

Do You Have This Courage?

The *International Sunday School Lesson* for Sunday, November 28, 2010
Psalm 139:1-6, 13-16, 23-24

“Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts; And see if there be any hurtful way in me, And lead me in the everlasting way” (Psalm 139:23-24—NASB-U).

“Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts. See if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Psalm 139:23-24—NRSV).

“Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Psalm 139:23-24—KJV).

The psalmist’s prayer might make us think of Job. God allowed the devil to test Job to prove that Job really loved God and would continue to love God no matter what happened. Or, his prayer might remind us of Jesus, who, when tempted by the devil in the wilderness, proved there was no wicked way in him.

The psalmist’s request took great courage. We know what Job and Jesus suffered when tested. If we make this request, we invite God to test us in any way best suited to our needs. If we have no conscious awareness of any wicked ways within us, we want God to show us if there are any hidden faults within so we can turn from them and be wholly right with God. God’s tests will show us the progress we have made in our journey of faith, and what we may still lack in faith, love, and obedience to God.

Before we pray this prayer, we must remember that God might bring unexpected suffering upon us for our own good. In addition, we would need to believe that if God did bring suffering that it would be to teach us what virtues will still need to develop, perhaps patience, for example. The Apostle Paul discovered this about suffering: “we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us” (Romans 5:3-5).

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Questions for Further Thought

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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, hem 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?