

God can't learn

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[0 : 0 0] but I don't think that's the direction that David has taken us here. I think for David, the fact that there is nowhere that he can be hidden from God is actually a source of comfort to him, because this is a God he trusts in. This is the Lord who knows him and who loves him. As he says in verse 10, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand, God's hand of power, as it were, will hold me fast. And so it's good news for him that wherever he's going to turn, wherever he's going to go, the God who loves and cares and protects him will be there in all of his wisdom. When I was growing up in Skye, we used to hear stories, I'm from the northwest of the island, we used to hear stories from the south about the leopard man of Skye. He was quite a famous guy who had a leopard print tattoo all over himself, and he grew up kind of off-grid. He lived in the wild.

Occasionally, people would sight him coming to the shops. It was this kind of elusive figure. As a child, you kind of wanted to see him, then you really didn't want to. God saw him, and God knew him.

There is nowhere that we can go or anyone can go from the presence of our God. Look at David's compass with me in verses 8 to 10. I'm imagining here there's a north and a south and an east and a west. If we go north, this is proper far north. If I go up to the heavens, you are there. Go south, as low as you can think of. If I make my bed in the depths, if I go to the place of the dead, you are there. Go east, if I rise on the wings of the dawn.

If I fly to the far side of the sea, if I go as far west as possible, even there your hand will guide me. Your right hand will hold me fast. Images to show there is nowhere we can hide from this all-knowing God, and that's a good thing for the people of God. From the compass, he moves to darkness. Verse 11, if I say, surely the darkness will hide me. Verse 12, even the darkness will not be dark to you. That thick darkness that we read about in the book of Egypt, so that they couldn't move because they couldn't see anywhere. If you've ever been in a cave, and the guide has switched off all the lights, and there's a darkness so thick you can almost feel it. Perhaps we think of the darkness when we're lying awake, consumed by fears and worries. Here's comfort. Even the darkness will not be dark to you. The night will shine like the day. There is no darkness so thick that God can't and doesn't see perfectly. Dark and light, day or night, doesn't affect God's total knowledge.

One more aspect of God's knowledge of us. Verse 16, In your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. The Lord knows all the days of our life, past, present, future. Before we were born or conceived, God knew all the days of our lives. They were written in God's book. God has the plan.

[3 : 4 2] We don't know what today will turn out like in the next few hours. We don't know what tomorrow will bring. We don't know what our circumstances will be in five years' time, but God does.

And David's intention here, as he outlines God's knowledge and control and plan of our lives, is to give glory to God, not to do damage to human responsibility. That's not his intention. There is, of course, that tension in Scripture. God is totally sovereign, and we are responsible human agents. But David's intention here is not to ask that question. It's to praise the God who knows everything about us from beginning to end, inside and outside.

And to recognize that what was true for David then is true for you and me now, and at the same time is true for the other eight billion or so people living on the planet at this particular moment in time. And when we begin to move out to that kind of range, it's no wonder, like David, you know, there is that sense of, wow, such knowledge is too wonderful.

Compared to our ignorance, compared to our limits, we are confronted here with a God of perfect and infinite wisdom who has no need to learn. There is nothing that can be taught to him.

I was thinking about this this morning before coming out to church. I'm thinking about this as an encouragement. God is the only person who sees us and knows us completely. And yet, this is the God who invites us into fellowship with him.

[5 : 45] I guess a lot of the time we're really afraid to show what we are really like. We really would not like all of the worst of our thoughts and intentions to be made publicly available.

Remarkably, God knows them, and God still chooses to love. And God sent his Son, the Lord Jesus, to save. We're going to think about, at the end, three practical applications of what it means for us that God knows everything. But let's move to the next question to ask, how does God know everything?

It takes us to this middle section, verses 13 to 18. Verse 13 really gives us the answer. How does God know everything? God knows us as the Creator. For you created my inmost being. You knit me together in my mother's room. So, David lives long before ultrasound. David lives long before those scanned photos similar to the one up on the screen. But he knows in his day that God knows our origins because God is the Creator of life. And so, we get this wonderful picture in verses 13 and 15.

You created my inmost being. You knit me together in my mother's room. And in verse 15, my frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.

It's a picture of an unborn child of an embryo in the womb, skillfully knitted and woven together by God. It's one of the many reasons I think we can be so grateful and thankful to science for giving us an insight into the wonder of what's happening before a baby is born. I was having a little read through some of the early stages of development. So, in week five of an unborn baby's development, their skin has formed, their central nervous system is beginning to develop, their eyes are beginning to take form.

[8 : 04] In week six, the brain begins to work, the spinal cord is there, the heart is developing. By week seven, you can identify the head, the arms and the legs begin to form. Week eight, you see a nose and fingers. By week 12, there are fingernails. And all of that, well, the embryo is still half the size of one pp. No wonder we find David exclaiming, I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

Your works are wonderful. I know that full well. Praise to God, the master craftsman who knows, who controls, who shapes, who weaves every aspect of a baby's development, who then knows all the days of our lives. And as David begins to consider that reality, and notice again what happens to him in verse 17. There's a sense of worship and joy and gladness. How precious to me are your thoughts, God. How vast is the sum of them. Not I love to think about you, God, but I am amazed, God, that you think of me and you have so many thoughts of me. This is precious. This is solid gold truth for David, that God, his creator, the awesome, the infinite God, thinks of us, created us, guides, and cares for us. So many thoughts. Verse 18, were I to count them? They would outnumber the grains of sand.

I didn't bring any grains of sand, but I did go into the kitchen for some grains of sugar. Boys and girls, I wonder, let me try this after, if you were to tip this out into a teaspoon, I would take us a long time. I don't know if you get any idea how many grains of sugar you find in one little bag.

Well, think about that as a teaspoon of sugar, and then change it to a teaspoon of sand, and then think about all the teaspoons of sand on all the beaches in all the world. And that's the kind of picture that David is trying to paint for us of, this is how much, this is how many thoughts, loving thoughts, guiding thoughts, caring thoughts that God has towards his children. God knows us as a wonderful creator. We still have one last question, and it's a question that takes us to, I don't know if you find this when reading Psalm 139. Often, when we hit verse 19, it can seem as a really surprising turn, can't there? The tone seems to change really quickly. But we need to ask the question, what do all these reflections, what effect do they have on David? So, we've heard notes of wonder, verse 6, such knowledge is too wonderful. Verse 14, I praise you. Verse 17, how precious to me are your thoughts. So, David is clearly worshiping the God who cannot learn, who has complete knowledge. He's being led to see the supreme worth and glory of God, to recognize the honor that this God deserves, the glory he ought to be given, the rightful place he deserves. Therefore, and this is where the turn comes, this is why the turn comes, I think. Therefore, because this is true of God, David then turns in his thoughts to oppose the sin that he sees out there in the world. If only you, God, would slay the wicked, those who speak of you with evil intent. Your adversaries misuse your name. Do I not hate those who hate you? The higher his sense of the glory of God, the more love he feels for his God, the greater his sense of pain and hatred when God is dishonored in his world.

Now, that might jar with us, but think about it in our context. Someone we love is bullied. Someone we care about is treated badly. Doesn't love move us in that moment to a form of righteous anger?

[12 : 41] It is right for us to care about injustice. It is right for us to care about those whom we love the most. Therefore, as David loves his God, he feels this profound sadness and grief when God is being dishonored. As he is committed to God's glory, he finds himself hating that idea of those who would speak badly of God, those who would refuse to worship God. Rather, they would mock God and misuse his name.

This idea of love and hate has that idea of what's my fundamental preference, what's the side that I'm going to choose? And because David chooses God and God's honor, he hates those who stand on the other side who dishonor God. So, he opposes the sin out there in the world because he worships.

Again, I don't know if we've thought about this, but when we pray, your kingdom come, your will be done. One thing that we are praying for, one way that God is going to answer that, is that in the end, all those who oppose God will be defeated.

That God will act so that true worship will be all that is found in his creation. And so, because he worships the God of glory, he is opposed to that which opposes God.

And that then leads him to verses 23 and 24, to oppose the sin not out there, but the sin in here, the sin that he identifies or wants God to identify in his own heart. He doesn't just stay with those out there. Verse 23, search me, God, and know my heart. Test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me and lead me in the way everlasting. The God who sees and knows everything is the God who is able to root out in David any corruption and sin, who is able to shine his light on it to expose it so that David might put it to death, that he might walk in the way of faith, that he might walk in the way of eternal life. And so, you have this sense in David that he has this high view of the majesty of God. And the more that he thinks about God, the more he becomes aware of how serious sin is. But as he recognizes sin isn't just a problem out there, it's in here. He also has a high view of the Lord's greatest covenant love of him.

[15 : 17] And isn't it such good news that there is a God, the God of the Bible, who loves his people despite knowing us at our worst? He chooses to send his Son to save us. Well, I said we'd think about some applications to finish of this truth that God can't learn. Let me suggest three for your further reflection. One, let me suggest that this has implications for our work. The first six verses, you know, David has been saying in various ways, God sees and knows everything about all of our daily activity. And that reminds us that all of our daily activities, including our work, they matter to him.

You know, part of our dignity as image bearers is that we have work to do from Genesis 1 to steward the earth. So, whether we work in school or university, whether we're working in a workplace or at home, we have the chance to give God glory. As we remember, moment by moment, we live before the face of God, who sees what we do, who hears what we say, and knows our intentions as we do.

So, we're invited here to remember wherever we go with our work, God is there, that we might ask that God's hand would guide us, that as we're in our workplace or we're in our school or our university, we can talk to our God, and we have an invitation to work hard for Jesus' sake.

The truth that God can't learn should influence how we work. It should also influence what we do with our worries and how we think about them. In verses 7 to 12, we're reminded that wherever we find ourselves, whatever our circumstances, wherever God places us, again, God is there.

God is there in the hospital ward. God is there in the quietness of our home. God is there if he calls us to the mission field.

[17 : 36] God is there when we're called to meet with a difficult person. God is there.

His complete knowledge of all of God's days, all of David's days. He is able to sleep, and he is able to awake and know that waking or sleeping, God is with us.

This God, he knows us completely. Our God, he knows what we need. He knows how to care for us all the days of our lives.

And so we are invited to trust him and to rest and to sleep. Lastly, with David, this reality that God can't learn has implications for our worship.

We see it so clearly that as David gives himself time to ponder and to reflect on God's precious thoughts, what happens? It leads him to praise.

[19 : 03] It leads him to praise. Thinking about how majestic and wonderful God is. It's actually such a wonderful antidote to our worries.

As we remind ourselves how great the God who cares for us is. David loves and finds it precious that God has so many thoughts about him.

Well, let's finish with one supremely precious thought that God has towards us. Let's think about the gospel. Let's think about the reality that the God of infinite, perfect, complete wisdom sent his Son into our world, knowing it was the only way to save sinners.

That the perfect, eternal Son of God became one of us, became fully and truly human. That Jesus, the Son of God, he had to learn.

And he had to learn obedience through suffering. Jesus suffered and died for our sin, for our spiritual ignorance, to bring us to know this God as our Lord, that we might know that all of our lives God is with us and God is for us.

[20 : 32] And there is nothing that can separate us from this God. Let's pray for a moment to give him thanks. Lord, our God, we thank you for a moment to stop and to reflect with David the Psalmist about how great you are.

Lord, that you are. Lord, that you have thoughts of any kind towards us is amazing when we think about how great you are.

When we think about how many people there are in this world, that you are able to have complete and perfect knowledge of all of our lives is beyond our ability to process. But Lord, as we reflect, we do pray that with David we would be drawn into increased worship.

As we recognize that you are the God who sees and knows everything, may that transform our daily lives, including our daily work.

And as we recognize there is nowhere where we can be hidden from you, that there is no darkness that's not light to you, may that give us comfort in our worries and our fears.

[22 : 02] We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.