

Precious in His Sight Psalm 139:1-18

There are some events in my life that I will never forget. I can clearly picture them in my mind's eye. Finishing the 1999 Detroit marathon, running through right field of Tiger Stadium and crossing home plate.

The day Robyn and I were married.

The day David was born and hearing the doctor say, "you have a little man cub."

Maybe you have some memories like that.

But there are also memories I would just as soon forget but can't.

They are painful memories.

Sobering memories.

Tragic memories.

There was the evening when I was 17 when Dad took us downstairs and told us the news that Mom had cancer.

There are the last words I heard my mom speak and then three days later succumbing to the heart ache I felt at her passing. They were bitter and wrenching sobs that poured out in that moment of feeling alone. But then from another room, David, who was only 5 years old, came in to comfort me. That's a memory I won't forget, but one I'm glad I have.

There is, however, another memory that I have etched in my brain that I wish would go away, one that will always be there. It's a memory that leaves a deep hole. I had just arrived at the church where I served as assistant pastor. After getting out of my car and retrieving my brief case from the back seat, a lady approached me from across the street where she lived. I didn't know her, but she clearly had something she wanted to talk about. I paused to listen. She didn't even introduce herself as she spoke words that I don't remember but was something along the lines of I want to show you what I found as she extended her hand toward me. What it was I will never, ever forget. In her hand was a piece of folded tinfoil and before I knew what was happening, she opened it up. Inside that piece of wrinkled wrapping were the severed arms and legs of a baby that had been aborted. She had gone

to the local abortion clinic and found them in the trash behind the building. They were treated as nothing more than a banana peel or a chicken bone. Shock, dismay, appalled doesn't begin to describe the emotions at seeing such a ghastly sight. That is something I will never forget.

There is the story of Maria nestled in the pages of *The Amazing Book of Stories* by Robert Petterson. Maria was the daughter of a cook, but she dreamed of living in high society. Those dreams were suspended when she married the valet of a nobleman at 16 and was widowed at 18. She married again. He was a musician from a prominent family. His parents, however, disdained her because she came from the serving class and referred to her as the chambermaid. They always considered her inferior. Soon after, her second marriage began to sour. She would bury five of her eight children. Her husband was more interested in visiting the local tavern than in practicing his music. She was often beaten and one night in a brutal rage, he raped her. Soon after she discovered that she was pregnant. Determined not to bring a child conceived by rape into her miserable world, she found a woman who sold concoctions that would induce a miscarriage. Three drops would kill the baby, more than that would end her life as well. She poured it all into her teacup, but the cup was accidentally knocked off the table. She was distraught at first, but then resigned herself to the fact that God must have a purpose for this child.

The author writes that he was a strange little boy: often reclusive and unresponsive, but he did possess the same love of music as his father. A local teacher took him as a piano student, never imagining his great gift. Had Maria been successful in her attempt to abort her child, the world would never know the music of Ludwig van Beethoven.

Who knows the number of potential musicians, teachers, statesmen, athletes, neighbors, brothers, and sisters who have been lost to abortion.

According to the Right to Life of Michigan from 1973 to 2020 there have been nearly 63 million legal abortions in the U.S.

Years ago, Dr. Dobson spoke about the long-term effects of abortion on our society. Not only would it have lasting emotional effects, there would also be the loss of economic sustainability through the loss of revenue from taxes or their value to society.

In our own state in 2022 alone there were over 30,000 abortions. In the same year, 115 survived the abortion. I won't go into all the statistics of how it breaks down between those who were married vs. unmarried who got an abortion, abortions among various ethnicities, the age range of women seeking abortions or how many women had earlier pregnancies that went to term.

If you want to see where our current State administration stands on the issue of abortion just go to the Michigan Right to Life website. It isn't any surprise at how liberal their views are related to abortion or that our Attorney General, Dana Nessel, made the statement shortly after the Supreme Court decision to end *Roe v. Wade* in 2022 that she would "violate her oath of office and refuse to enforce laws she disagrees with. During her campaign, she promised she would ignore Michigan's existing abortion law and refuse to prosecute abortionists." (MI RTL)

It is unfortunate that the Michigan Legislature was unable to pass the "heartbeat" bill which paved the way for the state legislative body to repeal the 1931 near-term ban on abortion. Did you know that a heartbeat can be detected at 21 days? Or that at six weeks lungs are beginning to form, eyes and nostrils are visible and taste buds and teeth are developing. At 14 weeks the mouth can make sucking motions, the spleen begins to produce red blood cells and the hair pattern on the head develops.

One of the arguments you often hear from advocates in support of abortion is the woman's right to choose. You will see placards that read "my body, my choice." No, it's not. When a woman becomes pregnant, she does not all of a sudden now have two heads, four arms and four legs. If the baby is a boy, she is not now somehow both a female and a male. It is an unborn child entirely separate from the mother who is carrying the child.

In an article by Avery Foley titled *Responding to Pro-Abortion Arguments: Can Abortion Be a Religious Right?*, on the Answers in Genesis website, she asserts the following: "From a scientific standpoint, a human life begins (exists) when a human egg in the mother's body is fertilized by a human sperm from the father's body (which can also happen in a petri dish in some reproductive technologies). If the combination of human DNA (Half from the mother, half from the father) doesn't result in "humanity," what does it result in? It's 100% human DNA; therefore, the offspring can't be anything but part of "humanity." The level of dependency on the mother doesn't make an unborn child nonhuman or nonexistent!

This is akin to saying that people who are dependent on a machine or a lifesaving medication to keep them alive do not have "existence, humanity, or spiritual life separate and apart from" that machine or medication. After all, without it, they too would die (and wouldn't we all die "separate and apart from" food, water, etc.?). But, of course, these people are fully human and exist even though their lives are currently dependent on something outside of themselves... They don't believe the unborn are persons.

This is a good reminder of why the question "when does life begin?" isn't ultimately a scientific question. Science can tell us when life begins, but it doesn't tell us when a person is a person. That question has been answered by God in His Word: right at the moment of fertilization.

Furthermore, an unborn baby implants in the woman's uterus via the first organ, the placenta. This disk-shaped organ implants itself into the rich lining of the uterus and—in a process that scientists still don't fully understand—shuts off the mom's immune system response (without actually shutting down the immune system itself) so that her body doesn't reject the baby as foreign. This wouldn't be necessary if the baby were just part of her body. Indeed, mom and baby are so distinct that, while baby relies on mom for oxygen, food, waste removal, various hormones, and more, their blood never comes in contact! The

placenta serves as a barrier keeping the two separate while allowing for the diffusion and flow of gases, nutrients, wastes, and hormones.”

If you weren't aware, today is Sanctity of life day and it marks the 51st anniversary since Roe v. Wade was enacted by a Supreme Court decision in 1973. But the prolife movement isn't just about the saving of babies from abortion, it is also about the right to protect all life. It's about an awareness of those who want to legalize euthanasia and assisted suicide.

When life is reduced to nothing more than the product of an evolutionary process where a person is born, lives and dies with nothing beyond the grave, you can understand the claim that the pre-born have no value, for that matter, none of us really have any value. It doesn't matter whether a Beethoven is born.

On the other hand, if the Bible is true, and it is, we come to realize and understand that it clearly articulates the value of all life, including the unborn as we see in our text today. There is no better passage to support the sanctity of life than **Psalm 139**. Please turn to that passage and consider that we are precious in God's sight.

In **verses 1-6**, God is aware of us.

In **verses 7-12**, God is around us.

In **verses 13-18**, God is almighty toward us.

I. GOD IS AWARE OF US – vv. 1-6

These verses speak of the omniscience of God. simply put, omniscience is knowing everything. In His omniscience, God knows everything.

I John 3:19-20 “This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in His presence whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts, and He knows everything.”

I Kings 8:39 “...hear from heaven, your dwelling place. Forgive and act; deal with each man according to all he does, since You know his heart (for You alone know the hearts of all men).”

Isaiah 46:10 “I make known the end from the

beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come.”

Jeremiah 1:5 “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you...”

And of course, in our passage we see that God knows everything. These verses tell us four things that God knows about us.

God knows our every movement

God knows our every motivation

God knows our every minute

God knows our every meditation

In short, God knows everything about us.

In **verse 1**, the psalmist acknowledges that God has searched him. The word ‘**search**’ has the idea of searching for a treasure, something that is of value. In other words, he's been put under God's microscope and looked at everything about him inside and out. He has looked the psalmist over from head to toe and He knows all about him. As one author put it, “**God, you know me perfectly.**” To God, you are a treasure that He knows all about.

Sometimes you may hear someone say or maybe you have said it yourself “I know what you're thinking,” or “I can see right through you” as if somehow you were transparent. And while they may think they do, they really don't. Even people who claim to read minds, have interjected subliminal messages that trigger your thoughts to think what they want you to think. Only God can know such intimate detail about you.

A football coach will study an opponent to watch every play in every game situation. He is looking to discover what will tip off what the other team will do so that he can strategically call a counter play. A twitch of a finger.

A certain stance.

I think it was Tony Dorsett of the Dallas Cowboys who inadvertently gave hints whether it was going to be a running play or a passing play by how he strapped on his helmet. If I remember correctly, it was John Madden who pointed it out. Opposing coaches found that if he snapped both straps of his helmet it was going to be a running play and if he

only snapped one strap it was a passing play.
Coaches look for clues that will help them have an advantage. But even that can't determine the outcome.

But there is something important to grasp in **verse 1**. Yes, God knows all things, but He knows ME. God's knowledge of me is a personal matter. It's as if David is saying that God has singled him out so that He knows everything about the psalmist. But it's not as if the psalmist can then choose what God knows about him. Everything about us is open to God.

Hebrews 4:13 "Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of Him to whom we must give an account."

Some of the advice that I give to couples who are getting married is to be a student of your spouse. Don't just make assumptions, learn their likes and dislikes. The journey is in the discovery of what you find out that grows their relationship. But God already knows everything about us. The word **'know'** appears seven times in this psalm as if to indicate the thoroughness by which God knows us. He knows both our activity and our inactivity.

David says that God is aware of every movement. He knows when we sit.

He knows when we stand, something my watch tells me to do if I've sitting too long. God doesn't need my watch to know when I stand.

He knows when I go out and He knows when I lay down.

He even knows why I entered a room even when I have forgotten. **How does God know the psalmist?**

David says that God knows him from **'afar'** (KJV) or is **'familiar'** with everything about him. Those words refer to both space and time, meaning God knows not only the where but also the when.

That He knows when I go out and when I lay down refers to the whole of my activities, everything about my day and everything about every day.

When I go to the gym, He knows I'm there.

When I go to the store, He knows not only that I go, He knows where I go and what I get.

He knows the way I take.

This past week there was news about the investigative arm of the Federal Finance department looking at the private banking and shopping activity of citizens to determine whether they are a potential threat to democracy. That's George Orwell's *1984* big brother kind of stuff. It's scary to think about how much the government knows about me. But they can't know everything about me or about you.

Here's the thing according to these verses, God already knows all that stuff about you and me. He is familiar with all my ways. God told Jeremiah that even before He had formed the prophet in the womb, He knew him. He had even set Jeremiah apart before he was born to be a prophet.

Did you know what you wanted to be when you grew up? It may have taken some time to figure that out, but God already knew.

Robyn said that when she was 4 or 5 that she wanted to be a nurse. That was her ambition. Guess what, God knew she would be a nurse long before she was even conceived.

He knew that Carl would be an engineer.

He knew that Jerry would be a printer.

He knew that Ben would be a truck driver.

He knew each of us.

Imagine for a moment what it would be like to know someone that well: when they sit or when they stand; when they move or when they lay down; to even know the thoughts swirling around in your head right now that no one else can see. If there was one of those little cartoon bubbles right now hovering over your head, displaying all your thoughts, what would it reveal about your thoughts? God already knows your thoughts, your plans, your motives, your words even before you do.

How important it is for us to take every thought captive according to **II Corinthians 10:5** or **Philippians 4:8** to think about things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, and admirable.

God knows every thought and every word even before it is spoken.

It's been said that the average articulate person

speaks enough words in a day to fill a good-sized book. In a lifetime that person can speak enough words to make enough books to fill a college library. And God knows them all.

The psalmist continues in **verse 5** by noting that God has us hemmed. Being a military strategist, David used a term that refers to a siege or a fortification. When an invading army lays siege to a city, they completely surround it so that no one can get in or out or that any supplies can be brought into the city.

As a fortification, it speaks of shutting the doors so the enemy can't get in.

A similar term in the Hebrew is used to speak of guarding something of great value. You and I are of inestimable value to God, so He has hemmed us in by being all around us. Not only does it refer to God surrounding us, the word can also mean that there is nothing we can do to escape His watchful eye. In driving, we talk about a blind spot. There are no blind spots with God.

Consider what one author noted in the context of this verse: **"The fact that God's hand was on David adds further evidence of the Lord's protection of His people. Although His hand brings judgment to the wicked, it brings grace and comfort to the righteous. He guards us on all sides. We may feel weak at times, but the Lord is always with us to keep us and strengthen us. Isaiah 40:28–31 points out that He does not faint or grow weary, but gives power to the faint and increases strength to those who are exhausted. Whoever waits on the Lord shall receive renewed strength and energy. Jesus promised that He and His Father keep us safe in their hands (John 10:28–29)."**

And when we come to **verse 6**, it's as if David stops to ponder on what he just said. What he just said is beyond his understanding. All of that should cause us to stop and worship God for His knowledge of us.

I don't know if God's knowledge of you is thrilling or threatening, whether it brings comfort or condemnation. It truly depends on how we live and on what we think about or where you go.

It should be comforting to know that in His omniscience, God knows us so well. David continues by telling us about God's omnipresence, that He is around us at all times.

II. GOD IS AROUND US – vv. 7-12

Omnipresence simply means that God is everywhere. First, God's presence is compelling.

A. God's Presence Is Compelling – vv. 7-9

David is asking some rhetorical questions. To change it around he would be saying "I can't escape from Your Spirit. I can't run away from Your presence."

In **Genesis 16:1-13** we find Hagar running away from Sarah, but she couldn't run away from God. God saw her every move and she gave God the name **"the God who sees."**

In **Jonah 1:1-10**, we read that Jonah foolishly tried to run away from God to avoid the prophetic assignment given to him. But God knew where he was. He saw him in the boat and He saw him in the belly of the fish.

I've been a Hagar and a Jonah. Maybe you have too. There isn't any place we can run to escape God's presence. There isn't any place we can hide where God doesn't see us or where He already is. When Adam and Eve clothed and hid themselves from God, they were trying to play a game of hide and seek or Marco Polo. But it didn't work. In His omnipresence, God already knew where they were.

Let's be clear though, that David isn't trying to escape God. Instead, he stands back confessing in awe God's omnipresence, that God is always around him.

Jeremiah 23:23-24 "Am I only a God nearby, declares the Lord, 'and not a God far away? Can anyone hide in secret places so that I cannot see Him?' declares the Lord."

Be glad He will never leave you or forsake you.

Be glad He is always with you.

Be glad He is with you in the shadows of death.

Be glad He is with you so there is nothing to fear.

Because of God's presence, he rests in the realization that God was guiding Him. Up, down, all around, God is there. His presence is compelling. Rejoice that He is always there. Marvel at His omnipresence.

Second, God's presence is comforting.

B. God's Presence Is Comforting – vv. 10-11

David finds comfort in the omnipresence of God. We cannot try to conceal our location through darkness, and neither does the darkness of trial hide us from God's presence. Darkness and light are the same to Him. Darkness ceases to be darkness in God's presence.

Hebrews 4:13 "Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of Him to whom we must give an account."

Charles Spurgeon noted: "There never was a time in which we were unknown to God, and there will never be a moment in which we shall be beyond His observation."

How does God know the psalmist so well? How does He know any of us so well? He is the one who made us. In that we see how God is almighty toward us. He is omnipotent or all powerful.

III. GOD IS ALMIGHTY TOWARD US – vv. 13-18, 23-24

About these verses Warren Wiersbe writes that "this is one of the greatest passages in literature about the miracle of human conception."

These verses tell us four things.

God shaped us

God sustains us

God stays with us

God searches us

Robyn's most recent knitting project has been to make some teapot cozies for some friends. The one she is currently working on she has had to rip out and start over several times. Whether it's because she missed a step, missed a stitch or found the instructions to be unclear, it didn't look right and so

she had to start over.

Not so with God. He knit you together as His masterpiece. As Tony Evans writes "everything about you is intentional." He makes no mistakes. We need that knowledge, that fundamental truth to establish our self-esteem and self-worth. God knows our first day and our last day and He holds us together through all the days in between. That God has knit each of us together speaks to His divine superintendence of the process of His forming us. He knows every cell. The average cell contains 100 trillion atoms, each with its own special function with an intricate time table telling it when to grow, when to divide, even when to die. Every minute some three million cells die and the same number are created to replace them and the human body has more than a million million of them. There is a million in each square inch of skin with billions of red blood cells coursing through our veins. We are not made by chance. We are fearfully and wonderfully created.

Because God took such special care in forming us, no wonder His thoughts about us are precious. No wonder He considers us of significant value. His thoughts of us are more than the number of grains of sand. We can't even fathom how precious we are to God. We can't even know all the thoughts God has about us. No wonder He loves us so much. No wonder He sent His Son to die for us.

Because He knows us so well, David invites God to search Him and show him the way he should walk, to lead him in the way everlasting. That should give us security. That should result in praise.

On this day we celebrate life, life designed by God, life designed to give God praise, recognizing that He has a plan for us.

God is aware of us.

God is around us.

God is almighty toward us.

[Play video: He Knows My Name]

Each of us uniquely made in the image of God for the glory of God. You are His masterpiece, You are precious in his sight.