

David Carter / General Adult

Psalms in the Key of Life / Psalm 139

“What do you think about, when you think about God” It’s question that A.W. Tozer, a well-known and admired pastor of the 20th century believed was the most important question that we can ask ourselves.

His point was that often a wrong or false understanding of God, leads to not just improper doctrine, but improper living as well. A correct understanding of God not only leads to sound doctrine, but sound living as well.

I think he was on to something. What do you think about when you think about God? How we answer that questions has a direct impact on how we live, how we worship, how we serve, how we give, how we love.

What is it that you think about, when you think of God, what is it that pops into your mind. See if you asked the average person that question, often the first words to come to our lips are things like... well I **feel** like God is... in my **opinion** God is, I **think** that God is like...

And the problem with that is that when our understanding of God is based off our feelings, emotions, and opinions, we often get a God that simply is made in our image. A God who reflects and echoes our feelings and opinions, in essence a god of our own making.

But the good news is, that God has not left our understanding of him up to our own opinions. God has revealed himself to us through his Word and through his Son. God tells us what God is like, God’s Son came to show us what God is like.

See David in our Psalm this morning he is meditating on the nature of God, he’s meditating on what God is like and what he comes to realize is that while God is incomprehensible in his nature, he is not unknowable, that while God is

incomprehensible, who he is, is truly beyond our understanding, he is deeply personal.

David's understanding of God impacts his life; it impacts how he lives. God is not a concept to be studied; he is a God that we can know and have a relationship with.

He is the incomprehensible, yet deeply personal God. That's what I think we find as we read [Psalm 139](#).

Look with me at [Psalm 139](#) this morning.

God has not left our understanding of him up to our own opinions. God has revealed himself to us through his Word.

When you think about God, what comes to mind?

That's the exercise that David is going through in our Psalm this morning.

And we see at times that he is overwhelmed with the depth of this question, but he is deeply and personally impacted.

And there are four things that David reveals about the nature of God in this Psalm. But he doesn't just reflect on the nature of God, he meditates on how it impacts him personally, how it impacts us personally.

In verses 1-6, David is meditating on God's omniscience, fancy word that simply means, that God knows everything.

God is omniscient, all knowing, he knows everything about me.

OMNISCIENT

Read his words there in verses 1-5.

Psalm 139:1-5 ESV

***O LORD, you have searched me and known me!
You know when I sit down and when I rise up;***

***you discern my thoughts from afar.
You search out my path and my lying down
and are acquainted with all my ways.
Even before a word is on my tongue,
behold, O LORD, you know it altogether.
You hem me in, behind and before,
and lay your hand upon me.***

God is omniscient, he is all knowing.

He knows everything there is to know.

There is nothing that God needs to learn or figure out, there is no news that surprises him, no knowledge or understanding that he is yet to discover. There is nothing we or anyone can teach God.

Knowledge and understanding begins and ends with him and in him.

You turn on the news tomorrow and they say that scientists have discovered a new planet, that they have discovered a cure for cancer, that's not new information for God, he isn't just finding it out and discovering it when mankind does, but he has known that truth from before the world began. He knows everything that there is to possibly know.

But then David gets personal doesn't he. He is thinking well if God knows everything, if he is omniscient if he is all knowing, then he knows everything about me.

Notice he says ***you have searched me and know me***... that word search, it communicates the idea of spying out or investigating. God searches our hearts.

To know is not just know about, but to know in detail, intimately. You know everything there is to know about me.

He starts to think about the implications of all this...

Do you see? Verse 2 he says you know when I sit down and when I rise. In essence you know what I'm going to do, before I even do it,

You know what I'm going to think before I even think it, you see that, you discern my thoughts from afar.

You know where I'm going to go, before I even go there, verse 3 you search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways.

You know what I'm going to say before I even says it, verse 4 even before a word is on my tongue, you know it altogether.

In fact, you know my past, present, my future... verse 5 you hem me in behind and before...

Like just stop and think about that for a moment. God knows everything there is to know about you, about me. There is no hiding from him, he knows us better than we know ourselves.

Like think about this, there is always this part of us that we keep to ourselves. People only know about us, what we choose to reveal to them, and the closest people are to us, the more we reveal. What we reveal to each other on Sunday morning, isn't so much, to our co-workers, our fellow students maybe a little more, to our spouses, we reveal more, but even to them there are things that they don't know.

We even have the ability to deceive ourselves... it's kind of like when you try and lose weight and you weigh yourself on the scale and you see the number, but you can rationalize it in your minds. Well, I drank a lot of water, my keys and phone are in my pocket, I should weigh myself early in the morning.

But then you go to the doctor's office, they put you on that scale and there is no rationalizing it with them, the numbers are the numbers, they just write them down.

That's the way it is before the Lord. We can deceive others, we can deceive ourselves, but not God, he searches and he knows us.

Hebrews 4:13 ESV

And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

And to David this is just too much for him to take in he just says in verse 6 ***Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it.*** He says this is mind blowing, this is too much for me to even fathom or understand I can 't even wrap my mind around it.

He knows the deepest darkest secret that we have, he knows the things about us that we keep to ourselves, the things that we hope no one ever finds out. He knows our greatest fears, our greatest hopes, our dreams, our aspirations. He knows both the good and the evil of which we are capable.

See this truth is either terrifying or deeply comforting.

This can be a terrifying thought, a humbling thought. God knows everything about me! If we realize just what God knows about us, how exposed we are in his sight it would cause us to tremble and fall to our knees like Isaiah when he came before the presence of almighty God when he said "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips." Like Peter when it dawned on him that he wasn't just standing in the presence of Jesus of Nazareth but in the presence of God himself he felt exposed and unworthy Luke records that he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

It can be a terrifying thought. Especially for those of us who don't have a relationship with Christ. Here we are we standing before a holy and righteous God in our guilt, in our sin and we have no excuse, no answer. We have nothing to justify our sin-stained hands and God sees it all, down to the intents of our hearts, that is a terrifying thought for those outside the forgiveness of Christ.

And yet how comforting it can be, do you know why? Because God knows the worst about us and yet he still sends his son to die for our sin on the cross. God knows the worst about us and yet he still stands this morning offering salvation to those who will believe in his son.

He knows how sinful, how evil we are to the core and yet he still pours out his grace and his mercy on us daily. Think about it he knows when we are going to sin, the exact moment that we are going to fail him and yet he gives us the grace to keep living even to that moment and beyond. He knew all the times we were going to fail him even before we were saved and yet he still saved us anyway.

It's comforting because there's nothing that we need to hide from him; he loves us as we are. He loves us in spite of our flaws, in spite of our weaknesses, in spite of our failings.

When God looks at us this morning, he doesn't see us in our sin, but he sees us clothed in the righteousness of Christ, covered by his blood, forgiven, redeemed, and restored.

This can be so comforting to those who are in Christ today...

God is all knowing, he knows me...

Secondly David meditates on God's Omnipresence.

OMNIPRESENT

God is Omnipresent, he present everywhere, he is always with me.

This thought overwhelms David, you see what he says there in verses 7.

Psalm 139:7-12 ESV

Where shall I go from your Spirit?

Or where shall I flee from your presence?

If I ascend to heaven, you are there!

If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!

***If I take the wings of the morning
and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,
even there your hand shall lead me,
and your right hand shall hold me.
If I say, “Surely the darkness shall cover me,
and the light about me be night,”
even the darkness is not dark to you;
the night is bright as the day,
for darkness is as light with you.***

He says there is not anywhere I can go that I would be outside of your presence, where can I go?

There is no height or depth, if I go as high as the heavens your presence is there, if I go as low to the place of death in Sheol, you are there... no height, no depth you can't reach.

There is no length I can go, if I go the uttermost parts of the sea of the earth even there your hand is there to hold me.

Darkness he says cannot even hide me from you, even the darkness is not dark to you.

There is nowhere that you can go to escape the presence of God! He is everywhere at the same time. His presence is just as powerful here as it is across the world in India, or China, or on the continent of Africa.

One of the things that few people know about me, is that I am actually a huge Star Trek fan, I'm more of a Next Generation guy, your captain Picard, Data, if you know, you know.

But the whole theme of Star Trek is that they are just travelling about the galaxies, not just our galaxy, but undiscovered galaxies. Alpha, Beta, Delta, Gamma Quadrants, or the Andromeda galaxy. And I've often thought to myself

as I'm watching, that even if mankind were able to develop the capability to travel about the universe, even out there you would still be in God's presence.

Amazing... mind blowing. But again, this is either a terrifying thought or a great comfort to our hearts this morning.

It's a terrifying thought because you cannot run from God, you cannot hide from him. He's there even when we are trying to escape, like maybe we can try to hide out in the darkness, in dark circles, in dark places, and yet even there God is present.

He's there with us when no one else is, and we hope that no one is watching, he's there, he sees us at our best and he sees us at our worst.

There is no running, there is no hiding. Jonah found that out, didn't he? Tried to run in the direct opposite direction that God commanded him to go, but with all his running, he ran right into the providence of God and came face to face with God's presence in the bottom of the ocean in the belly of a great fish.

Maybe you're here this morning, and you're running from God, you're trying to hide from him, my friend, God is calling you to stop running this morning.

And yet, how comforting is it to know, that God is always with us. That's the comfort that David has here, there is no darkness that God cannot reach down and pull us out of, no crevice of life that God is not there with us, no valley, no distance, no height,

Nothing shall separate us from the presence of God. That's what Paul says isn't it in Romans.

Romans 8:38-39 ESV

For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

God is Omnipresent, he is everywhere, he is always, always with me.

All knowing, All Present, he is all powerful.

Omniscient, Omnipresent, Omnipotent.

That's where David goes next.

OMNIPOTENT

God is Omnipotent.

He is all powerful, he created me for a purpose.

God is all powerful...

One of the reasons we love to get away up north every Summer is just the time you spend in creation. I can do without the bugs, the mosquitoes, but when you're out on the water and you see the calm, or you see the fish jumping, the birds swimming, the trees swaying. You feel the wind; you see the stars at night.

You see how creation so intricately interacts with each other, you can't help but think about what an all-powerful God must have created all of this.

The beauty, the intricacy, the design, the intent, it could not have created itself spontaneously any more than a musical masterpiece could have written itself, or the Mona Lisa could have painted itself.

No creation screams there must be a creator, and the design of the universe screams there must be a designer.

An all-powerful God standing behind it all, creating, sustaining it.

David reflects on God's creative power in a more personal way.

An all-powerful God didn't just create this beautiful world that we live in, but he created me. He created me for a purpose and with a design.

You see his words here in verses 13-16.

Psalm 139:13–16 ESV

***For you formed my inward parts;
you knitted me together in my mother's womb.
I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Wonderful are your works;
my soul knows it very well.
My frame was not hidden from you,
when I was being made in secret,
intricately woven in the depths of the earth.
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.***

David reflecting on the all-powerful God says you formed my inward parts... that word formed, it communicates the idea of created, inward parts literally means kidneys, but it has a double meaning.

It's this idea that God created my inner parts, my heart, my lungs, my kidneys, my brain... and sit and think about the intricate design of the respiratory system or the circulatory system, the digestive system, the nervous system.

You think about the intricate design of the human body, how each of these systems operate instinctively to sustain life and even to produce healing and restoration again it screams that there is a great all-powerful designer, behind that design, a creator behind the creation.

But it isn't just the physical inward parts, my inner self that David has in mind is the seat of emotion, my inward existence, the stuff inside of us that makes us who we are. Our personality, our traits, our character, is formed by God.

No wonder he cries out in praise, I praise you for I am fearfully and wonderfully made, marvellous are your works...

God you're so awesome, you're so amazing. When I think about how you created me to be who and what I am... I can't help but praise you for how wonderful you are.

And it isn't as though an all-powerful God, kind of put a system, an order in place and then let it run, but the image that David gives us is that God is intimately involved in creating each life.

He says you knit me together... verse 15 my frame, that is literally my skeletal structure, my bones were not hidden from you, when I was intricately woven in the depths of the earth.

This is why all human life is sacred because God is intimately involved in bringing each life into existence. He forms us in the womb, intricately...

It's not as though God created a machine, with a system and then just sent it off to run itself, no you formed me, you made me, you created me.

And if you created me, you have a purpose for my life.

Look at what he says in verse 16.

Psalm 139:16 ESV

***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.***

David is saying that there was a plan for my life before I was even born. In your book, every day of life was written down before I was even formed.

And of course, that brings so many questions about God's sovereignty and human responsibility, but that's not what David is reflecting on, he's comfortable with that tension, but the joy that it brings to his heart the reassurance he needs is that there is nothing that happens in his life that's outside the purposes and intents of God.

That God has a plan for my life, a purpose and it all works together. I am not a victim of random circumstances, no there's a purpose to it all, even the pain, even the darkness, there is purpose.

It means that whatever I may have been told, whatever my past may look like, whatever brokenness I may have come out of, my life is not an accident, I'm not here by random choice, but every life that is brought into this world God has a plan, God has a purpose for.

Amazing isn't it... we serve an omnipotent creator, an all-powerful God. And with his power, he decided to create you, to create me, intricately and he has a plan, a purpose for each of us.

What is David's response to this...

David is consumed with a passion and zeal for his God.

He's reflecting on all of this, think about where this is leading us.

He's thinking and reflecting on this God who knows everything about him, and yet still calls him to himself, this God that is always with him, that never leaves him nor forsakes him, whose hand is always upon him, the God who intimately and intricately created him for a purpose, and he is consumed and cannot understand how anyone could stand against or reject such a great and powerful God and so his response is...

Psalm 139:19–22 ESV

Oh that you would slay the wicked, O God!

O men of blood, depart from me!

***They speak against you with malicious intent;
your enemies take your name in vain.***

Do I not hate those who hate you, O LORD?

And do I not loathe those who rise up against you?

I hate them with complete hatred;

I count them my enemies.

We think to ourselves, like man those are some harsh words, why is David speaking with such anger...

But recognize that it is a holy anger.

David isn't calling down God's curses on someone who just cut him off in traffic, or at his neighbour who left his trash on his yard... this isn't petty anger.

He's reflecting on those who stand against his God, the wicked of the world, who don't just practice wickedness, but mock and make themselves enemies of God.

He's meditating on God's holiness...

HOLY

God is Holy and he realizes that God doesn't just call the world to holiness, but he calls him to holiness, he calls me to holiness.

Because God is Holy, his holiness demands that he judges wickedness and evil.

Like understand David is simply asking God to do what he has promised to do. God has promised that one day he will come in judgment of this world and those who stand against him, those who oppose him, those who do wickedness and evil in this world they will be destroyed in God's judgment.

David is simply asking God to do what he has promised to do. And let's be honest, we feel the same way. When we see the evil that is going on in this world, when we see the tragedy of the bombing of innocent civilians, when we see things like human trafficking and sexual exploitation of women and children, when we see the injustice of this world, doesn't our hearts cry out for God to bring his judgment on the wicked!

Our hearts cry out with David, Come Lord Jesus come and bring your justice on the wicked and the evil of this world and when we see the evil in the world we hate it, we want nothing to do with it. We want nothing to do with anything or anyone who hates or stands against the God that we love so much!

Do you see, David's passion, his zeal for the Lord's holiness, causes him to cry out...

God is Holy!

He leads me in the paths of holiness.

See, he recognizes the issue of unholiness isn't just out there in the world. The issue is right here in our own hearts. So, you see how he ends this Psalm...

Psalm 139:23-24 ESV

Search me, O God, and know my heart!

Try me and know my thoughts!

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

God is Holy and he leads me in the paths of holiness...

David ends this Psalm the way he began, search me, O God and know my heart!

Try me and know my thoughts.

I already know that you can and that you do, but why he is asking him this.

Search me and know me Lord, is there any unholiness in me, is there any wickedness in my heart, is there any way that I am wandering, that I am straying, is there any unfaithfulness in my heart oh Lord.

I hate wickedness, I hate sin so much, that I don't want it in my life, I don't want it standing between you and I!

So, he says, see if there is any grievous way in me and lead me in the way of everlasting...

Lead me in holiness oh Lord, help me walk in a way that is pleasing to you.

I wonder if that's our prayer this morning, if we would be so bold, so pray Oh Lord search me, search my heart. If there is anything grievous and unaddressed sin, any unholiness, any evil intent, anything that does not honour you...

Would you remove it Lord and lead me in the way everlasting.

See I think we're hesitant to pray that prayer because we know, we know what's in our heart. And just as we're grieved about what's going on in the world, we're often grieved about what's going on in our hearts and minds.

We know, we know we fall short of holiness. So how can we stand? How can we stand in God's presence? I mean this is why we need Jesus, yes, the world needs Jesus, but I need Jesus, because I fall short.

See Jesus comes and he lives that holy life that I cannot, and Jesus came and died for my sin so that I could be forgiven for my unholiness... but it isn't just forgiveness we need, we need to learn to walk in holiness.

And so, Jesus sends his Holy Spirit to live in our hearts and here's what the Holy Spirit is doing in your life and my life, he is growing us in holiness, causing us to walk in holiness.

Day by day, he is growing us and causing us to walk in the paths of holiness.

God is holy and he guides me in paths of holiness.

What do you think about when you think about God?

God is Omniscient, he is all knowing, he knows more than we could ever possibly understand, he is omnipresent, he is everywhere at the same time, there is no where we can go, where God cannot see us or find us, and we serve an all-powerful God, who created everything and sustains this whole universe by the power of his Word.

God is incomprehensible, can we ever truly search the depths of who he is, and yet, he is not unknowable, these big words and phrases and concepts do not overshadow that you can know God, you can have a personal relationship with him.

He knows everything, yes, it means he knows everything there is to know about you, and yet he still calls you to himself, he is everywhere, that means he is

always with you, in darkness as well as the light, in the valley as well as the mountaintop.

He is all powerful and he has used that power to create, you are not a mistake, you are not here by random circumstances, God has created you for a purpose, he has a plan for your life.