

“Can I Know God Personally?”

The Bible teaches that God is not an idea or force. Rather, He is a person, and He has a certain relationship with all that He has made. One of the amazing things about Jesus was the way He makes it clear that God is near to us and desires fellowship with us. He declared, *“my sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life” (John 10:27-28).*

But what exactly does it take to begin a relationship with God? Do we have to have a certain experience? Do we need to be devoted to religious deeds? Do we need to become a certain kind of person to please God? How do we know God?

Before you begin this week’s study, ask: **“Do you believe you have a relationship with God? If not, why not? If so, how do you know you have this relationship?”**

Psalm 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!

Study & Discussion

1. Read Psalm 139:1-4. What does God know?
2. Read Psalm 139:5-10. Where is God? *Sheol* is a poetic term in the Old Testament referring to a dark wasteland associated with death. What is your reaction to God's presence being with us even there?
3. Reflect on places and situations this week in which you have found yourself. Were you aware of God's presence in any of them?
4. Read Psalm 139:11-16. What does God see? What words illustrate God's attention and care in forming us?
5. What might have provoked David to say, "Surely the darkness will cover me"?
6. In verse 14, the Hebrew word for "fearfully" connotes a sense of awe. The Hebrew for "wonderful" connotes being marked out or distinguished. How do these words inform the way you see yourself? How you see others?
7. Read Psalm 139:16-18. This passage helps us see the extent to which God is attentive to our lives. Why are these thoughts precious to David? What is your personal response to these verses?
8. Read Psalm 139:19-22. Why would meditating on God knowledge and presence ignite David's zeal against God's enemies?
9. Read Psalm 139:23-24. Why does David ask God to search him if God has already searched him—and to know him if God has already known him?
10. How does this Psalm point us to Jesus Christ?

Going A Step Further...

- Each week in worship in worship we confess our sins together. **This week's** *Confession of Sin* came from [Psalm 139:1-3,23-24](#). Read that passage and pray together as a group in response.
- Each week in worship we read another Bible passage to complement the sermon text. **This week's** *Gospel Reading* came from Jesus' prayer in [John 17:22,25-26](#). Jesus is praying for His Church! He prays that God would make a way for us to be one with Himself and one another, and that the world would find this unity irresistibly attractive. How does God encourage or challenge you in light of these verses?
- As a part of worship [we sing songs and hymns that further amplify each Sunday's message](#). Every Sunday, we close the worship service with a singing of Thomas Ken's "[Doxology](#)" (you can hear one beautiful version [here](#)). God's many blessings are a witness to His Church that He knows us and is present with us. Read, listen to or sing the Doxology, and enter into a time of prayer thanking the Father, Son & Holy Spirit in light of His goodness and grace.

Questions about this week's study guide? Contact Kevin Greene, kevin@wepc.org
To hear sermons and access past study guides visit www.wepc.org/archivedsermons

Sermon Notes

This week, Steve Shelby preached on [Psalm 139](#)

Can You Know God Personally?

- “You see how it is godlike to love the being of someone. Your existence is a delight to us. I hope you never have to long for a child as I did, but oh, what a splendid thing it has been that you came finally, and what a blessing to enjoy you now for almost seven years.” (*Marilynne Robinson, Gilead*)
- The triune God that Christians worship is three distinct Persons in one Being, revealed in history and in the pages of the Bible as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- Because of this, God was, is, and will always be in relationship. He is never alone and never lonely. His loving overture to mankind is simply the outflowing of the love that already exists within Himself, for Himself!
- The personal salvation that Christians experience “is reconciliation with God the Father, carried out through God the Son, in the power of God the Holy Spirit.” God’s triune nature demonstrates the kind of personal relationship He longs to share with man.
- He said over and over again that His desire was for them to be His people and for Him to be their God. Such a God is “lovingly-loyal and loyally-loving to the works of His hands. He loves what He is committed to; He is committed to what He loves.”

This God Knows You and Wants You to Know Him

- “They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, ‘Where are you?’”([Genesis 3:8-9](#))
- A look at terms that help us:
 - Shepherd ([Psalm 23](#))
 - King ([Psalm 145](#))
 - Father ([Matthew 6:9](#))
 - Older Brother ([Hebrews 2:11](#))
 - Comforter ([John 14](#))

Psalm 139: He Knows Us

- Because He wants to know us
- He is fiercely present to/with us
- He wants us to know what He thinks
- Intimate and yet comprehensive
- He pursues