

Commentary on Psalm 139:1-6, 13-16, 23-24

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The **International Bible Lesson** (*Uniform Sunday School Series*) for **November 28, 2010**, is from **Psalm 139:1-6, 13-16, 23-25**. Five **Questions for Discussion** follow the *Bible Lesson Commentary*. The **International Bible Lessons** can be read at: <http://internationalbiblelessons.com/>; new *International Bible Lessons* are also published each Saturday in [The Oklahoman](#) newspaper.

Psalm 139:1-6

1 O Lord, you have searched me and known me.

God, who created us, gave us the ability to think, feel, and make choices. We can reason and follow God, especially as God has commanded in His Word, the Bible. Or, we can follow our feelings and be led by our emotions. When King David sinned with Bathsheba, he was following his feelings and not the revealed will of God. When God tests us, we learn whether we put God first or ourselves first, and God also knows our test results.

2 You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away.

God knows everything we do. Jesus said God knows every time a sparrow falls to the ground. He surely knows what the ones He created in His image are doing and thinking. God is never far away from us, but we can stray far away from God and His purposes for us. Even if we run away from God, He can discern our thoughts, as Jonah discovered.

3 You search out my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways.

The psalmist says almost the same thing twice, which indicates the importance he placed upon the thought. God knows not only our small choices, such as our lying down for a nap, but also the path or direction we are going and what our intentions are that motivate all of our choices. God knows the purposes we have chosen for our life, whether to serve God supremely or ourselves supremely.

4 Even before a word is on my tongue, O Lord, you know it completely.

We do not need to speak a word for God to hear our thoughts and know what we intend to say. We think a word or contemplate an intention that we may not choose to reveal to others, but God knows our words, thoughts, and intentions. He knows our thoughts and feelings behind the words we speak, and why we have chosen to speak or remain silent.

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

God gives us free will, and we can choose to obey God or not. There are times too when God will so direct us that we cannot move forward, backward, or sideways of our own free will because God will be controlling us; as God sometimes directed the heart of a king. In these times when God lays His hand upon us, he turns us where He wants us to go and do what He wants us to do.

6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is so high that I cannot attain it.

The psalmist knows these facts about God in relation to those God has created. He admits that comprehending all that these facts mean is beyond human ability. God's reasons for the opportunities He gives us to have an effect on history and why He sometimes intervenes in our history are beyond understanding.

Psalms 139:13-16

13 For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb.

God not only created the universe and the planetary systems that are light years away from us, but God also creates the inward parts of every human being. In His mysterious ways, He has determined to allow genetics and human choices and our fallen world to have an effect on our creation in the womb. Still, He knits every person in a beautiful way to achieve His good purposes.

14 I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that I know very well.

As much as researchers know about the human body, there is much they still want to know. The psalmist praises God that God not only understands all about us, but He made us with all of the tiny and intricate parts that compose our body and brain – some of which can only be seen with the most powerful microscopes. Each person is a wonderful work of God.

15 My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth.

In the psalmist's day, only God could see into a mother's womb as a child was being formed from conception to birth. Now we can see the development of real human beings as they are being intricately woven in the womb by God. Such knowledge of God's work on the unborn inspires us to care for every unborn child and newborn infant with special, prayerful care.

16 Your eyes beheld my unformed substance. In your book were written all the days that were formed for me, when none of them as yet existed.

“Unformed substance,” from our limited human vision, is the matter that composes our human bodies even before we begin to be made in the womb by God. God knows every atomic particle of our bodies, even before we were conceived in the womb, and God knows how each atomic part will fit together into our total makeup. God also knows how long we will live and the days before us.

Psalm 139:23-24

23 Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts.

The psalmist bravely makes this prayer request of God himself. He knows that God knows everything about him, but He asks God to give him real tests in real life – not just in an academic setting – to see where he stands in his life purpose before God. He wants to know how he scores on the tests so he can improve his way of living before God.

24 See if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

The psalmist wants to know if there is any wicked way, purpose, intention, direction for life or choices within him. He does not want to sin or practice sin in any way or to any degree. He wants to remove or have God remove any wickedness within him, so he will walk in the ways of God at all times – the way everlasting. Jesus made all this possible for us, if we will trust and obey Him as our Lord and Savior.

Five Questions for Discussion

1. Do you feel comfortable or uncomfortable thinking about how much God knows about you and your life? If someone tells you they feel uncomfortable, what might you tell them to help them feel comfortable?
2. In what ways do you find Psalm 139 encouraging to you? How might you use this Psalm to encourage someone who is feeling depressed?
3. What verse or verses in Psalm 139 mean the most to you? Give a reason for your answer.
4. When you think about God and the fact that God can, and sometimes will, help you in, how does this make you feel? When are some times when you would want

God to hem you in? Can you think of any times when you have felt God has hemmed you in to your benefit? How does that make you feel? (Psalm 139:5)

5. Read Psalm 139:23-24 again. Is this a prayer you could courageously pray to God? Can you think of some ways that God might test a person? How was Job tested? How was Jesus tested? How might you be tested?

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