

# Search Me O God

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[ 0 : 00 ] A Psalm of David. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me.

It is high. I cannot attain it. Where shall I go from your spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there.

If I make my bed in shul, you are there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me. And your right hand shall hold me.

If I say, surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light about me be night. Even the darkness is not dark to you. The night is bright as the day, for darkness is as light with you.

For you formed my inner parts. You knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works.

[ 1 : 22 ] My soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance.

In your book were written, every one of them. The days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them. How precious to me are your thoughts, O God!

How vast is the sum of them! If I would count them, they are more than the sand. I wake, and I am still with you.

O that you would slay the wicked, O God! O men of blood, depart from me! They speak against you with malicious intent. Your enemies take your name in vain. Do I not hate those who hate you, O Lord?

And do I not loathe those who rise up against you? I hate them with complete hatred. I count them my enemies. Search me, O God, and know my heart.

[ 2 : 24 ] Try me and know my thoughts. And see if there are any grievous ways in me. And lead me in the way everlasting. We're going to sing again.

Thank you. Well, good morning.

It's great to be back. As Stephen says, my name is Craig. I'm one of the leadership members up at Calderwood. I also work for Scripture Union Scotland. I'm the Glasgow regional worker.

So yes, it's fantastic to be here. Thank you to Cal for giving me the opportunity. To preach. And yes, we're in Psalm 139. One of the most recognizable psalms for believers.

Don't we often memorize the opening line? O Lord, you have searched me and known me. Or very famously, in verses 13 and 14.

[ 3 : 22 ] For you formed my inner parts. You knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. These are very recognizable verses.

And we'll cover them this morning. But I just wanted to sum up the whole of the psalm. Because yes, we do recognize the standout verses. But if you were to sum up the whole psalm, I think you could do no better than what the ESV Study Bible describes as.

The Lord knows all there is to know about you. The Lord knows all there is to know about you. So yes, so since Thursday, the death of Her Majesty the Queen, radio and TV interviewers have been searching for folks who have known the Queen personally.

And I don't know if anybody saw the interview. It was probably filmed for the Commonwealth celebrations earlier this year. But I think, I believe it was originally Sky News had managed to get the former Royal Protection Officer, Richard Griffin.

So his interview has stood out for me in the past couple of days for a couple of reasons. But then when I was preparing for it, I actually thought, well, why not? Why can I not just show it to you if you're not familiar with this interview?

[ 4 : 41 ] I picked up the phone and spoke to Cal. I was like, Cal, do you think it would be okay to show a 90-second clip? And he said, definitely, Stephen will sort it out. And Stephen has sorted it out. So if you bear with me, a 90-second video clip of the former Royal Protection Officer.

This is Richard Griffin being interviewed earlier this year. And normally, on these picnic sites, you meet nobody. But there was two hikers coming towards us. And the Queen would always stop and say hello.

And it was two Americans on a walking holiday. And it was clear from the moment that we first stopped, they hadn't recognised the Queen, which is fine. And the American gentleman was telling the Queen where he came from, where they were going to next, and where they'd been to in Britain.

And I could see it coming. And sure enough, he said, Her Majesty, and where do you live? And she said, well, I live in London, but I've got a holiday home just the other side of the hills. And he said, well, how often have you been coming up here?

Oh, she said, I've been coming up here ever since I was a little girl, so over 80 years. And you could see the clogs thinking. He said, well, if you've been coming up here for 80 years, you must have met the Queen. I love it.

[ 5 : 49 ] And as quick as a flash, she says, well, I haven't. The dick you meet so regularly. So the guy said to me, oh, you've met the Queen what she like. And because I was with her a long time, and I knew I could pull her leg, I said, oh, she can be very cantankerous at times, but she's got a lovely sense of humour.

Anyway, the next thing I knew, this guy comes round, put his arm around my shoulder, and before I could see what was happening, he gets his camera, gives it to the Queen, and says, can you take a picture of the two of us? Anyway, we swapped places, and I took a picture of them with the Queen, and we never let on, and we waved goodbye, and then Her Majesty said to me, I'd love to be a fly on the wall when he shows us photographs to the friends in America, and hopefully someone tells him who I am.

Hopefully somebody tells them who I am. I just thought that was a perfect capture of somebody who knew the Queen so personally. I'm sure that guy, Richard Griffin, had worked with Her Majesty for so many years.

And did you see what he was able to do? He was able to know that the Queen was up for a good laugh. And even before he'd said anything, she was on it, she was saying, oh, Richard knows or has met the Queen.

It was just a lovely example of somebody who knew somebody personally, and was able to understand their ways, and their mannerisms, and the relationship they had was just amazing.

[ 7 : 11 ] And we don't see that, do we? We don't see that kind of interaction, that behind the scenes. And the irony, our poor American cousins, that couple who were walking, didn't obviously notice.

And taking the photo of the officer, rather than Her Majesty, was just pretty, pretty funny. But yeah, think about relationships. How intimately do we have our relationships?

If you have colleagues at work, you will know them, but you won't know them as well as maybe a spouse, or a son, or a daughter. How can we really know somebody?

The closer you are to a person, we'll determine how well you know them. And as I say, the intimate relationship, the deeper the knowledge of the person you will have. But there's one relationship that goes even deeper than that of a husband and a wife, or a mother with a daughter, or a mother or a son, or siblings.

And that is the relationship between God and ourselves. This psalm shows us how God knows us. There is absolutely no hiding place between God and us.

[ 8 : 19 ] And put simply, there's no escaping God. If you have your Bibles open, Psalm 139, let's refocus verses 1 to 6, and let's see how God is all-knowing.

O Lord, you have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up. You discern my thoughts from afar.

You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O Lord, you know it altogether. You hem me in behind and before and lay your hand upon me.

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me. It is high. I cannot attain it. David repeatedly points out God's knowledge within these verses.

How much does God know David? He knows absolutely everything. And how is that the case? Because God has searched him according to David.

[ 9 : 24 ] Think to airports and think of the security baggage reclaim. Security protocols at airports have two purposes. That is to search and to detect if someone is trying to hide anything or get anything out of the country or into the country.

Metal detectors scan passengers to identify if they are carrying any concealed weapons or substances. Our luggage is scanned and the airport staff, their job is to identify objects that are being smuggled or hidden within suitcases or even our electronic devices or even our shoes.

But God doesn't need any devices. He doesn't need metal detectors to scan and search us because God knows us.

He knows us and he knows everything about us. God also knows our thoughts. He knows them before we know them.

Have you ever been asked the question, what are you thinking? My wife often asks me that if we're driving and it's just a natural moment of silence, we don't get that because we have two children, one five and one two, so we don't get silence in the car.

[ 10 : 39 ] But if there's ever a moment when the two of us are in each other's company and there's just a natural silence, my wife will often ask me, what are you thinking? Or have you ever been in a conversation with a friend or family member and within the conversation you anticipate where it is going and you know what that person is about to say and you catch yourself saying, I knew you were going to say that.

Again, going back to how well you know the person, that will determine how often these occurrences take place. Well, it's usually the wife that asks the husband what are you thinking?

But that will be more frequent than two colleagues working in offices if they're on the phone to each other. Two sisters catching up over a cup of coffee will often catch each other out by saying, I knew you were going to say that.

But for God, God knows David and he knows ourselves. He knows our every thought, he knows our every word and he knows our every action.

God is. It's incredible to think how awesome God is and David recognizes that in this psalm. If we were to measure God's all-knowing power, there is simply no measurement in the world that would come close.

- [ 12 : 01 ] There's so much truth to the children's chorus of Jesus' love is very wonderful. It's so high, you can't get over it. It's so low, you can't get under it. And if David was around here today, he would give that hearty amen to that chorus.

He, David, understood God's knowledge of him and he knew it was simply too wonderful, too awesome and too amazing for him to fully grasp. O Lord, you certainly have searched each one of us and you know each one of us.

There's no hiding place from God's all-knowing power. There's no escaping God whoever we are and wherever we may be. So as the psalm continues, let's focus on verses 7 through to 12.

Wherever shall I go from your spirit or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there. If I make my bed and show, there you are.

If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uppermost parts of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me and your right hand shall hold me. If I say, surely the darkness shall cover me and the light about me be night, even the darkness is not dark to you.

- [ 13 : 22 ] The night is bright as the day for darkness is as light with you. So I made the reference to that children's chorus, Jesus Love, is very wonderful.

The picture of God being ever present, God's love being everywhere is echoed across these verses. David knows that he simply cannot escape no matter where he goes.

In 1961, it was Yuri Gagarin who was the first astronaut from Russia to get out of orbit and go into space.

And he's got a very famous quote. He's quoted as saying, when he was asked, what did you see when you got there? He was quoted as saying, I looked and looked, but I did not see God.

For Yuri Gagarin, he was under the illusion that God was somehow his presence would have been within his creation within the outer space within our galaxy.

- [ 14 : 25 ] He was under the impression that if you could ascend to the highest point that is possible for a human, then you would be able to see God. But we as believers know that even outer space was made by the Lord.

Therefore, he cannot be found there. David in his writing makes use of the contrast and height and breadth and light and darkness to emphasize God's knowledge.

He knows that God's knowledge and God's power and God's care is too high for him to measure. He knows the furthest point of the sun rising in the east to the furthest part of the west is not enough to measure God's knowledge and care.

darkness is but light. Verse 11 and 12 darkness night is like light to God says David.

There's absolutely no escaping God who created it all. But why is that important to David? Well, because he knows that God will be leading him and holding him.

- [ 15 : 39 ] Look at verse 10. Even there your hand shall lead me and your right hand shall hold me. As a child of God, David knows God is with him.

I was on the school walk this week. I had Sam, who is two years old, and we walked up to collect Anna, who is in primary one. And when we got to school, as we got to the school gate, I said to Anna, okay, Anna, do you want to go the quick way home or do you want to go the long way home?

And of course, she's like, let's go the long way home. And Sam's usually in his pram, but on Wednesday, for some reason, wise or unwise, I decided to walk with Sam in his pram, not knowing that Anna would take the long way home.

But anyway, so of course, I was keeping an eye on both kids. Anna could run off to a certain point and I would have to call her back to say, don't get too far. Sam's going the opposite direction, so I'm having to take him by the hand and lead him.

The reason why I share this story this morning is because on that 20 minute walk, I found myself either leading Anna with my words for direction or physically navigating Sam by taking him by the hand.

[16:56] Ultimately, I was leading both kids at the same time, but for Anna, I could tell her where to go and for Sam, I had to show him where to go. Throughout the walk, I needed to be ever-present for both kids to make sure we all get back home.

As I said, if either of them ran too far or even ran away from me, as their father, I would have to chase them and get hold of them and take them back on course.

As best as I could, I was trying to be there for them, but also giving them the kind of freedom to explore the walk home. Ultimately, there was no place for David, to go which was beyond God's care.

In the same way that the kids were under my care on that walk home, God's care for us reaches to the highest of heights and the lowest of lows, the furthest east to the furthest west.

Is that a comfort to us this morning? So, so far, we've seen how David expresses how God, being all-knowing, and there's no hiding place, with God being ever-present, so there's no escaping his care.

[18:10] So, as we continue to move on through the psalm, we see there's no chance of evading God. Cast your eyes over verses 13 through to 18. for you formed my inner parts, you knitted me together in my mother's womb.

I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works, my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth.

Your eyes saw my unformed substance, and your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them. How precious to me are your thoughts, O God, how fast is the sum of them.

If I would count them, they are more than the sand. And I wake, and I am still with you. So we get to these very famous, very memorized verses.

For you formed my inner parts, you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. I still remember the joy of finding out in 2016 that Carly was pregnant with Anna, when we were living in air.

[19:28] And Carly came through to me, it was late one evening, she came through to me with the Brexit test, and it had the two blue lines. I still remember that like it was just six months ago, rather than six years ago.

But in the emotion of that moment, it was quite surreal for myself and Carly would have never been in a situation like that knowing that we were going to have a baby. But it was this psalm that came to mind later on that evening for myself when I sat back down.

These verses illustrate David's previous words, even the darkness is not dark to you, O Lord. The darkness of a mother's womb is as bright as light to the Lord, for he is the creator of all.

David's response is one of praise when he considers the Lord's handiwork in creating the smallest cell which grows into the smallest embryo which continues to grow into a baby.

He, God, is the one that knits it all together. Quite incredible when you pause and think about it. I remember hearing somebody, I think it was a preach, I remember somebody describing the delicacy of the human eyelids.

[ 20 : 52 ] Take a moment to think of the human eyelids. This is a great example of how God knits it. I remember the speaker describing how he'd studied the formation of an embryo's eyelid.

How incredible it is to think that God's design forms the delicateness within the formation. the eyelid is one piece, but then it splits, but then it only splits so far, and I just find myself sitting there thinking, yeah, the human eyelid is quite incredible when you think about it, but it's all God's handiwork, and he allows things such as eyelids to take shape and form the functions that they do.

So, God's caring hand was on David even before his mother gave birth to him.

God's leading brought David to his life to this point where he could stop and consider how amazing the Lord is. When he understands that the Lord knows that there's nothing more to him than anything that he created within him, we would do well to stop and consider this psalm in our own time.

So, later on today, throughout this week, go back to Psalm 139. Give it some time. Allow the Holy Spirit to move us to pray the same prayer as David continues to do.

[ 22 : 20 ] So, there's a part of me that wished that the psalm would end at verse 18. Again, what we had so far, let's recap. David has so eloquently expressed how awesome the Lord is with his knowledge and his care, and he expresses that in the words that we have in front of us.

He's been moved to praise within his soul, and he knows that God knows his every thought. And there's simply no hiding place that David can run to, nowhere where he can escape from God's care.

There's no avoiding God in his own creation. Even when he was in his mother's womb, God was watching. But then we get this sudden change.

There's a change in tone. Cast your eyes over verses 19 to 22. Oh, that you would slay the wicked, O God.

O men of blood, depart from me. They speak against you with malicious intent. Your enemies take your name in vain. Do I not hate those who hate you, O Lord?

[ 23 : 30 ] And do I not loathe those who rise up against you? I hate them with complete hatred. I count them my enemies. Ray Ortlund describes this point in the psalm as the turning of a hinge from verse 18.

I awake and I am still with you. Ortlund sees this psalm as David contemplating all the goodness of God's knowledge. And then he stirs him to wake to find himself, as Ortlund says, within the real world with real enemies who are in turn in fact God's enemies.

It's so easy for us to read through verses 19 through to 22 and jump straight to Jesus and consider that we ought to love our enemies. And that's exactly what we should do.

But before we do that, we first need to consider what David was facing. Remember King David, he was a forerunner to Christ. Therefore, he didn't have the benefit of Jesus' teaching like we do.

The focus of these verses, compared to the verses previous, are focused on outsiders. So everything that we've had before is focused on David and his inner parts, inner thoughts.

[ 24 : 54 ] These verses, verses 19 through to 22, focus on outsiders. Men who do not delight in God. Men who oppress God's grace.

David categorizes them as wicked men who kill God's chosen people. David wants nothing to do with them, verse 19. David describes his hatred for them, but we already know that God already knows this.

David's concern for justice is driving his anger and hatred towards this group of men. This group who are really, who are a reality in David's life.

But remember, David is wholeheartedly for God. John Piper sums up David's situation from Psalm 39 when he says this.

Piper quotes, we will grant to the psalmist who speaks under the guidance of the Holy Spirit as a foreshadowed Messiah and judge the right to call down judgment on the enemies of God.

[ 26 : 06 ] This is not a personal vindictiveness. It is a prophetic execution of what will happen at the last day when God casts all his enemies into the lake of fire.

End quote. So at this moment in David's life, and there are many others spread across the Psalms that David expresses hatred for enemies, for the enemies of God.

So what do we do with that today in 2022? Well, for one, we have the full counsel of God's word, unlike David's.

We have the full picture that God's word points to Jesus, the Messiah. And he will save those who trust him. And it will be he who will ultimately destroy those who rebel and turn away from him.

Is it wrong to pray for God's judgment on those who are against the Lord and his word? Well, I think what we have this morning, I think this Psalm shows, and David being the Psalmist, shows us how we are to do that in prayer.

[ 27 : 18 ] during the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus tells his followers in Matthew 5, you have heard that it is said, you should love your neighbor and hate your enemy.

But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

Matthew 5. So here we are, we are to love and to pray for those who persecute and for those who find that they are enemies, as David would describe them, in fact, God's enemies.

And if they are God's enemies, then ultimately it will be Jesus who will deal with them. He will have their final judgment.

It's with that picture of Jesus that we begin to draw to a close, remembering the words of Jesus that he taught to love our enemies and to pray for them. King David knew he felt such hostility towards God enemies and he knew that God knew it also.

[ 28 : 44 ] And this is where we land with the final two verses of Psalm 139. They're fantastic for prayer for us all to meditate on and to dwell on.

Verses 23 and 24 of Psalm 139. Search me, O God, and know my heart. Try me, and know my thoughts. And see if there are any grievous way in me.

And lead me in the way everlasting. Search me, O God, and know my heart. Try me, and know my thoughts.

I personally have been really challenged this week. have I ever taken the time like David did to call out to God and say, God, search me and know my heart.

Try me and know my thoughts. Simply put, God, I'm asking you to search me, to scan me, and to remove anything in the same way that we are scanned at the airport.

[ 29 : 53 ] Know my thoughts, God. Are we prepared to allow the Holy Spirit to lead us in a life that points to Jesus, especially in our thinking, in our speaking, and in our actions?

And that's amplified when we consider our thinking, our speaking, and our actions towards those who we consider to be enemies of God and of God's word. When we allow God to do this, the scanning and then the removing, he leads us to the way everlasting.

And then since Thursday, since the death of the Queen, I've been surprised, but yet not surprised, at how quickly the enemies of the royalty, of the royal family, have risen to the surface and their voices are beginning to shout that bit louder.

Those who would call themselves anti-royalists have begun to speak up. So this being the first Sunday since we have a king, King Charles III, as ruler of our country, this is a perfect psalm for us to be praying for King Charles.

Let's pray that King Charles will take the example of his mother and serve this country with a solid Christian faith. He's been given a great example for that for the duration of his life.

[ 31 : 25 ] But the queen modelled her words, her actions in the same way that King David modelled his words and his actions. But even more than that, we can pray that King Charles would look to Jesus and not his mother as the ultimate role model and saviour.

King Charles would do well to pray to the Lord as King David did when he says, Search me, O God, and know my heart.

Try me and know my thoughts and see if there are any grievous way in me and lead me in the way everlasting. Let's pray. Father, we thank you that you know us better than we even know ourselves.

Father, we thank you that we have your word. Lord, we thank you that your word is a pointer to Jesus.

And when we have faith by you in Jesus, then that leads to the way of life everlasting. Father, would you search us?

[ 32 : 47 ] Would you identify anything in our hearts or in our minds that is not of you and would you remove them, Father? And Lord, this week has been such an historic week that we find ourselves even more so than usual praying for people in government and people of authority.

And Father, we do pray for our new king. We pray that King Charles would find Jesus. We pray that he would find your faith and your love as he comes to your word.

Father, would you surround him with godly leadership and godly guidance. And we pray for our country. and Lord, we pray for those who are not just against royalty but ultimately against you.

Father, we pray if we know of any groups or any individuals in our circles of life, would we look to you for words and how to act towards them.

And ultimately, Lord, would you move in their lives as well. Father, we thank you for this morning. we thank you that it is your day. We ask that you would continue to bless us.

[ 34 : 11 ] In Jesus' name. Amen.