

**PLEASE DON'T READ THESE NOTES UNTIL YOU HAVE COMPLETED YOUR LESSON.
YOU WILL ROB YOURSELF OF THE JOY OF DISCOVERY!**

**In case you don't have time to discuss all the questions,
be sure to ask your group which questions
they want discuss.**

DISCUSSION STARTER

- How does it make you feel when someone obviously takes the time to really get to know you?

PREPARATION

1. Before you read **Psalm 139**, ask the Holy Spirit to teach you and guide you into all truth (John 16:13). We have been using the prayer, *Holy Spirit, think through me until your ideas become my ideas*, or King David's prayer, *Open my eyes to see the wonderful truths in your law*.
2. Read **Psalm 139** slowly and thoughtfully in at least two translations. As you read and reread, mark any words or phrases that are meaningful to you and put a question mark by anything that you don't understand.

Read Psalm 51 out loud

Reader A: Odd verses 1-21

Reader B: Even verses 2-22

All: Verses 23-24

3. If you had to memorize a verse (or verses) from this Psalm, which one(s) would you choose? Write out the verse(s) below.
Have several share

QUESTIONS

GOD KNOWS WHO I AM – PSALM 139:1-6

4. Put into your own words the specific things that God knows about you from **Psalm 139:1-5**.

God knows when we sit and rise

God knows all my thoughts

God knows when I'm up and when I'm resting – wherever I am

Everything I say – even before I say it

Precedes and follows me – He is always with me and around me

5. How does David feel about God's total knowledge of him? **139:6**
It is too much – too wonderful – he can't take it in – He's blown away!

How do *you* feel about God's total knowledge of you? Why? Have several share

6. Which of the statements in **139:1-5** do you find most comforting? Why?
Good question for discussion – encourage several to share

Which one makes you most uncomfortable? Why?

We love being known – but intimacy is sometimes uncomfortable because we are revealed for what we really are.

♥ Why does it matter that God knows you so intimately? What difference does it make? Why does David make such a big deal over it? Why would the all-powerful, all-knowing, supreme ruler of the universe be interested in me – one of billions? Yet God is! It gives us great significance. We say, "It's not what you know but WHO you know". In this case it's WHO knows us!

♥ What are some advantages of God knowing everything about you?

I don't have to explain myself; I don't have to be worried about being misunderstood; I don't have to pretend to be something I'm not; I don't have to hide anything; I don't have to worry that God might not love me if he really knew who I was – because He does know who I am!

♥ What are some words that would describe God if all you knew about him was found in **139:1-6**?

All-knowing, powerful, interested and loving, protective, wise – to name a few

7. What project or activity have you enjoyed doing, planning or making and then, even after your creation was completed, you continued to examine, enjoy, and appreciate it?

How does this concept of continuing to enjoy your handiwork or accomplishments, even after they are completed, apply to *you* and *your* Creator? What meaning does this give to David's words in **139:1**, "O Lord, you have searched (examined, investigated, explored) me . . ."

We enjoy working on something or making something, but even after it's completed, we still continue to enjoy it because of the creative efforts we put into it. Just as we like going back over something we have created, written, or done, so does God! God "searching" you is like us exploring and reviewing something we have created. It's like an artist enjoying her finished work. It's like an author reading her finished book and reveling in the craft of it and the clever use of words. God searching, investigating, exploring, examining us is the Creator marveling at all He has created! God made you and he enjoys watching you and admiring how you came together so nicely! He is enthralled with you because you are his creation. He likes his work! He marvels at the finished product. He takes delight in how you turned out!

And God wants you to take delight in what he has made too! That is why it is important for you to know who you really are because that essential you is his creation and everything He creates is good and beautiful and wonderful. You are the bouquet of flowers that He has grown and arranged and now he enjoys looking at you and enjoying how you came together as he notices your intricacies.

GOD KNOWS WHERE I AM – PSALM 139:7-12

8. What do you think is the purpose of David's questions in **139:7**?

It doesn't seem he is actually trying to get away from God. Rather, he is asking a rhetorical question (a question that does not require an answer) to make his point. By asking the question, he is making the point that we cannot get away from God.

9. What three sets of extreme opposites does David use to make his point that God is everywhere.

Heaven and "the place of the dead"

East (the sun rises in the east (wings of the dawn) and west (the Mediterranean Sea was to the west for David)

Darkness and light – God is in both

♥ What are some reasons why a person might want to get away from God?

♥ *How* do people try to get away from God?

♥ Have you ever tried to get away from God? Why?

♥ Even if we know we cannot get away from God, what do we sometimes do to hold God at a distance?

Knowing God and having God know us is wonderful, but with the relationship also comes responsibility. We sometimes hold God at a distance because we don't want to give us control to Him.

10. How would you *expect* God to treat the person who tries to get away from him?

Some answers might be with discipline , punishment or just ignoring us

How *does* God treat the person who tries to get away from him? **139:10**

Even there he guides us and holds us fast, giving us strength; God doesn't give up on us just because we are not always faithful to Him.

11. What does **139:11-12** say about God's ability to transform the most hopeless of situations?

He can take any dark, painful situation in our life and turn it into light – something useful and good.

♥ What dark situation in your life needs to be brought into God's light?

♥ Think of a time you felt all alone. Did it help (or would it have helped) to know that God was with you? Why or why not?

♥ What are some words that would describe God if all you knew about him was found in **139:7-12**?

Omnipresent (always everywhere); faithful and kind; big, powerful, vast; wise, nurturing

GOD KNOWS WHAT I AM – PSALM 139:13-18

12. Why does God know you so well? **139:13**

Because he designed, planned and created me!

13. According to **139:13-16**, when did God first establish a relationship with each of us?

Before we were born!

What significance does this have for the unborn? If we really believe the truth of this Psalm, it is hard to deny that the unborn are persons, creations of God. It is because of scriptures like Psalm, that Christ-followers usually come to the conclusion that taking the life of an unborn baby is wrong.

In a group of the size of GTBS, there probably are women who have had an abortion at some point in their life. We speak the truth in love and gentleness. We must all remember that no matter what is in our past, (like David in Psalm 51) God will **forgive, cleanse and work everything for good** if we repent and hand our failures to him. We hold out hope and love to the one who may be hurting over past decisions. *"Because of the Lord's great love, we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail; they are new every morning. Great is Your Faithfulness!"* (Lamentations 2:22-23)

14. What two similar images or word pictures does David use in **139:13** and **15** when he speaks of God creating him? **Knit and woven together**

What insight do these images give you about your creation?

We are a work of art that took preparation and planning. (Martha Weber described this well in her teaching drawing an analogy between knitting a project and our creation. Knitting is a process that takes planning and requires a pattern. We were birthed from an idea in God's mind and were made for a purpose.)

♥ Why does David thankfully praise God in **138:14**? What does this verse tell you about how you should view our own existence? **He praises God that he is wonderfully complex. He rejoices in his existence and who he is because God is his Creator!**

♥ What things about yourself do you have difficulty accepting, even to the point of questioning your Creator? Is there anything in the Psalm that helps you in this dilemma? **If you small group is a "safe place", this question can lead to good discussion and insight where you can help each other.**

15. Read **139:16** in all four translations. What does God know about your future and what impact do you think this has on your ability to make choices?

God has a plan and purpose for each life that he creates. (**Ephesians 2:10** - For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.) We, of course, must cooperate with God's plan and purpose and we certainly can choose to go our own way. But no matter what we do, nothing takes God by surprise; he knows the future as well as he knows the past. Even if we go our own way, he promises we can rediscover and live out our God-given purpose if we repent and come back into his arms of love.

16. Read **139:17-18** in all four translations. What are two possible meanings for these verses?
Either God is always thinking **about** us or he is **giving** us his thoughts (communicating with us).

♥ Regardless of the way you interpret **verses 17-18**, what is the significance of these verses?
Whether God's thoughts are TO me (communicating with me) or his thoughts are ABOUT me, it is obvious that we have great value to God and we are always on his mind! His thoughts TO us or ABOUT us are so vast that they cannot be counted; they outnumber the grains of sand.

♥ How does **139:13-18** make you feel about yourself and your value to God?

♥ What are some words that would describe God if all you knew about him was found in **139:13-18**?
Creative, powerful, loving, personal, gentle, tender, all-knowing . . .

♥ How does David describe the people who choose *not* to acknowledge the truths presented in this Psalm? (**139:19-22**) Why does he have such negative feelings towards them?

David is describing people who are not just ignorant of who God is and what he has done, but of people who have knowledge of the truth, but they choose not to believe it. Instead, they go their own way and live life the way they choose. They are enemies of God and David counts them as his enemies too.

It may seem that David is being harsh here, but he knows that people like this will scoff at the truth expressed in this Psalm, as they will try to pull David away from God. Ask your group if they have friends or family who try to do this to them. Sometimes those closest to us can be very influential and manipulative in trying to pull us away from our faith in God. Often our lifestyle and beliefs make them uncomfortable.

17. Why is David's prayer in **139:23-24** an appropriate response to the wonderful truths of this Psalm?
Since God planned us and created us and knows us so well, it seems appropriate that we ask him to search us so that we can know ourselves as well as God does – especially when it comes to anything in our life that would offend our loving Creator. David wants to make sure NOTHING interferes with God's plan and purpose for his life.

18. Since David has already acknowledged that God knows everything about him, what is his purpose in asking God to *search him and know his heart*?

David knows that our hearts often deceive us. When we ask God to search us, we are asking him to gently expose things about us and our hearts that we would not be able to see with our own insight. It takes a supernatural work to expose the things of the heart. God wants to reveal hidden things, that once they come to light, will lead to health and healing. God sees into the deep places of our heart and knows what is preventing us from drawing closer to him and experiencing his love. When he searches and examines us, these "engrained habits of sin" are exposed and only then are we able to receive forgiveness, cleansing and healing. Forgiveness and cleansing always make new places for God's love to take up residence in our hearts!

It is also important that God does the searching of our hearts because Satan is called the "accuser" and he would love to make us feel guilty about our failures and keep us from coming to God to receive forgiveness and cleansing. He would rather we wallow in our guilt. We dare not search our hearts by ourselves! We let the Holy Spirit do the searching and revealing.

- ♥ Why does God need to search our hearts instead of us searching our own hearts?
- ♥ If God points out an "offensive way" in you, what will you do about it?

RESPONSE:

19. The power of **Psalm 139** is not in *knowing* what it says, but in *believing* what it says.

Knowledge does very little for us. To believe means we put our trust in God's Word and we act or live as if it is truth, regardless of what our feelings or experiences are.

Look back over this Psalm put into your own words five facts about God and his relationship to you. For example: *No matter where I am, God is always with me;* or *God personally put me together in the my mother's womb.* Choose facts that are meaningful for you!

(Have several share their statements)

Do you really believe the facts (God's Truth) that you listed above? At GTBS, we have defined *faith* as *choosing to believe God's Word (promises) regardless of our feelings or circumstances.* In other words, if my circumstances and feelings contradict what God says is true, I choose, by an act of my will, to believe and put my trust in God's truth instead of what my feelings or circumstances may be telling me. The world says, "Seeing is believing". God says, "Believe me and then you'll see". If we want to experience God's truth and reap its benefits in our lives, we must first believe it and put our trust in it. Then, and only then, will we experience what God has for us.

20. If you are willing to believe the facts you have listed above regardless of what you feel about yourself and your circumstances, write a short prayer to God telling him you choose to believe the truths of this Psalm.

We may not FEEL loved, valued, special – the apple of God's eye. It could be that others may not treat us according to our worth. Regardless, we choose to believe and live according to the truths in this Psalm. In prayer, we tell God we believe his awesome words to us.

21. Because you have chosen to *believe* God's truth, what difference will the truth of **Psalm 139** make in your life? Write short answers to the questions below. Be as specific as possible.

Discuss in your small group how the truths given in Psalm 139 can be applied to each of the situations below. Feelings always come from our thoughts and beliefs. If we believe and act upon the truth, our feelings will follow.

How will the truth of Psalm 139 effect you the next time:

You feel unloved or insignificant?

You fail at something?

You sin?

You are treated unkindly or unfairly?

You feel lonely or abandoned?

The ones you love the most seem oblivious to your deepest needs?

You feel like a misfit because of your appearance or your personality or your position in life?

Pray Psalm 139 for someone else. Who is on your heart today? Are you concerned over a rebellious or absent child? A disbelieving spouse? A loved one who is ill? Do you need reassurance that God cares about those you love? **Read and pray Psalm 139**, inserting *the name of your loved one* when you come to the words *me, my* or *I*. Try it! You will be comforted and encouraged! **This is a powerful exercise; it is even a good way to pray for our enemies!**