



Community Group Discussion Guide

God's Attributes

January 14, 2024 | Psalm 139

MOTIVATE

Starter Questions:

- ⇒ *Think about one of your favorite people. What attributes does this person have that make him or her a favorite?*
- ⇒ *What is one of your favorite attributes of God?*

DISCUSS

Psalm 139 is in Book 5 of Psalms (see Psalms Overview). Written by David, it is considered to be primarily a Wisdom Psalm. Intended to teach, Wisdom Psalms provide practical guidelines for godly living according to God's will and direction. In this psalm, David described the personal nature of an all-knowing, all-present, all-powerful, all-holy God. David revealed the awe he felt toward God, who created the heavens and the earth yet who actually knew him and was intimately involved in his life.

- ⇒ *Why is it wise for us to continuously strive to understand God's attributes?*
- ⇒ *What difference can such knowledge make in our lives?*

David spoke of four great divine attributes which exceed our human understanding yet should deeply impact our everyday living. God is:

- All-knowing: An omniscient God has full knowledge of all things past, present, and future as well as intimate knowledge of each individual.
- All-present: An omnipresent God, unlimited by time and space, is present everywhere at once to the whole of creation, yet also to each part.
- All-powerful: An omnipotent God has all strength and might over all things at all times and in all ways.
- All-holy: A just God refers to His incomparable being and His blameless, faultless, unblemished moral purity. God does everything in harmony with His holy character.

Psalm 139:1-6 ¹ O LORD, you have searched me and known me! ² You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar. ³ You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. ⁴ Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O LORD, you know it altogether. ⁵ You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me. ⁶ Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it.

God is all-knowing

David realized that nothing in his life was hidden from God's all-seeing gaze. God knew the depths of David's being, what no one else saw. David's use of "You know" means that God had an intimate and experiential knowledge of his character, his being, his very heart. When others saw David's actions, God saw his intentions and motives.

- ⇒ *Are you reluctant to be known so thoroughly by God?*

Waking or sleeping, David was known by God. In picturesque words, David described God surrounding him like he was a city being besieged with no way of escaping His all-knowing thoughts. God laid His hand on David, implying discipline and corrective action.

- ⇒ ***In verse 6, what was David's response to being so known by God?***
- ⇒ ***Are you stunned by the magnitude of God's thoughts? Explain your answer.***

The infinite God is intimately aware of every individual on the planet. Having created life, God presides over every aspect of each life. He completely surrounds us. He is deeply familiar with everything about us—when we rest and when we rise to work and everything in-between. He knows what we're going to say before we say it. He knows everything we have ever thought or done, whether good or bad. He knows the intentions of our heart and our motives—which may not even be known to us.

- ⇒ ***God's omniscience is both convicting and comforting. What are some implications of God being all-knowing?***
- ⇒ ***How can this knowledge be cause for alarm for the unrighteous but a source of confidence for God's people?***

Psalm 139:7-12 ⁷ *Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence?* ⁸ *If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!* ⁹ *If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,* ¹⁰ *even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me.* ¹¹ *If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light about me be night,"* ¹² *even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is bright as the day, for darkness is as light with you.*

God is all-present

God is always with us. David envisioned the extremes from which he may have tried to escape God's divine presence: from the heights to the depths to the outermost seas. But David learned he could not run from God nor could he hide from Him. Regardless of David's location, God was there.

- ⇒ ***Can you think of circumstances from David's life in which he may have wanted to hide from God?***
- ⇒ ***Have you ever been tempted to try and hide from God? What was the result?***

David emphasized two places:

- **Sheol (verse 8):** Also called the depths, the Old Testament writers considered this to be the realm of the dead or the temporary place of departed souls.
- **Darkness (verse 11-12):** This darkness refers to times of trials, often called "the dark nights of the soul." Thinking perhaps the darkness would remove him from God's presence, David discovered that darkness quickly ceases to be darkness when the radiance of God's presence is there. In the dark night, God knows perfectly all that is transpiring and what His eternal purposes are.

- ⇒ ***Describe how these words of David are a source of comfort: Even the darkness will not be dark to you.***

God is always in touch with our lives. We are never beyond His reach. No matter where we are, God's hand will lead us and His right hand—considered the hand of strength--will hold us.

⇒ ***For those who desire God's presence, how is this a comforting promise?***

Psalm 139:13-18 ¹³ *For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. ¹⁴ I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. ¹⁵ My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. ¹⁶ 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. ¹⁷ How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! ¹⁸ If I would count them, they are more than the sand. I awake, and I am still with you.*

God is all-powerful

David marveled at God's power as evidenced in the birth process. David was astounded that God precisely created him and ordained the number of his days. With words like an artist, David described how God had "knitted" him and "intricately woven" him together like a skilled artisan would weave a beautiful tapestry.

God made David in the secret place, a euphemism for the womb, that unseen place concealed from human eyes. There David was threaded together like a multicolored masterpiece of cloth or fine needlepoint. All these threads picture his veins, arteries, muscles, and tendons.¹ God saw David's unformed body before he was made. The precise length of his life was determined by God before he was born. There could be no changing the number of his days.²

- ⇒ ***Why must we all understand that every person, including ourselves, is "fearfully and wonderfully made?"***
- ⇒ ***In verses 17-18, what was David's response to being so perfectly created by God?***
- ⇒ ***What is your response?***

These divine truths were precious to David, vast and beyond his human comprehension. If he tried to list these truths about God, they would outnumber the grains of sand on the earth, far past his ability to understand. When David awakened, his thoughts were still dominated by God.

We are fearfully, wonderfully, secretly, and invisibly made by the hand of God. He determines the length of our lives even before we're born. He made us and we are His.

- ⇒ ***Discuss this quote from the NIV Commentary on Psalm 139: The God who knows us from our beginnings is the God who has watched us all along.***

Psalm 139:19-24 ¹⁹ *Oh that you would slay the wicked, O God! O men of blood, depart from me! ²⁰ They speak against you with malicious intent; your enemies take your name in vain. ²¹ Do I not hate those who hate you, O LORD? And do I not loathe those who rise up against you? ²² I hate them with complete hatred; I count them my enemies. ²³ Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! ²⁴ And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!*

¹ Lawson, S. J. (2006). [Psalms 76–150](#). (M. Anders, Ed.) (Vol. 12, p. 335). Nashville, TN: Holman Reference.

² Lawson, S. J. (2006). [Psalms 76–150](#). (M. Anders, Ed.) (Vol. 12, p. 335). Nashville, TN: Holman Reference.

God is all-holy

David began this section by pledging his loyalty to God. God's enemies were David's enemies. To challenge God was to challenge David. David asked God to slay those who opposed Him and blasphemed His name. Yet, David also understood that it is God alone, in His holiness, who can judge correctly since only He knows all the circumstances and inner motives.

⇒ ***Since God knows everything, why will His justice always be administered fairly?***

In his prayer for vindication, David was keenly aware of his own imperfection and of his desire to be holy before God. Test me, he asked God, as a refiner would test and purify metal. David asked that God reveal to him any offensive way in which his sin grieved the Lord. Only then, once his own sin was confessed and removed, could God lead him in the way of holiness.

David's prayer to God should be our own:

- Search and know me: Because God fully knows us, we should be compelled to ask Him to search us since we cannot fully know ourselves.
- Try me: Reveal any way in which our sin grieves God. Only when it is confessed and removed can God lead in the way of holiness.
- Forgive me: Demonstrate an awareness of our imperfection and of a desire to do right before a holy God.
- Lead me: Direct us down the right path and away from any path that grieves.

TRANSFORM

Make personal application:

The personal application of this inspired psalm begins with an overwhelming sense of the infinite greatness of God. The fact that He exceeds the limits of our human comprehension should cause us to respond in increasing amazement toward Him. The God who is near us is the God who knows us and makes Himself known. The greater our vision of God's attributes, the greater will be the wonder-filled love that will overwhelm our hearts for Him.

- ⇒ ***How is it that God can be both infinite yet intimate?***
- ⇒ ***What is your response to a God who makes Himself known to you in such an intimate relationship?***
- ⇒ ***Of the four attributes of God we discussed today, which one is currently the most meaningful to you? Explain your answer.***

Pray:

Praise God for each of the divine attributes focused on today: all-knowing, all-present, all-powerful, all-holy. Use Psalm 139:23-24 to pray a similar pray to David's.

STUDY: Resources used, compiled from, and quoted

- *Holman New Testament Commentary, Psalms 76-150* pages 332-338
- *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, pages 1191-1192
- *The NIV Application Commentary, Psalms, Volume 2*, pages 913-927
- *Shepherd's Notes, Psalm 101-139*, pages 67-69