



LET'S BEGIN HERE

The great doctrines of the Bible not only provide a solid foundation for our faith but offer to us genuine comfort during difficult times. That is especially true of the many attributes of God—those divine characteristics that mark His nature and His ways. Psalm 139 uniquely explores many of those expressions of divine nature, leaving much to mystery, but also signaling to us the personal and powerful care that God offers His children, providing our greatest reassurance in times of doubt.



Getting Started: The Making of a Psalm

God's people, the Hebrews, enjoyed a rich history of song-making and worship, both personal and corporate. The Old Testament presents in all its genres a treasure trove of songs, hymns, and spiritual songs, composed and sung by the faithful, from Genesis to the end of Malachi. A significant concentration of those worship hymns found a permanent home in the Hebrew psalter—the book of Psalms. Not unlike the hymns and praise songs of today, the Psalms gave expression to the struggles of the faithful as well as to the deep truths of God as revealed in creation (Job 38:7), through the ministry of His servants (Deuteronomy 32:1–43), and often accompanied by angelic antiphony (Isaiah 6:2–4).

Psalm 139 stands out as one of the psalms that not only captures some of the most profound attributes of God but also how those doctrines ought to undergird the rhythmic meter of faith.

Take a few moments to turn to Psalm 139 and read it to yourself and then aloud. Use the time to listen to the poetry and expressions as if you're seeing it for the very first time.

What phrases or expressions are most meaningful to you? Explain your response as transparently as possible.

Quotable

*I don't know
of a better statement
in all the Bible to
reassure us of
God's involvement
in our lives than
the one hundred
thirty-ninth psalm.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



THE GREATEST WORDS

Our Greatest Reassurance

Psalm 139

Each hymn or psalm was composed with a specific purpose—either as personal prayer or expression of praise, or as an anthem to be used in the corporate Hebrew worship experience.

Look closely at the words in your Bible printed at the very top of the psalm. You will find an inscription, printed in a small font that offers insight into the origin and purpose of the psalm.

Who wrote Psalm 139? And for what purpose was it composed?

Make your way through the psalm, and this time make some notes about any major themes or ideas that you see. Use one-word or two-word descriptions of each theme or idea.

Your Turn in the Scriptures

Perhaps nowhere else in Scripture are the attributes of God more clearly on display than in the refrains of Psalm 139. Let's take a closer look at how each section develops and examine the attributes in each section the prayer-song represents.

God's Omniscience—God Is All-Knowing

Read Psalm 139:1–6. Describe the many ways David explained the all-knowing nature of God. List all the aspects of God's omniscience found in these verses.



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Read Isaiah 49:15–16. Pay close attention to who is speaking to whom. Using a commentary of the Old Testament or a theological dictionary of the Old Testament, try to discover the context of these two verses.

What is being revealed about the nature of God?

How does this passage compare or contrast with what is being expressed in Psalm 139:1–6? Do you see any similar images or language? If so, what do you see?

How do Isaiah’s words help explain the meaning of Psalm 139:1–6?

SERMON NOTE: If you were delivering a sermon on Psalm 139:1–6, for instance, and making a point on the attribute of God’s omniscience, you might say, “The fact that God is all-knowing ought to bring us great reassurance in times of uncertainty. It’s not merely a cold, tested doctrine but a powerful truth we can cling to when we’re troubled.” Then you could illustrate that by having the congregation turn to Isaiah 49:15–16 and making the point: “God is not just all-knowing, but because He knows everything about us, He cares for us even more compassionately and deeply than a mother for her nursing baby.” See how that works?

Now go through the remaining sections of Psalm 139, and study the corresponding characteristics of God represented in each. Follow the process modeled above based on verses 1–6 for each remaining section. Use the prompts as a guide as you study each section, support what you find with a correlating passage, and then make a sentence or two of personal application.



THE GREATEST WORDS

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Psalm 139

God's Omnipresence — God Is Ever-Present

Psalm 139:7–12

Observations from these verses:

In what ways did David describe God's omnipresence?

What significant images did David employ to express this truth?

Correlating passage: _____

How does it relate to Psalm 139:7–12?

Principle(s) for application:



THE GREATEST WORDS

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Psalm 139

God's Omnipotence — God Is All-Powerful

Psalm 139:13–18

Observations from these verses:

In what ways did David describe God's omnipotence?

What significant images did David employ to express this truth?

Correlating passage: _____

How does it relate to Psalm 139:13–18?

Principle(s) for application:



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Psalm 139

God's Faithfulness—God Is Perfectly Just and Good

Psalm 139:19–24

Observations from these verses:

In what ways did David describe God's faithfulness?

What significant images did David employ to express this truth?

Correlating passage: _____

How does it relate to Psalm 139:19–24?

Principle(s) for application:





A FINAL PRAYER

Write out your own prayerful response to what you have discovered about God from your study of Psalm 139. Use the space below, or write your prayer in your journal.



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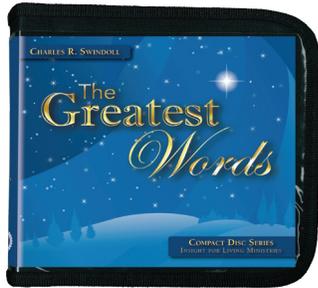
Psalm 139

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

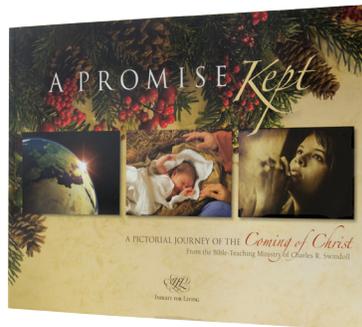
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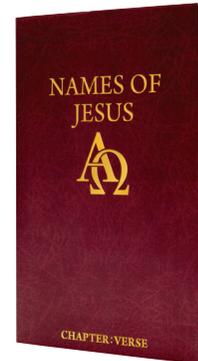
Tools for Digging Deeper



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For the 2016 broadcast, this Searching the Scriptures study was developed by Mark Tobey in collaboration with Charles R. Swindoll based upon the original outlines, charts, and sermon transcripts.



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