

Knows Me With Me Made Me

Psalm 139

Turn to Psalm 139. Psalm 139 is a psalm of confidence. That means the words describe our confidence in God. We're telling God how well he takes care of us. Psalm 23 is the most famous psalm of confidence. "The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not lack." To say that and mean it takes confidence.

Worship psalms and confidence psalms are the foundation of our faith. Our confidence in God is not built on lament psalms, it's the other way around.

The lament and complaining psalms are built on our confidence and worship. It is because we confidently worship God that hard things don't make sense. It is because of our confidence in God's care that long painful troubles confuse us. Out of that confusion we complain to God with the lament psalms.

But at the core of our faith is our confident worship. That the foundation of our faith, that's how faith begins, and we know that at the end, when God is finished, confident worship will be all that's left. Lament will be gone! Good!

Psalm 139 has 24 verses, and it divides nicely into four stanzas of six verses each. We will go with that.

The basic themes of these four stanzas are not complicated. 1 God knows me, 2 God is with me, 3 God made me, and 4 So am loyal to God. I am using the NLT today because I thought it expressed this psalm so well.

First verse: *O LORD, you have searched my heart and you know me.*

There are two things going on here. One, we learn that God searches and knows each one of us. Let's read vv1–2 to get a better feel for that:

O LORD, you have searched my heart and you know me.

² *You know when I sit down or stand up. You know my thoughts even when I'm far away.*

God has searched each one of us, and knows us very well. That's one of the two things in this psalm. But the psalm is not **God telling us** how well he knows each one of us. The psalm is **telling God** how well he knows me. That's the second thing: each one of us says this to God ourselves.

*O LORD, you have searched **my** heart and you know **me**.* God wants each of us to say this for ourselves, so we will, right now. [Lead the congregation to speak this out loud.]

O LORD, you have searched Ed's heart and you know Ed. Now each of us will put our own name in this and say it out loud. It will sound funny, but God will hear each of us. [do so]

This psalm does teach us about God. He knows me, he's with me, he made me. But it requires us to say this to God ourselves. "You, God, know me, You are with me."

When we're sitting alone reading this, "you know me" is quite different than "he knows me." So when you read it alone, read it out loud, so your eyes see the words, your mouth says the words, and your ears hear you say it. That's the way to read a psalm like this.

I will now read the first three stanzas, to v18, and you understand yourself saying these things to God as I read.

¹ *O LORD, you have searched my heart and you know me.*

² *You know when I sit down or stand up. You know my thoughts even when I'm far away.*

³ *You see me when I travel and when I rest at home. You know everything I do.*

⁴ *You know what I am going to say even before I say it, LORD.*

⁵ *You go before me and follow me. You place your hand of blessing on my head.*

⁶ *Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too great to understand!*

Now we get to "you are with me."

⁷ *I can never escape from your Spirit! I can never get away from your presence!*

⁸ *If I go up to heaven, you are there; if I go down to the grave, you are there.*

⁹ *If I ride the wings of the morning, if I dwell by the farthest oceans,*

¹⁰ *even there your hand will guide me, and your right hand will hold me fast.*

¹¹ *I could ask the darkness to hide me and the light around me to become night—*

¹² *but even in darkness I cannot hide from you.*

To you the night shines as bright as day. Darkness and light are the same to you.

Now the third stanza, "you made me."

¹³ *You made all the inner parts of my body, and knit me together in my mother's womb.*

¹⁴ *Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex!*

Your works are wonderful—how well I know it.

¹⁵ *You watched me as I was being formed in the secret place,
as I was woven together in the dark of the womb.*

¹⁶ *You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book.
Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed.*

¹⁷ *How precious are your thoughts about me, O God. They cannot be numbered!*

¹⁸ *I can't even count them; they outnumber the grains of sand!*

And when I wake up, you are still with me!

God wants to hear me say this to him myself, and God wants to hear you say this to him yourself.

No other psalm so thoroughly parades God's care for each and every one of us, each individual on our own. In the ancient world they sometimes wondered about their different gods, if there were gods that knew everything, or had all power, or were present everywhere. Some others beside Israel and the church understood their god to know all and go everywhere.

What they do not have, though, and what is unique to the God of the Bible, is that such a great, all-knowing, and powerful God would also have so much interest in each one of his people, so much energy and compassion for every single one of us, so much concern for each individual. No one else even thought they had such a God. It is consistent in the Bible, especially Psalm 139.

Jesus said, "Don't you get it? Your Father in heaven even knows the number of hairs on your head (Luke 12:7)!" Psalm 139, to my thinking like no other psalm, calls us to tell God that we know this, we get it. Now let's go over the stanzas a little more carefully.

One: You know me (vv1–6)

¹ *O LORD, you have searched my heart and you know me.*

² *You know when I sit down or stand up. You know my thoughts even when I'm far away.*

³ *You see me when I travel and when I rest at home. You know everything I do.*

⁴ *You know what I am going to say even before I say it, LORD.*

⁵ *You go before me and follow me. You place your hand of blessing on my head.*

⁶ *Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too great to understand!*

God does just "know" as in having all the facts, like a computer that has incredible memory storage. God is interested. He *wants* to know. He knows because he *searched*. "You have searched my heart and you know me." He searched because he wanted to know all about us.

You go before me and you follow me. He always goes in front of us, preparing the way, and he always follows us, keeping an eye on things. You place your hand of blessing on my head. God knowing us so well is good for us. It brings us his favour and his help.

He knows what I am going to say before I say it. That's pretty good, because sometimes time I don't know what I'll say before I said it!

⁶ *Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too great to understand.* God, it is mind-boggling, it is too much, my mind cannot grasp it, God, that such a great God as you is so tuned in to me.

Two: God, you are with me (vv7–12)

⁷ *I can never escape from your Spirit! I can never get away from your presence!*

⁸ *If I go up to heaven, you are there; if I go down to the grave, you are there.*

⁹ *If I ride the wings of the morning, if I dwell by the farthest oceans,*
¹⁰ *even there your hand will guide me, and your right hand will hold me fast.*
¹¹ *I could ask the darkness to hide me and the light around me to become night—*
¹² *but even in darkness I cannot hide from you.*
To you the night shines as bright as day. Darkness and light are the same to you.

Something unexpected happens in the second stanza. We tell God what happens when we try to run away from him. Sometimes we'd actually like to get away from God. We don't know if the psalmist really feels like that, or if the psalm just means we can't get away even if we wanted to.

Jonah tried to flee from God's presence but could not. This second stanza sounds just like Jonah. He went to the farthest ocean, even the bottom of the ocean, but God was there. Even if we'd actually like to flee from God, we cannot, even if we'd like to hide, we cannot. That's actually a relief to me. On a bad day I might want to get away from God, and I'm pleased to know that even then it will not work. He will still be right there.

Sometimes we don't like God much, and we don't think he likes us either. Then we might want to flee God. But he's not after us to trap us. V10 – *Even there your hand will guide, your right hand will hold me fast.* Even if we are trying to escape God, we cannot, and that's good because his hand is there to guide us and help us, to hold on to us and keep us from danger.

We might want to run from God because of the first stanza. Some parts of the first stanza made me wince a bit. Do I really want a holy God who has searched out *everything* in my heart, who knows *everything* about me, and who sees *everything* I do? Maybe that's why we want to run.

But listen, this is David. David has things to hide, too. He composed this psalm for Israelites to use in worship, and they also had dark corners in their hearts and lives. In this psalm, it is good for us that God is so interested in us and knows each of us so well. It is the best thing that could happen to us. In this psalm, we are grateful and impressed that God is like this. We praise this God, and love him.

Keep in mind, as well, that people in biblical times did not have nearly the introspective conscience that we now have. Neither in Old Testament times nor in New Testament times were God's people so steadily aware of their shortcomings. They were not better than we are, about the same, but they thought a lot less about their failures. So "God knows everything about me" was not as likely to trouble them.

One more thing: verse 8: *If I go down to the grave, you are there.* Death will separate us from a lot of things, but it will not separate us from God. He's not leaving. Where we go, he goes with us, and that includes death and the grave.

Three: God, you made me (vv13–18)

This stanza is mostly about God being at work when we were in our mother's womb.

¹³ *You made all the inner parts of my body, and you knit me together in my mother's womb.*

¹⁴ *Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex!*

Your works are wonderful—how well I know it.

¹⁵ *You watched me as I was being formed in the secret place,
as I was woven together in the dark of the womb.*

¹⁶ *You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book.
Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed.*

¹⁷ *How precious are your thoughts about me, O God. They cannot be numbered!*

¹⁸ *I can't even count them; they outnumber the grains of sand!
And when I wake up, you are still with me!*

You knit me together in my mother's womb. The first two stanzas mention God's hand on us. "Hand" is not mentioned in this third stanza, but there's no other way to take that line. *You knit me together, you put me together, in my mother's womb.* Each of us needs to imagine God's hands working inside our mother's womb day and night, shaping and creating us in there.

I am not sure what to do with the great number of God's thoughts. Here's how I paraphrase vv17–18. *How precious to me are your thoughts, God. How wonderful, what goes on in your mind. I cannot even begin to imagine all that happens in your thoughts. And when I wake up, I am still with you.* (I love that last line, but I've no idea how the psalmist got there.)

"God, you know me completely. God, you are with me everywhere, even when I run from you. God, you were making me, putting me together, from the moment I was conceived."

Four: My Loyalty to God (vv 19–24)

Verses 19–22: "If they are your enemies, God, they are my enemies too."

¹⁹ *O God, if only you would destroy the wicked! Get out of my life, you murderers!*

²⁰ *They blaspheme you; your enemies misuse your name.*

²¹ *O Lord, shouldn't I hate those who hate you? Shouldn't I despise those who oppose you?*

²² *Yes, I hate them with total hatred, for your enemies are my enemies.*

"God, they blaspheme you, they misuse your name, they hate you, they rebel against you, so I want nothing to do with them, I make them my enemies because they are your enemies."

If somebody is hard on a person I love, my wife or my children or a close friend, I want to clobber them. If somebody makes themselves an enemy of someone I love, they have made me their enemy too. In this psalm, we give that kind of loyalty to God.

Jesus calls us to treat everyone with respect, even to be good to our enemies, so we will do that. But if they are God's enemies they are indeed also our enemies, and let's not pretend otherwise.

And then the psalm ends with on a note of humility, of self-consciousness of sin. What about the parts of me that might offend God?

²³*Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.*

²⁴*See if anything offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life.*

The psalm begins, "you have searched me and you know me," and at the end we ask God for that again. "God, search me, look carefully, I don't ever want to be your enemy, I don't ever want to be among the wicked. See if I am going in wrong ways, take me away from those, lead me in the right way, lead me to live in the way that lasts forever."

Instead of running from God, let's ask him to lead us in his path of life.

Conclusion

This psalm leads every follower of God to tell God: "God, you have searched me and you know everything about me. God, you are always with me, you never leave me, wherever I go your hand guides me, your right hand holds me tight. God, you made me, you knit me together in my mother's womb, your eyes saw my unformed body."

Knowing these things are true is half way there. But we are not using this psalm until each one of us actually says this to God ourselves. God wants us to say these things to him with confidence. He hopes that we'll do that. Amen.

PRAYER: LORD God, you have searched me and you know me, everything about me. You are always with me, you never leave me. I cannot escape you. Wherever I go your hand guides me, your right hand holds me tight. LORD God, you made me, you knit me together in my mother's womb, your eyes saw my unformed body. God, I am on your side, I line up behind you, your enemies are my enemies. See if I am going in any wrong ways, God, take me away from those. Lead me in the right way, lead me to live in the way that lasts forever. Amen.

BENEDICTION: May God himself, the God of peace, make you holy through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it. Amen. Go in God's peace to love and serve the Lord.