

Knowing Me, Knowing You (Psalm 139)

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- [0 : 0 0] Thank you. All right, I was told to preach something not of 1 Corinthians. We're having a break, all right, from 1 Corinthians.
- Okay, so I'd like to preach what I did on Sunday and Saturday as well so that we're on the same page. Okay, Psalm 139. Okay, if you have your Bibles with you, if you have your mobile, you can actually open up to Psalm 139.
- My topic, the theme is knowing me, knowing you. What would you immediately think of these four words?
- If you are my age, you will remember a song. You know that song, it doesn't necessarily tell you about my age, but because it's a very popular song, right?
- It's from knowing me, knowing you, uh-huh. Oh, there is nothing you can do, right? It's a very popular song, even though it was 40-something years ago.
- [1 : 0 7] And it speaks something. You know why this Abba was so famous, right? Because it's quite unique, because there were two couples. And they got famous, and then they'd been together, and then they got married.
- But this song, particular song, was actually produced out in 1977. How many were you actually in this world then? But after they sang, they had this song, they got married.
- But the thing is, in 80 and 81, both of these couples divorced. It's quite ironic, isn't it? They all wanted someone to know them well.
- I think we all seek others to know us well. And we want to know others. All right?
- Praise God if there are close, intimate relationships. Praise God for couples who've been like Vincent, Jennifer.
- [2 : 1 9] How long have you been married? Don't. Secret, all right? What about Vincent and Eva? How long have you been married? Don't. Be careful. Don't give me the wrong answer.
- All right? I mean, all these years of intimate... How long have you been married, Pastor William? 13. Wow. Okay. My humble 31 year.
- And praise God, there was... It's good to have this intimate, close relationship. It really is a strength for our struggles in life.
- Okay? But then, there is no perfect relationship here on this earth. Right? Because we're sinful people. And even if I do my best as a husband, okay?
- At times, you probably, if you ask Simo, you know, just pull her aside and say, hey, how is Albert doing at home? You know, she might tell you something that, yeah, normally I would tell you.
- [3 : 2 5] But even if I did my best, I score highly. One day, one day, I will have to leave her as she will leave me. Right? So, in this entire world, yes, we give thanks for close, intimate, healthy, up-building relationships.
- But ultimately, I believe God is the one who knows me well. And we need to know him well. And because of knowing him, and I have a better understanding of myself.

So, let's read this Psalm 139. Okay, we'll read it bit by bit, okay? Okay. Now, this psalm is a very interesting psalm. I think there are many songs written.

I think the second song is sort of resembled a little bit about the Psalm 139. In Chinese, actually, there are lots and lots of songs written from this psalm. Okay? So, actually, this psalm really was, the psalmist was realizing that, yeah, God's presence was in all circumstances in his life.

There is nothing, nowhere, that God was not there. Okay? So, with this kind of assurance, God knowing me, that he's able to offer his sincere prayers.

[4 : 53] Now, I think that if we have this faith in someone who knows me well, and who is perfect in his power, and who is perfect in his love, that makes a whole world of difference in our lives, in our journey of life.

So, this psalm made God speak to us. It's not just the psalmist was writing that psalm to express himself, but God used that psalm to speak to us in our daily life, that with that kind of awareness of God in our different aspects of life, we can take full confidence in our lives, in whatever we do.

And we can take full confidence that he leads us, he is with us. We can walk with him, no matter what life circumstances bring.

My 64 years has told me, my 40-something years of following Jesus has told me he is faithful. It's the best thing in my life.

It's not just because I'm a pastor, I'm selling religion. No, it's through up and down, through all the circumstances, through failure, through successes.

[6 : 22] God is with me. And that's the best thing in life. So, this psalm is, yeah, I'd like to share.

And there were three contemplations there, and there are two petitions there. And we can follow a little bit, and may God speak to us, okay?

So, there is this three contemplations. One is, God is all-knowing, okay? The theological swear word is omniscient, okay?

Don't worry about it if you don't know what that means. It really means all-knowing. And God is all-presence. And God is all-powerful in creation.

Because of these three contemplations about God, the psalmist had two really sincere petitions or prayers in life.

[7 : 21] One is, God, destroy my enemies. Can we be that honest? I don't really like the one sitting next to me. God, destroy him.

Can you say that in your prayer? And then, a very soul-searching prayer. God, guide me.

Search my heart. Let's look into it a little bit, bit by bit, okay? The first one, about the all-knowledge, all-knowing nature of God.

The omniscience of God. You've searched me, Lord. You know me. You know when I sit down and I rise. You perceive my thoughts from afar.

And you see all these verbs there. There's many. He tried his best to describe how God knows. Searched. Know.

[8 : 16] Perceived. Discerned. Familiar. You know it completely. You hear me. Wow. There's, I mean, God, there's nothing inside, outside of me that God doesn't know.

Isn't it wonderful that someone would know me that well? I don't even need to utter a word from my mouth and he knows already what my thoughts inside.

Is there someone in my life like that? Not even Seymour. I can cheat.

I can deceive her with my words. So simple. I mean, no. I mean, yeah. I mean, it's good. But then, but then, no one would know what is deep down in my heart.

You know? When you're working at night and nobody around, you know, you, oh, I really feel hungry. And I go out and I pull out in the fridge, oh, a can of beer or whatever.

[9 : 24] And God was there. He knows. And I go back to the computer and I type in what's on the screen. God knows. Right? Right?

My worries about my exams. My worries about my job. Your worry about your residency. Right? God knew. And he knows us.

Even though my failures, my iniquities, my sin, my arrogance, he knows. But he accepts.

He loves us still. You know, this knowledge, that knowing, this word, it's not just in Old Testament. It's not just about facts. I know about Venus.

She's a doctor. She's pediatric. It's not just about that. But that knowledge is kind of reflected in close relationship in the Bible.

[10 : 24] All right? For example, in Genesis, knowing refers to intimate relationship. Adam knew his wife, Eve, and he begets Seth.

Right? There can't be closer relationships than giving birth to someone. So, in the Bible, knowledge, knowing, is very close relationship.

God knows us. God has desired this very close relationship with us. He knows you well. He knows me well.

Even though I am fallible. Even though I'm terrible at times. But he knows me. He knows you. And he accepts me just the way I am.

So, cast all my cares onto him. And don't need to pretend. I just come to him just the way I am.

[11 : 33] Secondly, he is everywhere. Okay? 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 into death, you are there. Far side of the sea. And even your hands guide me and your right hand hold me fast.

I mean, these are all very hypothetical places. I mean, you can't go up to heavens. You can't go down to the depths. Where is the far side of the sea?

I mean, these are all very hypothetical. But what he wanted to stress was, God is everywhere. There is no way that God is not there.

Right? And the interesting thing was, why was he, why he mentioned all these places that he couldn't go to?

[12 : 33] And the thing was, where can I go from your spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? He was actually running away from God. Why did he have to run away from God?

Maybe in front of this holy God, almighty God, majestic God. And immediately we feel our sin, our littleness, our fallibility.

Right? And then I want to hide myself. Just like Adam and Eve, when they realized they sinned. And then God was coming in the breeze of the day.

And they come to, Adam, where are you? They hid themselves. And sometimes, you know, especially when we sin, when we do wrong. We want to, ah, we better not have devotion on that day in case God smash me with his rod.

You know? And we think we can hide away from him, right? God is there. But I think it was good that he realized that God's hand was not to punish him.

[13 : 48] He was there. He thought he was running away from God's punishment. And then God has caught him and he realized that he was not punishing him. He was actually to guide him.

Right? His right hand was to hold me fast. He was not going to let me go. Have you experienced these sort of things? I have. You know, I've sinned. I've done wrong.

And I come to God and say, oh, sorry, God, please. And God, yes, he will remind me, he will at times discipline me, but his discipline was for good, not to destroy me.

Otherwise, I wouldn't be here today. So, thinking about God's knowledge about me, think about God's presence with me, because he wills for the good for my life.

And thirdly, the omniscience. That is, God created me with his power. All right?

[14 : 51] You created my innermost being. You knit me together in my mother's womb. You see, again, created, knit, woven, right? Made.

All right.

God knows me. God is with me because he has created me in a very unique way, very individually, very unique.

And you see, and he's realized that God's works are very wonderful. And he has a greater realization of God's creative work in him, the psalmist.

Now, if you look back at the first description about God's knowledge, he firstly, in verse 6, he said, such knowledge was too wonderful and too lofty.

[16 : 18] I couldn't grapple that, Lord. Yeah, I know you're there with me, but wow, this is beyond me. All right? And then, in verse 10, we just read before, wow, Lord, your hand will guide me and hold me fast.

And he had a greater realization from little knowledge about God's hand, God's knowledge about himself. And then they realized that he was running away from God because of his sin.

And, oh, God, you were not there to punish me. Wow, you are a gracious God. Thank you. And then here, and they realized that when his inner being, it was created by God, wow, he has an even greater understanding of God's doing.

God's knowledge about me, who loves me, accepts me. God's presence, there's nowhere I can hide from him.

And then I realized everything God does for me was good. And then, and he realized that, well, my body, my me, that me, that myself was created even right before no one could see.

[17 : 36] Now, it was trying, you know, in this hidden, it was hidden from him in a secret place, woven together in the depths of the earth. Now, these were mystical expressions at the time, okay?

But even the psalmist said, even those mystical things cannot stop God's goodness in our lives. Nothing, nothing can separate us from the love of God.

Because he knows us. He's with us. He created us. Now, with these three contemplations, if we have, getting more assured about God's presence, knowledge, doing in our lives, we're going to be very, we don't need to be, you know, when we face challenges, when we face different frustrations in life, we can have a solid ground to stand on.

We don't need to depend on other people. They're welcoming me or not. They're thinking I'm a good person or not.

We don't need to depend on that. Because ultimately, we'll get frustrated because men are fallible. And men change all the time. Right?

[19 : 09] But if we stand on the solid ground of God in Christ, crucified for me, there is no other things in this entire world can separate that love, that amazing love, from me to him.

And we don't need to prove ourselves. God loves me. God knows me. God is with me. And God has created me.

I think there's a lot of, I mean, people in this world all search for these kind of knowledge, relationships, acceptance. But we used to be like that too.

We used to seek everywhere. But here we are. We have this amazing God, powerful God, all-knowing God. We can put our faith to.

And that's why, that's why the psalmist kind of concluded, these three contemplations.

[20 : 27] How precious to me are your thoughts, God. How vast is the sum of them. Where are you to count them? They will outnumber the grains of sand.

When I awake, when I awake, I am still with you. God's presence can be our assurance, no matter what kind of circumstances we're in now.

What kind of doubts are we in? What kind of relationship that could have broken our hearts?

Or whatever difficulties we are facing, there is nothing God that cannot heal.

There is nothing God that cannot help us. That's why the psalmist had that assurance.

[21 : 33] The omniscience of God, the omnipresence of God, the omnipresence of God. How precious to me are your thoughts of God.

We can pray to God like that. Thank you, God. How vast is the sum, the precious thoughts. How vast. I cannot count them. Thank you for loving me.

I can truly rest at night. And I can wake up in the morning. Thank you, God, for your sufficient grace for me for this coming day.

Because of these three contemplations, and then he was able to pray in a genuine and real way. You know, we come to God, often we think, we come to God with religious formality.

And we can even, we can, you know, even think we can deceive God. You know, oh Lord, you know, yeah, I don't like him, but oh, bless him. You know, we think we can deceive God, you know, but God knows even what we utter from our mouths.

[22 : 54] Lord, I hate his guts. Lord, do something about it, Lord. I don't want to see his face. I don't want to see him. You know, I'm sure we can pray like, well, the psalmists pray like that. Right?

If only you, God, would slay the wicked. It was worse than that. You know what I mean? You could slay the wicked. Away from me, you who bloodthirsty. You are thirsty. And they speak of you with evil intent.

Your adversaries, misuse your name. Oh, do I not hate those who hate you? And so on, and so on. And there are many, many descriptions in psalms like that.

You know, say for instance, Psalm 136 or something like that. Oh, how blessed are those who dash your babies on the rock. That's not very Christian. Right? What kind of people would pray like that?

All right? Now, these are called imprecatory psalms. All right? There's lots of them actually in this book of Psalms.

[23 : 53] All right? But, if we try to understand why would be these sort of contents in the Bible.

Okay? These cursings. if we understand a little bit more the background of the psalmists, the persecutions, and the cruelty they were facing, maybe we understand a little bit more why the psalmists would protest, complain, curse the enemies like that.

all right? All right? Just think. Maybe, maybe, I don't know, I don't even know, like, my parents, all your grandparents, if they have faced Second World War, right, China being invaded by Japan at the time, right, maybe we'll understand a little bit more about the enmity, that kind of, yeah, that kind of really anger towards different races of people.

And maybe today in Ukraine and Russia, maybe we could understand a little bit more but we, because we're not Ukrainians, we can't fully comprehend.

but if you understand the people of Israel at the time being captured and being cruel, cruelly treated by these Babylonians, maybe we understand why it was more than personal anger, all right?

[25 : 45] It was national, it was, it was, it was ethnic kind of hatred. towards those people who treated them badly. But then again, understand, this, these sort of psalms were not personal kind of curses.

It was, it was written, yes, but it was addressed to God. It was not unlike, you know, some of the Asians, the religious practices, cursing, or those voodos, witchcraft, nothing like that.

Right? It was addressed to God. These sort of psalms usually was done in a religious, in a worship, in a sacrificial kind of meeting, in these kind of activities.

All right? So they were addressed to God. It was not direct to their enemies. It was protesting, praying to God.

There's a difference between that and direct curses, I believe. Right? I pray to God, I protest to God, and God, you do something about it, I leave it to you.

[27 : 07] And, in a way, the psalmist was very genuine. this is how I feel, God. You do something about it. I hate these people, but you do something about it.

I'm not going to do anything about it, but I give it to you. I'm sure we can pray genuinely how we feel. We let him know because he knows anyway.

We can't deceive God if I'm really, really angry with somebody and then I, God, yeah, yeah, told me to forgive. Yeah, yeah, forgive. Not that you really want to forgive. But, yeah, yeah.

And then we say a lot of things, God knew it. It's, you know, it's fake. Why the point praying? If we want to pray, better be genuine and sincere and let God to do something about it.

And often, I believe it comes back to you and I'm the one. I need the changes. Right? So, we understand. And then, and then the New Testament.

[28 : 11] We don't just read the Old Testament. The New Testament, Jesus taught us to bless our enemies. Right? But we go through the Old Testament too. It's not just, we just, ah, yeah, Jesus taught us this.

But, but the whole Bible addresses our spirit, mind, soul, everything. And we can come and, and, and let God to work through our lives, our hearts, and transform us.

Right? Let's pray to God in a genuine way. And the second petition was directed to, to himself. Because it's, you know, it's, sometimes, it's not easy to differentiate between righteous anger or self-temper.

You know? Sometimes, we think, ah, I want to, because this is what God hates, I want to stress that as well. But sometimes, it couldn't be just me.

We've got to be pretty sure with the close relationship with God and the spirit of God will, will inspire me and, and teach me so how I need, so I can define, differentiate whether it's of God or what's, what's of me.

- [29 : 40] So we can pray that too. Search me, God, and know my heart. Test me and know my anxious thoughts.
- See, if, well, my, if I were the psalmist, I wouldn't write that. I, my Albert Tang translation version would be, see, Lord, what offensive way in me.
- It's not if any, I know they are. But it, what? Right? If you think, if I think there is, oh, I might not be offensive at all, please, we lie.
- Of course, we have offensive ways. I have. Right? But, Lord, please show me what offensive way in me. And may these offensive way be clear and forgiven and be changed by God so that he will lead me to the way of everlasting.
- I think this is the most sincere and daring prayers we can have for ourselves. How can we pray that?
- [30 : 58] if we don't have the full knowledge of the previous assurance of God's knowledge for me, God's presence with me and God's creative power within me, I wouldn't be able to dare to pray those two prayers.
- Right? I wouldn't even dare to pray. Everything will be superficial. Everything will be just on the surface.
- Religions. But if we have that deep, deep knowledge and relationship with our God, I'm on solid ground and I can pray genuinely even opening up myself, my dark self to him.
- And at appropriate time, I can even open it up to certain brother or sister because I don't need to prove anything. I have my limitations.
- I have my sin. I have my, yeah, I fail. I can't be honest. So, this year we talk about build up in him.
- [32 : 29] I believe this is something that really help us to, it's not just an outward thing, how we serve, how we perform.
- If there's nothing in here, even though we can work well for a while, eventually we just drain. Because there's nothing there, there's limited resources, eventually we'll just dry up, we die.
- But if we continually let God to transform us, to fill us, to assure us, to inspire us, we're getting built up in him.
- It's just like growth of our physical body, right? But this spiritual growth is much more subtle.
- But we can't grow ourselves. But the word of God and the spirit of God in us, we can. We can be built up.
- [33 : 42] in him. So with these three contemplations, God's knowledge, God's presence, God's creative power, we can dare to pray to God.
- God, do something about these bad experiences, enemies, in my life. God, perhaps I am the greatest enemy.
- search me, O Lord, and know my heart. Test and know my anxious thoughts. Help me to see what are the offensive ways in me and lead me in a way everlasting.
- testing. I have this spiritual check-up here. We actually sell it and Sunday.
- We distribute that to people. It's kind of an inventory. It was actually, I borrowed that from C.S.
- [34 : 53] Lewis Institute. edited a little bit. It's kind of a, it was done in a way like loving God and loving others.

There's questions surrounding those. It helps us to check. It may not be a very thorough, it may not be a very detailed, you know exactly where you are, but it's an indication, okay, how am I walking with God and how, if I say I love God, and how is my relationship demonstrated with other people?

I'm honest, I can be honest to share with you, out of the 70, okay, the highest score is 70, no, highest score was 140 because one part is 70, the other part also 70.

So out of 140, your pastor passed, okay? If I didn't pass, I wouldn't let you know.

But interesting was, when I was walking one day and was contemplating about, you know, this psalm and thinking about this infantry, and somehow I, somehow I believe maybe the Lord has speak to me, it was not a tangible voice, but it's something in my heart, it said, Albert, if you're not, if you are not a pastor, I wonder how would you have scored?

[36 : 41] very soul searching, right? Isaac, if you were not a deacon, how would you have scored?

Interesting. You know, sometimes I feel that because, oh, because I'm a pastor, I can't fail, you know, and then sometimes I would be a bit lenient towards myself. And I think if Simo would do something for me, perhaps I'll fail.

I think it's good if you have someone who's close enough and sincere and honest enough, check it. And maybe the two will balance each other and you will see a truer self, right?

But it's something for us, yeah, I think if we have the confidence and really want to know myself and want to see how God would know me and how I would know him, maybe, you know, I'll put it on Facebook or there are some copies outside.

I mean, you can, and then you don't have to hand us back. And I was thinking later on in the year, we probably would like, we may have a workshop of something like this and just to see how we are spiritually.

[38 : 07] and if there are those who are interested, we may, I don't know, we may organize a group or two to truly, to work on our spiritual conditions.

Yeah, there is this essential commandment in the library. I think some Cantonese brothers and sisters, they have used that.

Yeah, I think for English, we have done the essential leadership with you guys, right? That was good, but even the basics was love, what is humility, what is listening to God, you know, I think if we really be genuine to search, let God search us and we can grow together.

So let's try that first. And if you really, really, really want to dig further, let me know, or let Pastor William know. We're happy to see what we can help so that we can, on, on, on this way, everlasting.

Let's pray. Father God, thank you for your word. Yeah, thank you for the psalmist who's been so honest. And yeah, we can be honest, we'll have to be honest with you, God.

[39 : 39] We can't hide before you. There's no way we can hide from you. So help us. Yeah, we just open up ourselves to you. Hear our prayers, we pray.

In Jesus' name, amen. Amen.