

# Reflections and Meditations on Psalm 139:1-6

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## Part I: *Searched and Known*

“O Lord, You have searched me and known *me*.” -Psalm 139:1

In the language of the NKJV<sup>1</sup> the translator(s) have added the word *me* to the end of verse 1 for clarity' sake. As such it has been italicized and that italics tips us off to let us know that a particular word was not found in the original Hebrew of the Old Testament -or for that matter in the Greek of the New Testament but was added in order to clarify the author's intent.

In this case I quite enjoy reading verse 1 without the use of the italicized *me*. I find that when I read it this way, "*Oh Lord, you have search me and known*" that it gives way to a rather open-ended line of questioning concerning David's choice of introductory lines. For example, "*Lord, you've searched David and now what exactly is it that you know?*"

I pause and I imagine God stopping everything that He's doing and focusing all of His intention on me and saying, "*Aha! Now I know!*" "*What Lord, what do you know?*" Can you even imagine what God would say in response to that?! And this is where we stop and wonder. Some may fear that God has uncovered their hidden sin and crooked motives. Others that God has seen their best effort -even on their worst days. And while these are both true, God sees much more than this. God sees what is hidden- "*My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.*"<sup>2</sup> Yes, God certainly sees our brokenness and our failures -He is intimately aware of them. But the divine vantage point sees well beyond the horizon of our fallenness. God sees who we can be -and who we will be in Him one day. He sees us apart from our brokenness. God possesses the ability to rejoice in us in our imperfection because of the confidence He possesses in His own abilities. Imagine a father who knows that one day his young son will be an all-star caliber professional ball player. How would he coach his son as the boy struggles to hit his first ball off the batting tee? "*C'mon son, you've got this!*" "*But I can't do it!*" says the boy, "*I'm just not good enough and it's too hard!*" But the father knows what the boy does not and while he takes the time to correct certain aspects of his sons swing and stance in the batter's box, he continues to call the boy into who he will be one day. This is how it is with God. He knows what lies hidden in our potential and He knows how He feels about us along the journey. In fact, God has already searched *you* and knows!

But I want us to go a step further and ask ourselves, "*What does it mean that God searches us?*" In keeping with a biblical theology, we concede that God is certainly not searching us out for information' sake. He's not lacking concerning the details of our life. So then if He's not gathering data what is He up to? Psalm 139 is widely recognized as one of the most intimate treatments in all of the Psalms concerning *the relationship* of God to man. Thus, this *searching* is taking place in the context of relational love. God is searching David because He delights in David. The Hebrew root word<sup>3</sup> formed and translated as [you have] *searched* carries with it the sense of an examination -a thorough probing. But because God already possesses all the information he needs about David's life this probing is deeply personal.

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<sup>1</sup> New King James Version

<sup>2</sup> Ps.139:15

<sup>3</sup> חָקַר (ḥā-qār)

Let's take a minute to dive under the surface a bit as we further explore the richness of this first verse. What about this word translated into English as *known*? Remember, David didn't compose his songs in English so running to the English dictionary is probably not the best way to understand his intent. As you may imagine, in Hebrew, as in English, *to know* carries a wide variety of meaning. In this case the Hebrew root word<sup>4</sup> includes in it the implied meaning *to care*. The implication is that God is searching David because He cares about him -because He likes him. God's observation of David is intentional. In this case God's detailed knowledge of David isn't limited to His omniscience it's related to His sovereignty. God knows -not just because He's all-knowing but because He chooses to know by coming close enough to see for Himself.

To summarize we can either say that God has familiarized Himself with David because He cares for Him or because God cares for David, He has chosen to get to know him as a friend. Imagine if I told you that God wants to come close to you because He likes you. Most of the time we don't appreciate others rummaging around in our personal affairs. But God desires to come close -to examine or to familiarize Himself with us because He cares for us. God is intensely relational, and He desires to walk right in through the front door and make Himself at home in our living room.

God searches and He knows. He probes because He cares. He examines by coming close. *"Oh Lord, You've searched me because you care."* By taking the time to make this *theology of divine affection*<sup>5</sup> practical we can begin to participate in the eternal beauty and power of this reality today!

But let's rewind for just a minute. When we approach the scriptures, in this case the Psalms, we must take time to read through them. In our case we start by reading all the way through Psalm 139 and we become familiar with *what the Psalm says*. Next, we slow our tempo and begin to comb through individual phrases even pausing to examine specific words. This helps us to get to know *what the Psalm means*. But we don't want to stop here. We want the word of God to dwell *in us* richly -with all understanding<sup>6</sup>. The word of God dwells in us by the presence and activity of the abiding Holy Spirit and so we must talk to the Spirit through the lens of His word. As I discover truths about God I want to stop and thank Him for them. I want to ask Him to continue to reveal Himself to me and I want to ask Him to do in me what He has said. So, *"Father, thank you for showing me that you have chosen to draw near and to know me intimately."* *"Would you continue to show me more about this? Help me to understand to greater degrees your love and familiarity with me."* And finally, *"Lord, would you continue to come close, and would you let me experience the truth concerning how you feel about me and what you already know about me?"*

In this way as we search His word His word begins to search us. In a glorious turn of events, we find that we have begun to search out and know the God who searches and knows us. What a marvelous and fruitful way to participate in the affections and power of our God!

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<sup>4</sup> [יָדָעַ] yâda'

<sup>5</sup> Phil.1:8

<sup>6</sup> Col.3:16

