Psalm 139: Bible Study Guide

19-BSG-139C: CHAPTER OVERVIEW.

Characters: God, David.
Key Word: Omnipresence, Ps. 139:7.
Strong Verses: Ps. 139:1, 6, 7, 8-12, 17, 23, 24.

KEY WORD STUDY.
Omniscience, Omnipresence, Omnipotence.

ISSUES AT A GLANCE.
God, Creator of Mankind
God, Goodness of
God, Guidance
God, Omnipresent
God, Omnipotent
God, Omniscient
God, Unsearchable
God, Wondrous Works of

 ISSUES FOR FURTHER STUDY.
Ps. 139:7 Spirit -- Heb. Ruach (Spirit) referring to God’s Spirit.
Ps. 139:8 Sheol -- Heb. she’ol (the realm of the dead/ the underworld; see Job 14:13; 1 Kgs 2:6).
Ps. 139:13 my inward parts – Heb. Kilyah (organs like kidneys in sacrificial animals).
Ps. 139:16 my embryo – Heb. Golem (a formless mass or incomplete vessel; an embryo or fetus). NKJV renders it “my substance.”

19-BSG-139D: CHAPTER INTRODUCTION.

“This psalm is a meditation on the wonderful ways of Divine Providence. The psalmist dwells particularly on the omniscience and omnipresence of God. No thought of man’s heart is hidden from God, and there is no place in creation where a man can hide himself from the face of God. A man’s thoughts are known before they are uttered: the creature contains no riddle for its Creator. The thought of God’s
knowledge leaves men helpless: no human mind can comprehend its reach. And just as no thought can be hidden from the Creator, so there is no place in the world—however unknown and remote, were it accessible only to the dawn-bird—where a mortal can pass beyond the grasp of God’s hand. In heaven above, in Sheol below, God is equally present. Were a man to enwrap himself in the darkness of night to hide him from his Maker, he would find that for God the very darkness is light (verses 1–12).” [Patrick Boylan, The Psalms: A Study of the Vulgate Psalter in the Light of the Hebrew Text: Introduction and Notes, (Dublin: M. H. Gill and Son, Ltd., 1921–1924), 2:347].

19-BSG-139J: QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

SEEING WHAT’S THERE.

[1] What is the main content of this chapter? Meditation upon the doctrines of God -- Omniscience, Omnipresence, Omnipotence.

[2] What does the chapter say about God? God’s attributes are beyond human comprehension. “No one can escape the all-pervading Being and observation of the Holy Spirit. We are, whether we will it or not, as near to God as our soul is to our body, for the Holy Spirit dwells within the Christian (1 Cor. 6:19). This makes it dreadful work to sin, for it is insulting God to His face.” [Keith Brooks, Summarized Bible: Complete Summary of the Old Testament, (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2009), 139].

CAPTURE THE ESSENCE.

[1] What does the LORD know? (1-4)

He knows our manners. “Downsitting ... uprising ... art acquainted with all my ways ... beset behind and before” (Psalm 139:2, 3, 5). God knows everything we do, nothing is hid from Him be it good or bad.
He knows our meditations. “Thou understandest my though afar off” (Psalm 139:2). He knows what we are thinking even before we think it. The omniscience of God can only be of God because it is so great.

He knows our mouth. “There is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether” (Psalm 139:4). God is cognizant of every word we speak. That can be very scary knowledge for the defiled mouth. God’s knowledge of our talk is why “every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment” (Matthew 12:36). [John G. Butler, Psalms, Analytical Bible Expositor, (Clinton, IA: LBC Publications, 2012), 6:871–872].

[2] Where is the LORD? (7-12) He is everywhere.

Psalm 139:7–12 (NKJV) — 7 Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? 8 If I ascend into heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in hell, behold, 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 fall on me,” Even the night shall be light about me; 12 Indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You, But the night shines as the day; The darkness and the light are both alike to You.

[3] What astonishing fact that the psalmist admit about God’s knowledge in this chapter? (6). “Your [infinite] knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high above me, I cannot reach it.” (Psalm 139:6, AMP)

Beloved, God’s knowledge is beyond the grasp of the finite mind.

Romans 11:33–36 (NKJV) — 33 Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! 34 “For who has known the mind of the LORD? Or who has become His counselor?” 35 “Or who has first given to Him And it shall be repaid to him?” 36 For of Him and
through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.

The wisdom and knowledge of God is beyond our understanding. “God’s wisdom and knowledge are far too deep for us to understand; they are unsearchable and beyond tracing! Nonetheless, we can appreciate their value, for even our limited knowledge has the effect of riches in our life. We can’t know or understand everything about God, but the wisdom and knowledge that God allows us to have constantly affects how we live.” [Bruce B. Barton, David Veerman, and Neil S. Wilson, Romans, Life Application Bible Commentary, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1992), 226].

[4] For what should we praise the LORD? (14) “I will confess and praise You for You are fearful and wonderful and for the awful wonder of my birth! Wonderful are Your works, and that my inner self knows right well.” (Psalm 139:14, AMP)

[5] What is said about God’s thoughts toward us? (17–18) “How precious and weighty also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How vast is the sum of them! If I could count them, they would be more in number than the sand. When I awoke, [could I count to the end] I would still be with You.” (Psalm 139:17–18, AMP)

[6] What great prayer ends this psalm? (23–24) “Search me thoroughly, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there is any wicked or hurtful way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” (Psalm 139:23–24, AMP)

19-BSG-139K: DISCUSSION QUESTIONS.

TO THINK ABOUT AND DISCUSS.

[1] Because of His omnipotence, David ask God to “destroy the wicked!” (Ps. 139:19–22), but why? Is there a conflict between David’s
desire here and God’s longsuffering towards sinners (2 Peter 3:9)? How would you defend your answer?

[2] Ps. 139:1–4. “The Hebrew verbs can be interpreted as timeless truth: “You search me and you know me.” God’s attributes are not restricted to time. The words know ... understand ... observe, and are aware speak of God’s omniscience. The word observe comes from the Hebrew root zarah, which means “measure.” The Hebrew word for ways does not necessarily denote literal walking but daily behavior.” [Kevin R. Warstler, CSB Study Bible: Notes, 2017, 935].

How does the knowledge of God’s omnipresence (Ps. 139:5) encourage/ increase your faith as you go through the many trials of life? In a previous chapter, David had said “though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me.” (Ps. 23:4). Does the Lord guarantee us protection always?

FOR SELF-EXAMINATION.

[3] This psalm, among other things, gives us an opportunity to self-examination of our lives, with a thought of the omniscience of God, (v. 1–6). Take a journey and jot down all thoughts, attitudes, behaviors, sins in your life that offends the Lord. Confess of those sins and ask the Holy Spirit to help you (1 John 1:9).

FOR LIFE TODAY.


This is a warning to us all. We can never hide from God. The prophet Jonah found this out the hard way. “But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. He went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid the fare, and went down into it, to go
with them to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.” (Jonah 1:3, NKJV)

A little later, Jonah discovered that he could not get away from God. When was the last time you ran from God? Are you still attempting to hide/ run? Are fulfilling the mission He has given you, or like Jonah you keep finding excuses?

[5] How does the message of this chapter relate to us today? What response do you think this chapter should inspires us to do?

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