

## **You Can Know God When You Let God Know You**

### **Psalm 139**

*The secret to understanding ourselves is to know the God who knows us.*

Have you ever asked yourself how many times you are photographed in a day? When you walk into the bank or return your cart to the corral in the parking lot, somewhere there is a camera marking your every move. Our world is full of blue lights on street corners and whirring cameras mounted on walls. Yet David tells us here in Psalm 139 that at every moment of the day, we are under a much higher scrutiny. He reveals that the secret to understanding ourselves is to know the God who knows us. We shouldn't be surprised.

**God knows you better than you know yourself.**

**Psalm 139:1-4**

**“O LORD, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O LORD.”**

The feelings we have when told someone is watching us varies depending on who that person is to us, what level of trust we have in the video eye, the purpose of the “watching” or even our own motives in being filmed. However, there does appear to be one constant. Anyone in an environment of cameras, while at first aware with any or all the above feelings, will soon forget and ignore the cameras. The feeling of being watched only rises to the surface when someone reminds them or, after some violation, they realize they were just “caught on tape.”

David is telling God that at this moment in his life he realizes that God watches him always. He is confessing that he may have not given that much consideration in the past (and we know he will not in the future as well) but for the moment he wants God to know he is ok with this intrusion.

There is a show on TV called “Lie to Me” which highlights a company that specializes in reading body language and voice inflections for truth or lies. Having taught communications I know the difficulty in reading such signs. Too often the reader brings his or her bias to the process so a large man is assumed to be aggressive and a blond woman to be flighty. In this case David reminds himself that God is basing his observations on outward signs alone. He knows every aspect of our body functions, brain scanning and thought processing.

When something comes out of your mouth and you realize you said it out loud – God know what was coming. If you want to keep those things from coming out of your mouth you want to first acknowledge the presence of God in your brain – by seeing Him in your very being you have more than a video presentation – now you are associating with the producer of your life.

So why do we need to pray?

People tell me that I am a fairly transparent "read" in meetings. They say they can tell when I'm bored. They can especially tell when I'm irritated. Then there is my wife Jane, who has lived with me long enough to read the signs that other people can't read. She usually knows what I am thinking even when I am trying to mask it. But the knowledge of God has of us goes one step further.

If God knows what I'm going to say before I say it, why do I need to pray? Why doesn't he just look into the future, anticipate my request, and grant the answer before I put it into words? Is prayer some kind of game? Is God teasing me—like someone who holds my desire behind his back, waiting for me to use just the right words, all the while knowing what it is that I want and knowing that he can grant my desire? The trouble with this view is not just that it reflects an unworthy view of God. Its root problem is that it misunderstands the nature of prayer.

The main reason we pray is not to get what we want. Well, I have to confess my prayers too often resemble a grocery list than a conversation, but, in truth there is more to prayer than the answer. Prayer is a relational encounter.

In his book entitled *Beginning to Pray*, Anthony Bloom warns there are many times when we are ready to pray to receive from God, but we are not ready to receive God. "We want something from him but him not at all." Bloom warns when we pray most passionately and vulnerably it usually means that the subject matter of your prayer matters to us.

We do not overcome this huge barrier between us and God – or God and us – by changing posture or language. We want to see God as David sees Him —as a God who knows me better than I know myself. Even when I don't know what I am going to say or can grasp my own thoughts I know God does.

**God is with you when no one else wants to be with you.**

**Psalm 139:5-12**

**“You hem me in—behind and before; you have laid your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain. Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. If I say, ‘Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me,’ even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you.”**

Now the image of God shifts to give us a new angle. From this angle God is not just observing us out there but one who is close to us – even touching us. He is so close to us that there is no way for us to lose Him, much less for Him to lose us. David demonstrates this by pretending to run from God only to discover Him at every turn. Flight from God is impossible because anywhere we might go God is already there. Now David makes the more important point. Not only is God with him wherever he goes, but God is also guiding him. Verse 10 says: "even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast." When God is my friend the thought comforts me but if I am living a life that makes me God's enemy the truth frightens me. There have been many times in my life when the hand on my shoulder was a comfort and the same hand at a different time was foreboding.

I believe you can tell a lot about where a person's moral choices are from how they receive your touch. When my children were little and took direction without question they were quick to hug and be touched. Often choosing to be close to me in times of trouble – even when being disciplined, but, with age came a desire for independence and my touch, my very presence, became a challenge to their decisions and choices. They stiffened against the constraints Judi and I placed on them, just as they did my embrace.

The rules and standards that we saw as an expression of love and a means of protection, they mistook for a prison.

So which is it for you, when it comes to God's strong hand of love? Is it a source of comfort to you or something that you stiffen against and resist? Does the inescapable presence of God make you feel protected? Is that steady footfall that you hear the mark of a faithful companion? A guide? A rear guard who's got your back? Or do you feel like God has laid siege to your soul? Do you see his relentless pursuit as the pursuit of an adversary?

When are ambivalent about that choice in our lives we would do well to hear the promise in verses 11-12, "If I say, 'Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me,' even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you."

God sees as clearly in the darkness as in the light is good news unless we are trying to run, hide, or otherwise obscure the true state of our heart and actions. With apologies to Abraham Lincoln, you may be able to fool all of the people some of the time and some of the people all the time, but, you will never be able to fool God any of the time. He sees you coming and going—because He is the author of life.

**God made you to fly not creep.  
Psalm 139:13-24**

**“For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.**

Verse 13 reads: "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb." The Hebrew word that the NIV translates as "created" in this verse is a word that means to "purchase" or "get." Like a master craftsman God is pictured as purchasing the material for our inner most – every detail of us – parts and putting them together so they work perfectly. No wonder he declares in verse 14 , "I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well."

This is a radically different worldview than the one that would see the unformed fetus as a blob of tissue. According to God's word, human conception is not an accidental process but an intentional one. The modernist looks at the human form as a machine, a mere collection of cells, or a consequence of random forces. But the Psalmist sees it as a work of God that includes the entire scope of his life. The same God who is at work in the womb continues to work in my life once I leave the womb. He saw me when I was unformed. He keeps a record of my days.

**How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand. When I awake, I am still with you.**

By the time we get to verses 17-18 ("How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand.

When I awake, I am still with you.") we understand the depth of David's gratitude. If you are having trouble seeing your life as meaningful maybe it is time to rethink your view of humanity.

If the human embryo is nothing more than a glob of tissue similar to a tumor then certainly it can be scraped away and discarded, or, treated like a commodity—something to be harvested for the benefit of others or something to be bought and sold in the market place. This drastically downgrades humanity from God's view but more immediately it downgrades life for us. If there is only tissue in the womb then what is there on the battle field, across the border, or, living in the noisy apartment above you?

If you do not value life while it is in the womb, how can you value it outside the womb? There may be a political aspect to life before birth but that is not my point here. My point is that when we attribute life to any other than God we have overstepped our moral boundaries. One cannot hold the unborn as tissue and claim to hold the adult as anything more than animal with speech capabilities.

How have we come to have such a low view of ourselves? The answer is a simple one: We lost sight of ourselves when we lost sight of God. It is God who gives us life. It is God who gives us purpose. It is God who gives us dignity. Rule God out of the equation and you have a mass of cells and little more. We do not learn of God by studying ourselves. We learn of ourselves by studying God.

**If only you would slay the wicked, O God! Away from me, you bloodthirsty men! They speak of you with evil intent; your adversaries misuse your name. Do I not hate those who hate you, O LORD, and abhor those who rise up against you? I have nothing but hatred for them; I count them my enemies.**

We would do well to follow David's path as he aligns himself with God's purposes, and he asks God to search him and differentiate him from the wicked. Verse 19-22 read: "If only you would slay the wicked, O God! Away from me, you bloodthirsty men! They speak of you with evil intent; your adversaries misuse your name. Do I not hate those who hate you, O Lord, and abhor those who rise up against you? I have nothing but hatred for them; I count them my enemies." We are embarrassed by his sentiment—David's words sound harsh to us—but that is only because we have lost our moral compass.

### **Memory Verse**

**Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."**

The Psalmist's uncomfortable words are a reminder that there really is such a thing as evil. And it is right to denounce evil. But those who denounce evil in others must be prepared to confront a more subtle enemy: they must be prepared to face the evil in themselves.

That's why the Psalmist concludes with a prayer for himself in verses 23-24: "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

### **Conclusion**

In a Christianity Today article entitled "Looking for Monsters," Kay Warren writes that the first time she visited Rwanda, she went expecting it to be easy to spot the monsters

who had perpetrated that country's terrible genocide in 1994. "What I found left me puzzled, and ultimately terrified," she writes.

Instead of finding leering, menacing creatures, I met men and women who looked and behaved a lot like me. They took care of their families, went to work, chatted with their neighbors, laughed, cried, prayed, and worshiped. Where were the monsters? Where were the evildoers capable of heinous acts? Slowly, with a deepening sense of dread, I realized the truth. There were no monsters in Rwanda, just people like you and me.

The good news is that the God who is your creator is also your redeemer. This God who knows you inside and out, the God who sees you coming and going, the God who is the architect of your soul, is also the architect of your salvation. He is the God who became flesh and dwelt among us in the person of Jesus Christ. He is the one who shed his blood. Your creator is also your redeemer—Jesus Christ: the only one who saves us from our sin.

### **Next Steps**

**Memorize Psalms 139:23-24**

**Confess my secret sin to God look for help from His church**

**Reset my personal boundaries to God's standards**

**Commit to spend the first fifteen minutes of every day with God.**

Author: More teens becoming 'fake' Christians

By John Blake, CNN

(CNN) -- If you're the parent of a Christian teenager, **Kenda Creasy Dean** has this warning:

Your child is following a "mutant" form of Christianity, and you may be responsible.

**Dean says more American teenagers are embracing what she calls "moralistic therapeutic deism." Translation: It's a watered-down faith that portrays God as a "divine therapist" whose chief goal is to boost people's self-esteem.**

Dean is a minister, a professor at Princeton Theological Seminary and the author of "**Almost Christian**," a new book that argues that many parents and pastors are unwittingly passing on this self-serving strain of Christianity.

She says **this "imposter" faith is one reason teenagers abandon churches.**

"If this is the God they're seeing in church, they are right to leave us in the dust," Dean says. "**Churches don't give them enough to be passionate about.**"

What traits passionate teens share

**National Study of Youth and Religion.**

The study, which included in-depth interviews with at **least 3,300 American teenagers between 13 and 17**, found that most American teens who called themselves Christian were indifferent and inarticulate about their faith.

The study included Christians of all stripes -- from Catholics to Protestants of both conservative and liberal denominations. Though **three out of four American teenagers claim to be Christian, fewer than half practice their faith**, only half deem it important, and most can't talk coherently about their beliefs, the study found.

**Many teenagers thought that God simply wanted them to feel good and do good --** what the study's researchers called "moralistic therapeutic deism."

No matter their background, Dean says committed Christian teens **share four traits: They have a personal story about God they can share, a deep connection to a faith community, a sense of purpose and a sense of hope about their future.**

"There are countless studies that show that religious teenagers **do better in school, have better relationships with their parents and engage in less high-risk behavior**," she says. "They do a lot of things that parents pray for."

Others practice a "**gospel of niceness**," where **faith is simply doing good and not ruffling feathers**. The Christian call to take risks, witness and sacrifice for others is muted, she says.

Corrie says she sees no shortage of teenagers who want to be inspired and make the world better. But **the Christianity some are taught doesn't inspire them "to change anything that's broken in the world."**

Teens want to be challenged; they want their tough questions taken on, she says.

Corrie, echoing the author of "Almost Christian," says **the gospel of niceness can't teach teens how to confront tragedy.**

**She says parents who perform one act of radical faith in front of their children convey more than a multitude of sermons and mission trips.**