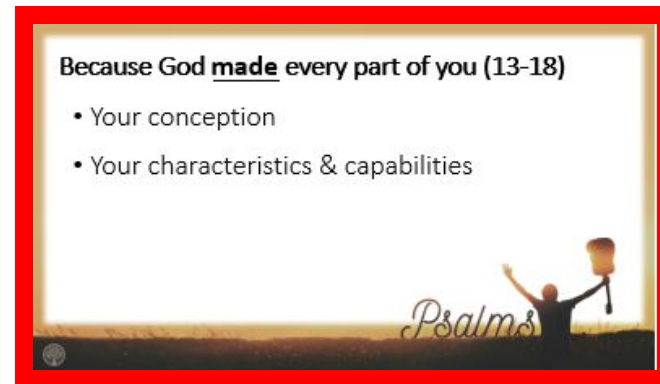
Because God made every part of you in **verses 13-18**.

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,

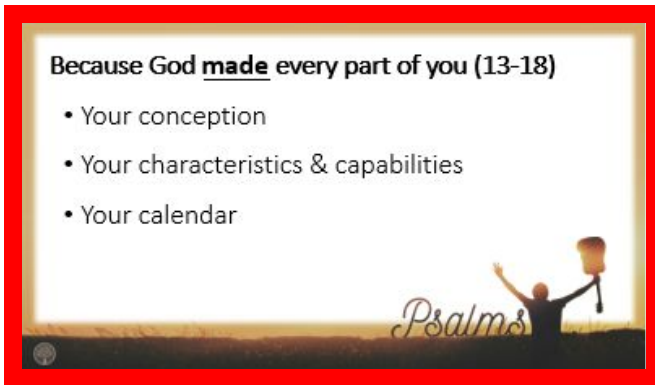


Your characteristics.

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

⁴ C.f. Job 14:5
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others may say, or where you believe the mirror 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?

⁵ Romans 8:38-39

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 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 –

⁶ 1 Peter 5:10-11

⁷

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

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.



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

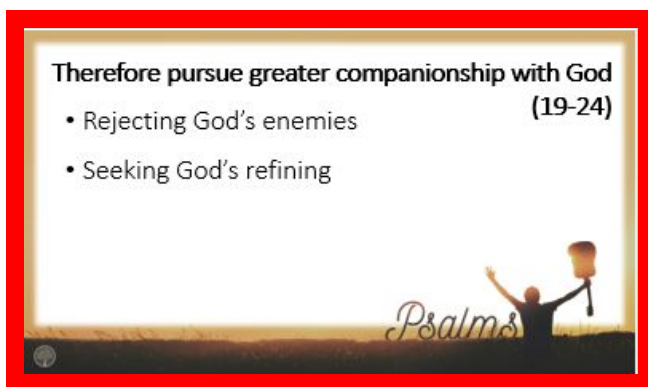
Interestingly, contemporary songs based on **Psalm 139** don't have us singing **verses 18-22**:

"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

⁸ C.S. Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*

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.

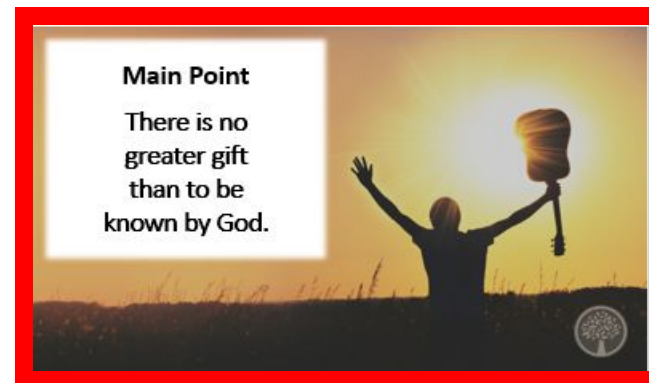
Do you desire to have your own personal relationship with this amazing God? **John 14:6** teaches clearly that *No one comes to the Father except through* faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus is the only way, the truth, and the life. Will you turn from your sin today, and believe on His death and resurrection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

If so then you can,



Rejoice in your everlasting relationship with God!

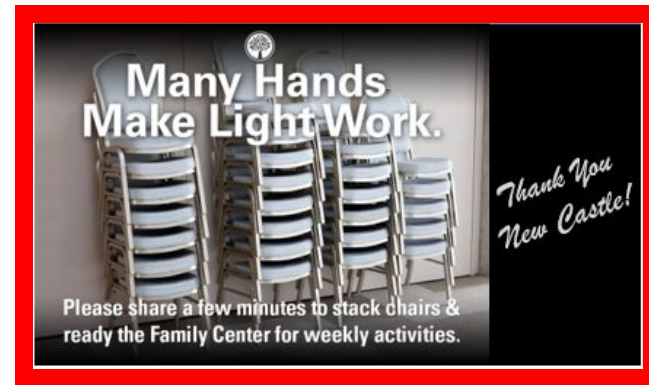
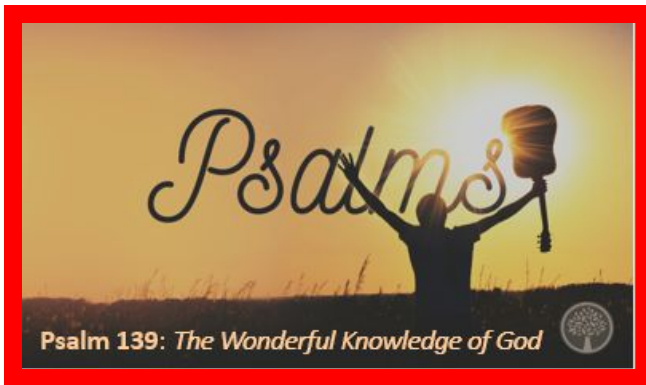
Pursue greater intimacy in your fellowship with God. Pray more fervently. Listen more quietly when you read His Word. For,



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



Let's pray.

<<Reminder for new members to form receiving line>>

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/>
- <https://www.monergism.com/topics/mp3-audio-multimedia/00-old-testament-sermons-book/psalms/5-books-psalms-audio/book-5-32>
- <https://www.jenoshman.com/jen-oshman-blog/2018/12/11/does-god-see-me-an-advent-devotional>

- *Knowing God*, J.I. Packer
- *The Holiness of God*, RC Sproul
- *Their God is Too Small*, Bruce Ware
- *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?