

GOD'S PENETRATING PRESENCE

His personal involvement in your life

Psalm 139

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The wonders of the universe¹

The sheer size and magnitude of the universe is staggering. Scientists estimate it might take 500 billion years, traveling at the speed of light (186,000mps) to travel around the perimeter - if there even is one! The sun is 330,330 times larger than the earth, with a diameter of 864,000 miles and could hold over one millions earth-sized planets. There estimate 285 galaxies for every person on earth, with the nearest major galaxy being 2.5 million light years away. There are more stars in the universe than grains of sand on Earth. On Earth there are more than 326 million trillion gallons of water. The deepest point in the sea is the Mariana Trench off Guam in the Pacific Ocean; it is 6.77 miles below sea level. Hydrogen gas is the least dense substance in the world, at 0.08988 g/cc. Hydrogen solid is the most dense substance in the world, at 70.6 g/cc. Helium is the second most abundant element in the Universe but it's exceedingly rare on Earth. Helium used for industrial purposes is a byproduct of natural gas production, of whic 75% is produced in the USA. The double-helix structure of DNA was discovered in 1953 by James Watson and Francis Crick. The length of a single human DNA molecule, when extended, is 5'5".

Not only does the immense size of the universe scream about the infinite greatness of God, the intricate design of the most miniscule particles on earth display His astounding wisdom. The infinite nature of God's power and the intimate display of God's knowledge should astound your soul. How can so immense a God know every the hair count of 7 billion people on Earth, and care for every created life? The Almighty God who sustains galaxies, upholds the unseen sparrow in her nest. This is the testimony of Psalm 139.

Knowledge of God

How many things can you think about at once? How much have you learned in your life and are still learning? Have you tried to think about how much God knows, or how powerful He really is? If God is not OMNISCIENT, OMNIPOTENT and OMNIPRESENT, He would be less than an Almighty God and not worthy of the glory and honor He commands. Grasping the concept of God's "OMNI"-s can be either ominously terrifying, or extremely comforting. God is the most personal, relational Being with His creation revealing His will, power and character to us. God's complete knowledge of all things, His extensive presence and His unparalleled power is meant to evoke a response of fear and accountability to those who reject Him. Yet for those who know and love Him, these same qualities bring confidence in the personal protection and careful provision of Almighty God.

Psalm 139 is a beautiful expression of God's intimate knowledge and penetrating presence in the lives of His people. God is not a distant, inattentive or uncaring; but rather He is personally and intricately acquainted with every fiber and aspect of your life. One pastor notes, "*Not mere omniscience, but a knowledge which knows him altogether; not mere omnipresence, but a presence which he can nowhere escape; not mere creative power, but a power which shaped him, fill and thrill the psalmist's soul.*"²

¹ <http://didyouknow.org/fastfacts>

² James Montgomery Boice, *Psalms*, vol.3, p.1201

David wrote this psalm from intense circumstances that are apparent within. It must have been an occasion of desperation as he pleads his innocence while inviting God's scrutiny in his life. Similar perhaps to Job, David would rather draw nearer to God's judgment of his life than follow the path of the wicked. Whatever the exact circumstances were that prompted David to write this prayer, it produced one of the most notable psalms written. This psalm has a way of extolling some of the most amazing attributes of God, while at the same time expressing appropriate personal response.

David shows how the penetrating knowledge and presence of God extends to all areas of life. He expounds the virtues of God's knowledge, presence and power as a comforting reminder during times of personal distress. It takes all those theological "OMNI"-s and tells us what they really mean for your life's circumstances. PSALM 139 TEACHES US GLORIOUS TRUTHS ABOUT GOD'S PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT OUR LIVES NOW AND YOUR PROPER RESPONSE TO HIM.

I. GOD'S MAGNIFICENT KNOWLEDGE [vs.1-6]

ESV Psalm 139:1 To the choirmaster. A psalm of David. 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.

HE KNOWS YOUR INTIMATE THOUGHTS

An easy way to study this psalm is seeing how it is broken into four sections of six verses each. The first four verses are descriptive about God, while the next two verses are related personal reflections. David begins by confessing God's perfect knowledge of himself. David meditates on the complete knowledge God has of him, and how much it brings him comfort during his distressing moments. The Hebrew root word "**know**" is emphasized in the first six verses extolling the breadth and depth of God's knowledge.

God is not just aware of your daily presence, rather His knowledge extends to every single thought you ever have. UNLIKE A MAGICIAN who attempts to deceive you with illusive tricks to make you think they can read your mind, your thoughts are an open book before God, while His remain incomprehensible to us.

HE KNOWS YOUR LIFE'S DIRECTION

God is not an idle observer of human beings keeping an eye on our busy lives and efforts - like watching ants scurry around in an ant farm. God knows the "way", or *someone's life direction*, with full knowledge of their lifestyle choices and personal pursuits. Think about your daily routines, all the habits and little nuances you follow each morning. The way you prompt and motivate yourself throughout the day. Followed by your evening routine with family, how you unwind and prepare yourself to sleep. Then getting up the next morning and doing it all over again. You might think you're the only one who pays attention the details of your personal routine, but God pays even more careful attention to both *how* and *why* your life is lived out.

HE KNOWS YOUR HEART'S INTENT

Others may see your life activities, but God sees your heart's intent. Before words are spoken, God's knows your heart and motive - even if those words are never spoken!

Matthew 15:18 *But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person.*

The words you speak are a direct revealer of your heart. God is always discerning between the wheat and chaff of your life, sifting what is right and good from what is worthless and sinful. This amazing knowledge God has in your life is meant to evoke a response. As a child of God, you are to be humbled by the expansive difference between your knowledge and His. You can take comfort in God's intimate knowledge of you. The sinful person should be fearful about God's perfect knowledge. It is threatening and intrusive to stand under the accountability of God's judgment.

"For an unsaved person this powerful, pervasive knowledge seems intrusive and frightening, and with good reason. God is the end-time judge with whom we must reckon. Strikingly, the response of the psalmist is not fear. He is not trembling when he thinks of God's omniscience. On the contrary, he shelters himself in God's knowledge and marvels at it. For the psalmist, God's knowledge is not a threat; it is a refuge."³

II. GOD'S EXTENSIVE PRESENCE [vs.7-12]

Psalm 139:7 *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.*

NO HEIGHT, DEPTH, OR LENGTH IS BEYOND GOD'S REACH

David was not interested in escaping God's presence. ON the contrary, God's perfect knowledge and penetrating presence was a comfort to him. He rhetorically remarks how absurd it is to think someone can actually travel outside the presence of God, by either ascending beyond Heaven or descending into the grave or Hell. Literally, there is no place on this planet or in the expansive universe where God is not present, nor in control. This truth brought David great comfort that God's protective hand was always over him.

Extremes on Earth⁴

Highest peak – Mt. Everest, Nepal [29,029ft.]

Lowest point – Dead Sea, Israel [-1,385ft.]

Ocean depth – Mariana Trench, Pacific Ocean [35,994ft.]

Deepest cave – Voronya Cave, Georgia [7,195ft.]

NO PLACE TO HIDE FROM GOD'S PENETRATING SPOTLIGHT

Each of David's descriptions is meant to highlight the absolute sovereignty of God over His creation. His penetrating presence means that He has His personal control and precious care for His children. God has every authoritative right over His creation because He is Creator. At the same time, you can have a right relationship with Him because He is your Creator God. His intense care for you means you do not need to fear how dark or scary your life may get. Nothing can or will happen outside His ever-present control.

³ *ibid.*, 1204

⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Extremes_on_Earth

III. GOD'S REMARKABLE POWER [vs.13-18]

Psalm 139:13 *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 were 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.*

HIS PERSONAL AND INTRICATE DESIGN OF YOU

David next meditates on the most intimate moments of life: CONCEPTION. Of course God knows you best, He is the author, designer and sustainer of your very life! The remarkable design of life is what gives value to every person at conception. All parts, big or small, are an amazing design that make everyone "fearfully wonderful."

Job 10:8-12 *Your hands fashioned and made me, and now you have destroyed me altogether. Remember that you have made me like clay; and will you return me to the dust? Did you not pour me out like milk and curdle me like cheese? You clothed me with skin and flesh, and knit me together with bones and sinews. You have granted me life and steadfast love, and your care has preserved my spirit.*

MIRACLE OF BIRTH⁵

Week 5 – heart begins to beat; blood begins to circulate; the beginnings of the brain, cardiovascular, nervous and reproductive systems start forming; 2mm (sesame seed)

Week 8 – eyelids, ears upper lip and nose forming; heart has separated into four chambers; ½ in

Week 13 – all major organs have formed and are functioning; limbs and extremities formed, able to suck thumb and close fist; vocal cords and larynx; 3 in, 20 grams

Week 19 – hair, eyebrows and eyelashes have grown; facial features are completely recognizable; bones are hardening; kidneys formed and urine produced; 6 in, 8 ½ oz.

Week 26 – ears able to hear sounds; lungs grown and able to function outside the womb; eyes fully developed; brainwaves detected; 14 in, 1 2/3 lbs.

Week 32 – eyes open, looking around; all five senses working; moving, grabbing, listening, practicing breathing; 17 in, 4 lbs.

Week 40 – ready to go; 300 total bones, but later some fusing together reducing to 206 bones by adulthood; 19 in, 7 lbs.

HIS SPECIAL PURPOSE FOR YOU

God is not just present at the start of a your life, He knows every single day leading to your last. Everyone has a set amount of unique days in God's book to live, respond, and choose to serve or reject Him (Job 14:5). He is not some sinister puppet master playing with human lives for unjust pleasure. Instead, God carefully designs and directs each life to accomplish His will, while allowing every individual to personally respond to their Maker. The mystery of conception, the powerful providence of God over every life should astound, overwhelm and humble you at His intense, personal concern. You have been formed for a purpose both in this life and the one to come.

⁵ <http://3dpregnancy.parentsconnect.com/calendar>

The question you need to answer is: AM I FULFILLING HIS PURPOSE FOR ME? IS HE FULFILLING HIS PURPOSE IN ME?

IV. MY RESPONSE TO THE ALMIGHTY GOD [vs.19-24]

Psalm 139:19 *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!*

AVOID IDENTITY WITH THOSE WHO OPENLY DEFY GOD

David seemingly makes an abrupt turn from his meditative musings on the wonders of God to sober concern over his current distress. Whatever was happening in David's life had definitely unsettled him. *How could those who had been wonderfully formed by such an amazing God actually hate and attempt to defy Him?* David feels confused and troubled over the seeming victory of wicked men getting away with defying him and his God. David pleads his case of loyalty and refusal to associate with God's enemies. He seeks God's salvation by inviting His loving scrutiny in David's life.

INVITE GOD'S LOVING SCRUTINY IN YOUR LIFE

David's comfort came by meditating on the great OMNI-s of God. Those who defy God should and will fear THE Almighty as He judges them justly. You have no reason to fear Almighty God. You have nothing to hide from Him because He already knows you intimately. You welcome and invite His loving examination of your heart with no attempt to escape His penetrating presence. You desire your life's direction to be in the everlasting way. You anticipate your sin being exposed so that you may be holy and pleasing before the Lord.

Just as the psalm comes full circle, you and I need to be willing to pray, "*Search me, O God, and know my heart!*" All the while knowing, "*O LORD, you have searched me and known me!*"