



A Scary and Wonderful Psalm

A Brief Study of Psalm 139 (Student Guide)

A Frightening Psalm?

Psalm 139 is very comforting, but it can be a little frightening as well!

Read vv. 1-12. What could be frightening about these verses?

Discuss some things people do that God would not like to see. Or, getting a little personal, what about some things you do?

Intimate and Delicate Language

Read v. 13a. God is not watching as “Big Brother.” What is His perspective, however?

Discuss what might be meant by the intimate phrase, “inward parts.”

Read v. 13b. What are some pictures that you get from these words?

So, does God have tiny little knitting needles inside a woman’s uterus?

If you have a scarf or cap knitted by grandma, what gives that scarf its value?

What does this verse say about the value of every human life?

The Awe of It All

Read v. 14. David was awed by this. Are you aware of how amazing and miraculous you are? Have someone look up some of the amazing facts about the human body and share with the group in the next study.

You may want to go to the following website and watch the presentation *Fearfully and Wonderfully Made* by Dr. David Mention of Answers in Genesis.

<http://www.answersingenesis.org/media/video/ondemand/fearfully/fearfully-wonderfully-made>

Perhaps you could watch it as a group.



But what about when a child appears to us to be not so “fearfully and wonderfully made” and there are severe “abnormalities”?

Read and discuss what **Isaiah 45:11** says about this.

Read v. 15.

This all brings David back to God’s intimate knowledge of you and me. God saw us and knew us before we were born. He was way ahead of ultrasound!

David is obviously talking about the womb here and again uses the imagery of the weaver, “intricately woven.” But how does that relate to the “depths of the earth”? (Hint: see Genesis 2:7)

How does the idea of God creating and knowing every baby in the womb impact the abortion debate for the Christian?

Read v. 16. Again we read of God’s knowledge of you from very the very beginning. He knew you as an “unformed substance.” In other words, He knew you before you even looked like you! How does this speak to those who might defend abortion by saying things like, “It’s only a tiny speck” or “It doesn’t even look like a baby”?

An additional thought comes out here. What does it mean that God wrote your days in His book “when as yet there was none of them”?

The Comfort of Being Watched

Read vv. 17-18. David is overwhelmed by thinking about the thoughts of God! But what is one thing David is sure of?

That brings us back to the idea that God is watching over you as your Creator, and not as “Big Brother.” Yes, He sees and knows everything you do and that’s not always good! But where is our hope? (John 3:16; Romans 6:1-4; 1 John 1:7-9)

How does Luke 1:31 relate to this and our discussion of Psalm 139?



Therefore, it's not frightening to think about God knowing us and watching us. In fact, it is very comforting. He sees you as the work of His hands. He sees you as reclaimed by the outstretched hands of His Son. You are indeed precious to Him! Wow!

Facing a Terrible Reality
Read vv. 19-22

It almost seems like this section has nothing to do with the first portion of the Psalm. David is very angry in these verses. What is he angry about?

Although Psalm 139 describes so amazingly God's involvement in human life from the very beginning, it also provides a platform upon which to face a terrible reality. Not everyone gets it. Not everyone sees the preciousness of human life in the womb. There are those who favor invading this "knitting room" of God and killing the life God creates there. Abortion has been around so long that many have become desensitized to what it really is and does. Should this cause us anger as it did for David?

How should we deal with those who "don't get it"? (See Ephesians 4:15 and Romans 12:14-21.)





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A Brief Study of Psalm 139 (Teacher Guide)

A Frightening Psalm?

Psalm 139 is very comforting, but it can be a little frightening as well!

Read vv. 1-12. What could be frightening about these verses?

Discuss some things people do that God would not like to see. Or, getting a little personal, what about some things you do?

Don't make people answer the second one if they don't want to! The point is, God knows all about you! He knows where you are, what you're doing, what you're thinking, and what you're going to say before you say it (v.1-4)! You also realize that there is no place you can go to escape this all-knowing God (5-12). It is almost like Psalm 139 is God's version of George Orwell's 1984 poster, "Big Brother is Watching You"! People may want to point out some of the comforting aspects of these verses, but we will get to that.

Intimate and Delicate Language

Read v. 13a. God is not watching as "Big Brother." What is His perspective, however?

Discuss what might be meant by the intimate phrase, "inward parts."

God watches as your Creator. God knows you because He made you. Here David uses very intimate language. "You formed my inward parts" is a Hebrew idiom that could be translated, "You made my kidneys"! The kidneys were the last organs removed in the sacrificial disemboweling. They denote the very depth of who you are—your "inner being." Clearly, God was intimately involved in making you who you are from the beginning.

Read vv. 13b. What are some pictures that you get from these words?

So, does God have tiny little knitting needles inside a woman's uterus?

If you have a scarf or cap knitted by grandma, what gives that scarf its value?

What does this verse say about the value of every human life?

David switches from intimate to delicate language. "You knitted me together in my mother's womb" (v.13). "Knitted" means to "cover" or "fence in." There is a progression. God created your very essence (your inner being), and then wove or knitted a covering for "you"—your body. This also seems to confirm the biological process for procreation that God established. You were uniquely "you" at the moment of your conception. Cell division begins and your "covering"—your body—develops.

We know, of course, that God does not have tiny little knitting needles that He uses inside a uterus. However, guided by the Holy Spirit, David paints a picture of God's intimate and delicate involvement in the formation of life from the moment of conception.



As many people know, weaving or knitting is delicate work. It takes concentration to make sure the right strands go in the right place to produce the pattern that will lead to a recognizable whole. The scarf that your grandma knit is not only beautiful because of the amazing pattern of the woven threads, it is beautiful and valuable because of the hands that did the knitting. Your life is amazingly beautiful and valuable, not only because of the miraculous complexity of your body, but because of the hands of your Creator.

The Awe of It All

Read v. 14. David was awed by this. Are you aware of how amazing and miraculous you are? Have someone look up some of the amazing facts about the human body and share with the group in the next study.

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But what about when a child appears to us to be not so “fearfully and wonderfully made” and there are severe “abnormalities”?

Read and discuss what **Isaiah 45:11** says about this.

It doesn't matter what you look like, or how good you are at math, or whether all your parts still work! You are the work of God's hands! As such, don't ever question your value. Don't ever question anyone's value. Value comes from what God does in us and through us and not from what we are able to do or not do. To think that God cannot be at work in a child with disabilities is an insult to the power and purpose of God. From the moment of conception, God has been involved in your life and He gives you value!

Read v. 15.

This all brings David back to God's intimate knowledge of you and me. God saw us and knew us before we were born. He was way ahead of ultrasound!

David is obviously talking about the womb here and again uses the imagery of the weaver, “intricately woven.” But how does that relate to the “depths of the earth”? (Hint: see Genesis 2:7)

How does the idea of God creating and knowing every baby in the womb impact the abortion debate for the Christian?

“Depths of the earth” is a reference to the womb. Adam was made from the earth (Genesis 2:7). So the idea of earth, dark, underground, secret place, womb, beginning of life—these would all go together for the Hebrew. David's point is clear: God knew us even before we were born. This raises the abortion issue way above the political or social realms. Abortion destroys the intricate work of God's hands. Abortion destroys someone known by God.



Read v. 16. Again we read of God's knowledge of you from very the very beginning. He knew you as an "unformed substance." In other words, He knew you before you even looked like you! How does this speak to those who might defend abortion by saying things like, "It's only a tiny speck" or "It doesn't even look like a baby"?

An additional thought comes out here. What does it mean that God wrote your days in His book "when as yet there was none of them"?

Our size or how we look does not negate our humanity or our value as the work of God's hands. We are all different sizes. We all look different at different stages of our development. You do not look the same now as you did when you were 2-years-old. We look different at eighty than we do at forty. The point is you were you from the very moment of conception, known and loved and valued by God.

God not only knew you while you were being formed inside your mother, God had a purpose for your life. Indeed, it is an eternal purpose. God would have all to be saved. God wants every human being to be called into an eternal relationship with Him.

You many want to lead some discussion here about what happens to the souls of aborted babies. Theologically it is the same discussion we have about the souls of babies who were stillborn or died before baptism. We commend these souls to the mercy and grace of God in Christ. We are comforted by His ability to bestow faith even in the womb if He so desires as He did for he unborn John the Baptist (Luke 1:15, 41, 44). We must avoid the extremes such as, "Every aborted baby goes to hell" or "Every aborted baby is with Jesus." We simply do not know. Be sensitive to the fact that there may be women who have had miscarriages or stillbirths or abortions in your audience.

The Comfort of Being Watched

Read vv. 17-18. David is overwhelmed by thinking about the thoughts of God! But what is one thing David is sure of?

You are always in the thoughts of God. You have been from the very beginning of your life. God knows you because He was intimately involved in your formation. The reason God is always present in your life is because what He made is precious to him.

That brings us back to the idea that God is watching over you as your Creator, and not as "Big Brother." Yes, He sees and knows everything you do and that's not always good! But where is our hope? (John 3:16; Romans 6:1-4; 1 John 1:7-9)

How does Luke 1:31 relate to this and our discussion of Psalm 139?

Baptized into Christ, God sees you as cleansed and holy! Jesus took our place from the very beginning. He, too, grew and developed in the womb of His mother, Mary. His "taking the form of a servant" (Philippians 2:7) began at His conception. He needed to be knitted together, shaped, and formed as we were so He could take our place in life and in death. "And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" (Philippians 2:8).



This would be a good place to address the guilt and grief experienced by women and men involved in an abortion decision. Often they feel that this sin is too big to be forgiven. They feel the “frightening look” of God. Emphasize that God see us all cleansed through the blood of Christ regardless of the sin.

Therefore, it’s not frightening to think about God knowing us and watching us. In fact, it is very comforting. He sees you as the work of His hands. He sees you as reclaimed by the outstretched hands of His Son. You are indeed precious to Him! Wow!

Facing a Terrible Reality

Read vv. 19-22

It almost seems like this section has nothing to do with the first portion of the Psalm. David is very angry in these verses. What is he angry about?

It appears that as David has developed this picture of an awesome, all-knowing God who is intimately involved in the creation of every life that he is angry with those who just don’t get it. Those who do not know God in this way mock Him and rise against Him.

Although Psalm 139 describes so amazingly God’s involvement in human life from the very beginning, it also provides a platform upon which to face a terrible reality. Not everyone gets it. Not everyone sees the preciousness of human life in the womb. There are those who favor invading this “knitting room” of God and killing the life God creates there. Abortion has been around so long that many have become desensitized to what it really is and does. Should this cause us anger as it did for David?

Yes, it should anger us that the work of God’s hands is being treated so callously. When you assault life, you assault the Author and Redeemer of life. We can call this “righteous anger,” but we need to be careful. Our sinful nature can take over and even righteous anger can lead us to sin.

How should we deal with those who “don’t get it”? (See Ephesians 4:15 and Romans 12:14-21.)

In Ephesians 4, Paul is speaking to those within the Church. In order to grow together, the truth needs to be spoken to one another and always in love. There may be some within our congregations who don’t get it when it comes to the God-given value of human life. They need to hear the truth of God’s Word applied to the life issue. Screaming and yelling will not get us anywhere.

In Romans, Paul is describing the marks of the true Christian. Attitudes of some in our church and in our society may anger us and we may be appalled by the evil of abortion, but our approach needs to be one of truth and prayer and love. We are equipped with the Gospel. That changes hearts and minds. People with changed hearts and minds can bring change to our society.

Use vv. 23-24 as a closing prayer.