



Date: 19th & 26th May 2024

Theme: *God knows me!*

Bible Reading(s): **Psalm 139**

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PREPARATION FOR GROUP LEADERS

Please remember to contact your group beforehand to remind them of date and time for meeting.

Please make yourself familiar with this *Good Soil* material and **Psalm 139**.

PREPARATION FOR ALL PARTICIPANTS

If you have time, read Psalm 139 before your group meeting. *Is this Psalm familiar to you? Is there anything in this Psalm that resonates with you? Have your thoughts and feelings changed about this Psalm over time?*

STARTING THE SESSION: FINDING OUR ROOTS

When sharing in small groups, please remember to only share what you feel comfortable with, respect others who are speaking, and know that if any difficult issues are raised for you, you may wish to speak privately to your minister or safeguarding officer. While the groups should be a safe space for honest reflection, the group leader may have to share things further if they have any safeguarding concerns.

In small groups of 2-3 people, discuss:

Who would you say knew you best growing up, and who knows you best now?

What does it take to really get to know a person?

Have there been moments when you have got to know yourself better? How has your self-knowledge changed or improved over the years? Are you ever surprised by yourself?

A PRAYER

Loving God,
Thank you for the opportunity to meet together and share our faith.
Help us to share honestly with each other without fear of judgement.
Encourage us to support one another.
Motivate us to give thanks and praise to you.
Uplift us so that we may know that your Holy Spirit is here with us,
and enable us to see ourselves as you see us.
Remind us that we are 'loved' completely by you. Amen.

READING THE SCRIPTURES

Read together the Bible passage: Psalm 139

Background Information:

The Psalms are the lyrical poems or songs, used by God's people in worship for thousands of years. In the Bible, there are five books of Psalms, totalling 150. They form the hymnbook of the Hebrew people, loved by Jesus, and always close to his heart and lips. We still use psalms regularly in worship today.

Psalm 139 is one of the most meditative and reflective of all the psalms; it is a prayer addressed to God. Attributed to King David, it is traditionally believed to have been written around the time of his coronation. It is an intimate prayer that encourages us to remember that God is omnipresent (present everywhere). Because of this, we can never escape from God's Spirit. This is good news to those who know and love God, because no matter what we do or where we go, we can never be far from God's guiding and comforting presence. God has searched us and known us! Words and deeds, thoughts and motives, God knows us inside out. God knows when we sit down to relax and when we rise up to engage in the various activities of life. He knows what we are thinking, and even anticipates our thoughts. This psalm reminds us of the supreme power of God, and also that God knows us intimately.

We might imagine how an artist or author is involved with care in their creation, and this is evident throughout this psalm about our creator God. The writer is secure in God's presence, asserting that we are protected in God's hand for ever and ever. The psalm expresses faith that we are made according to God's plan; designed and loved, before we were even in our mother's womb. God planned everything about us! God's infinite knowledge boggles the mind. Our human brains strain under the weight of the idea. But we can continue to bow in worship at the immensity of the knowledge of God!

The final verses of the psalm (verses 19-24) contain some harsh and disturbing words, often missed out when read in church! Here we see how the writer longs to see God honoured by the other nations, but expresses this in terms of hatred for his enemies (the adversaries of God). However, the prayer ends by asking God to test his thoughts and attitudes, and lead him in God's way. Surely this final part (verses 23-24) is good prayer for us all, especially when we are feeling annoyed or under threat.

DIGGING DEEPER

GOD KNOWS YOU (Verses 1-6):

What do verses 1-6 tell us about God? What does God know about us?

How do you feel about God knowing you better than you know yourself? (Secure and loved, or uncomfortable and restricted? Or what other feelings?) Why does this awesome thought so often bring a mix of emotions? What are some of the advantages of God knowing everything about you? How could this be a source of motivation in your life?

GOD WANTS YOU (Verses 7-12):

Even though we can't 'get away' from God, do we sometimes try to hold God at a distance? How?

GOD MADE YOU (Verses 13-18):

How often do you consider that God has been devoted to you even before you were born, and is intensely interested in the outcome of your life? How might knowing this shape our behaviour and decisions?

IN ANGER OR ADVERSITY (verses 19-24):

What are your prayers like when you're cross or feeling under attack? How might the earlier part of this psalm help us get things in an eternal perspective? What does Jesus invite us to pray for our enemies?

ACTIVITY

As you look in the mirror on a daily basis, remind yourself: '**You are fearfully and wonderfully made**'; and '**You are loved**'. Make a habit of it! Do this every day for a number of weeks, months or years.

At home, try writing a prayer to God, expressing your beliefs about God's feeling for you.

PRAYING TOGETHER

Pray together for those in the church and community who are in need of healing or strength.

Pray for those nationally or globally who are facing difficult adversaries, living through poverty or war.

Say **the Lord's Prayer** together, and any other prayer or blessing you would like to share.