



Summer in the Psalms

“What Do You Know?”

Psalm 139:1-24

Context: Psalm 139 begins with a declaration of God’s omniscience. From this general statement the writer elucidates his sense of God’s all-embracing knowledge. He uses four poetic paragraphs, each containing six verses. Within each paragraph there is an explanation of a particular characteristic of God and then a summary statement that exalts God because of His use of that characteristic. The psalmist ends with a plea

for God’s searching and revealing, and the psalmist’s response that requests God’s empowered leading away from sin to life-eternal.

The Pearl: Better to be hedged in by the ultimate Protector than loosened to travel godlessly toward an ever-lasting death (cf. Psalm 139:5).

1-Knowing about the inscrutable – Psalm 139:1-6

We are known to God better than we even know ourselves. The psalmist declares God’s full-orbed knowledge of us has shut us in from back to front even before we can bring a single word to mind to describe ourselves.

2-Knowing about my place – Psalm 139:7-12

An inescapable awareness of the Spirit’s omnipresence causes the psalmist to pause and state that which is often overlooked. There is no hiding place from God, be it in heaven or Hell, on islands remote, or in the darkest of hollows. God grasps and lifts up His own in His timing for their deliverance.

3-Knowing about my beginning – Psalm 139:13-18

“The majesty of man” is sourced in the mind of God. Our incredibly intricate formation finds both description and thanksgiving in this section. We are made the way we are as the unfathomable capstone of God’s creative workmanship.

4-Knowing about the way – Psalm 139:19-24

Finally, the psalmist brackets the ending of the Psalm using the same idea in which it began. Aware that God fully knows our every thought, the psalmist implores God to deliver him from his deepest sins of the heart. His cry goes beyond deliverance and ends with an appeal to God to lead him down the path of eternal life.



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For Further Study:

As a **Bible study method** look up the term “search” TWOT 729b (μεμῶ¹r), as in Job 13:7-9. What does it look like when you search for something (i.e. a spider that just ran under your bed) like those looking for the body of Jesus in the empty tomb (cf. Matthew 28:5) or the Magi of Matthew 2:8? Have you searched and found the Jesus of Scripture?

As a **theological study method** use your Bible cross references of Psalm 139:7 to consider the possibility of hiding oneself from God’s presence (cf. Jeremiah 23:23-24; Jonah 1:3-10; John 20:19-29). What does it feel like to attempt to hide sin from God’s presence (Psalm 32:1-5; 2 Samuel 12:1-13)?

The psalmist uses the literary technique of *inclusio*, where he ends the psalm with a verse similar to how he started it (cp. verse 1 and 23). Why would David find the need for God to search him in order to reveal his sin? What does David ask God to do about any sin that is found (see Psalm 139:24)?

Transformation exercise:

Use Psalm 139:23-24 to begin your morning. Think about what it looks like to be led along the path of eternal life as you begin your day, break for lunch and dinner, and as you lie down to sleep. Try to identify some place in your day where you sensed God’s presence, Selah.

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