

God's Promised Presence

Nia turned around to look at the person who had tapped her shoulder.

"I love your hair!" the woman said. "Who did it?"

"I did," said Nia as she advanced in the line. "Thank you."

Nia paid for her Caffè Americano and went to the coffee bar to add some sugar and cream. A few minutes later, she was joined by the woman, who introduced herself as Kayla. When Kayla learned Nia had on a hairpiece that she had made, Kayla was intrigued.

"I have alopecia," Kayla said. "I lost my hair in elementary school."

Nia shared her own story of hair thinning and pulled up photos on her phone of the hairpieces she made.

"Do you have a shop and a card?"

Nia had neither. She found it difficult to see the value in her abilities.

"You are too negative about yourself," a friend had said. "God knows you inside and out. He knows the gifts He's put in you."

Kayla was the tenth person who had approached Nia about her hairpieces just this week!

Nia was in awe of a God who knew her so well and was always finding ways to bless her, despite herself. She realized she had to yield. Nia would begin making moves to market and sell her hairpieces.

1. *How does God's presence make you feel right now? Explain your answer.*

2. *How would you comfort someone who may be feeling alone?*

3. *Explain this statement: "Let all your deeds be done as if God is sitting next to you."*

The Lord Knows Everything about Us

Psalms 139:1-6 KJV

To the chief Musician, a
Psalm of David

1 O LORD, thou hast
searched me, and known
me.

2 Thou knowest my down-
sitting and mine uprising,
thou understandest my
thought afar off.

3 Thou compassest my
path and my lying down,
and art acquainted with all
my ways.

4 For there is not a word in
my tongue, but, lo, O LORD,
thou knowest it altogether.

5 Thou hast beset me
behind and before, and laid
thine hand upon me.

6 Such knowledge is too
wonderful for me; it is
high, I cannot attain unto it.

Psalms 139:1-6 NIV

For the director of music. Of
David. A psalm.

¹You have searched me, LORD,
and you know me.

²You know when I sit and when
I rise;
you perceive my thoughts
from afar.

³You discern my going out and
my lying down;
you are familiar with all my
ways.

⁴Before a word is on my tongue
you, LORD, know it
completely.

⁵You hem me in behind and
before,
and you lay your hand upon
me.

⁶Such knowledge is too
wonderful for me,
too lofty for me to attain.

This song of praise seems to arise from a dangerous situation. In verse 19, the psalmist begins talking about "wicked" and "bloodthirsty" people who were his foes. These unrighteous people misused God's name, probably by calling down curses on His faithful servants. But the psalmist is confident that God is able to deal with evil, and the psalmist expresses zeal for the Lord and His standards of virtue (vv. 19-22).

Before the psalmist writes of any earthly peril, he describes God's awareness of him. The Hebrew verb rendered "searched" (v. 1) can also be translated "to investigate" or "to examine thoroughly." This intense

investigation was the basis for God's knowledge of the psalmist.

The creator is aware of every thought people have and every action they perform (2 Chron. 28:9). He can objectively and fairly evaluate the actions of people because He knows everything (1 Sam. 2:3). All wisdom and counsel reside with Him (Job 12:13), and "his understanding has no limit" (Ps. 147:5). There is nothing in the universe that is hidden from God's sight. Everything is exposed by His gaze (Heb. 4:13).

God's awareness of all things serves two purposes. First, everyone is accountable to God for their actions. No one will do evil and get away with it. Second, the Creator's awareness reminds His people that He knows their circumstances and reaches out in love (Gen. 16:13).

God's knowledge of the psalmist was specific. Psalm 139:2 refers to when he would sit down and stand up, which points to his daily activities. Even though God is in heaven, He remained cognizant of the psalmist's thoughts and understood his motives.

There was no doubt in the psalmist's mind that before his mouth framed a word, the Lord was already fully aware of what the king would say (v. 4). Regardless of the dangers he might face, God went before him and after him.

The Lord had placed His hand of blessing on the psalmist (v. 5). He admitted that God's awareness of him was so extraordinary that it went beyond his comprehension. He was unable to fathom God's infinite knowledge of him (v. 6).

4. *Which aspects of the psalmist's life did God know about?*

5. *How extensive was God's knowledge of what the psalmist said?*

6. *How did the psalmist respond to the fact that God knew everything about him?*

The Spirit of the Lord Is Present Everywhere

Psalms 139:7–12 KJV

7 Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?

8 If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.

9 If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;

10 Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.

11 If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me.

12 Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.

Psalms 139:7–12 NIV

⁷Where can I go from your Spirit?
Where can I flee from your presence?

⁸If I go up to the heavens, you are there;
if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.

⁹If I rise on the wings of the dawn,
if I settle on the far side of the sea,

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

¹¹If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me
and the light become night around me,"

¹²even the darkness will not be dark to you;
the night will shine like the day,
for darkness is as light to you.

In poetic fashion, the psalmist highlights the impossibility of escaping God's presence. He describes the futility of trying to flee from God by going to heaven or the realm of the dead. It's as if he were saying, "If I ascended as high as I could, or descended to the lowest possible depth, I could never escape Your reach."

Suppose the poet made the rising sun his chariot and raced to the utmost reach of the western horizon (v. 9)? Even if he could somehow settle down on the other side of

the Mediterranean Sea (which lies west of Israel), the Lord would still be there to afford support every hour of every day (v. 10). Unlike the idols of surrounding nations, God is fully present to protect and guide His people on every point of every map.

The psalmist describes another means of escape: hiding (vv. 11–12). He envisions a situation in which the “darkness” would obscure his presence like a thick piece of fabric would cover a person’s body. He also imagined asking the “light” of day to suddenly change into “night” all around him.

Adam and Eve, after transgressing God’s directive, tried to conceal themselves from Him. They sewed fig leaves together in an attempt to cover their nakedness. When the cool evening breeze began to blow, they sensed God’s presence within Eden and tried to hide from Him among the trees (Gen. 3:7–8). None of their efforts succeeded.

The psalmist dismisses all attempts at escape. He discerned that the creator God could see in darkness as well as in light. We cannot escape God. Once we have recognized the futility of any attempt to evade and escape, we can begin to accept that God is everywhere, just as we can joyfully accept that He knows everything about us.

Daniel, while in exile in Babylon, affirmed a similar truth. In an expression of praise, he declared that God unveiled realities that were “deep and hidden” (Dan. 2:22). God knows everything that is hidden in “darkness,” even though the infinitely glorious “light” of heaven blazed all around Him.

7. *What did David intuitively realize about the Spirit’s presence?*

8. *Where could David go to get away from the Spirit’s presence?*

9. *What was comforting to David about the Spirit’s all-encompassing presence?*

Never Will I Leave You

One of the greatest promises God has given His people is that He will never leave them nor forsake them. This promise brings peace and comfort. Every child wants to know that a parent will always be there for him or her. It does not matter if you make a mistake. God will always be there. In fact, one of His names is Jehovah-Shamman—the Lord is there (Ezek. 48:35).

Many people suffer from abandonment trauma, which results from being physically and emotionally neglected. The people who suffer from this describe its effects as extremely painful and like they cannot breathe.

"Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you!" (Isa. 49:15). What an amazing and awesome thought to know you cannot hide, out-run, or distract the presence of God from your life. God is always there.

Although there are some parents who have no compassion and will abandon their children, God says He never will. Statistics reveal that nearly 35 million U.S. children have experienced one or more types of childhood trauma, including abandonment.

Thank God for His commitment to us. What a great love and compassion He has for His own. As the prophet Jeremiah says, "The LORD appeared to us in the past, saying: 'I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness'" (Jer. 31:3).

10. *How does it make you feel knowing that God is ever-present?*

11. *What disadvantages do you see if God is ever-present with us?*

12. *How do you feel if you add your name to Jeremiah 31:3 (i.e., "I have loved Grace with an everlasting love")?*

You Know Me

What an amazing feeling for someone to know you. If you are known, you do not have to explain your thoughts and actions or introduce yourself. You are comfortable and at peace. God knows us. He doesn't need any introductions. We are so known to God that He knows every strand of hair on our head. "Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows" (Luke 12:7). You are worthy of being known.

► *Write a gratitude letter to God, showing your appreciation for His constant presence in your life. Include the moments you did your best to please God. Also include moments when you know you disappointed God, yet He remained faithful.*

KEY VERSE

O lord, thou hast searched me, and known me.

—Psalm 139:1 KJV

You have searched me, LORD, and you know me.

—Psalm 139:1 NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

Week of November 25 through December 1

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

- Mon.** Luke 3:23-38—We Belong to Christ's Family.
- Tue.** Psalm 128—A Household Built by God.
- Wed.** Ruth 1:1, 3, 6-18—Determined Loyalty.
- Thu.** Ruth 2:1-3, 17-23—An Act of Kindness.
- Fri.** Matthew 12:46-50—Bound Together by More than DNA.
- Sat.** Ruth 3:1-13—Daring Faith.
- Sun.** Ruth 4:9-17—God Has Not Abandoned You.