



**Psalm 139**  
Inductive Discovery Lesson 9

George Beverly Shea has been a musical artist and ministry partner extraordinaire alongside Billy Graham since 1943, when the two first met doing a radio program in Chicago. Mr. Graham once said, "I've been listening to Bev Shea sing for more than 50 years, and I would still rather hear him sing than anyone else I know." In his biography profile Shea is referred to as "a man of deep sympathies, who will listen endlessly to the troubles of others but dismiss his own with a word and a smile." The words to one of his most often sung numbers remind us to view life from a heavenly perspective, and to adore both the infinity and intimacy of the God we see here depicted in Psalm 139:

*How big is God? How big and wide His vast domain.  
To try to tell, these lips can only start.  
He's big enough to rule His mighty universe;  
Yet small enough to live within my heart."*

On planet earth where over six billion persons reside, God knows each one individually and intimately. Everything about us—every thought, attitude, action, or word spoken—is known by Him. Nothing is hidden from Him. He is everywhere at once, involved in the tiniest details of our lives. Such knowledge, when meditated upon, reduces us to the lowest humility and rouses us to the highest adoration. His glory and majesty far exceed our ability to comprehend Him and yet, the Bible says, it is possible to know Him even as we are known!

***Did you know ~***

Psalm 139 is one of the wisdom psalms, written by David from a deeply personal perspective. The occasion for its composition is unknown, but its message is unmistakably clear. In it we find reason for the awesome wonder with which David worshipped the God who created the universe, yet who intimately knew him and became involved in the daily details of David's life. This poem beautifully describes the omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence, and divine holiness of God, aspects of His character that forever impact the lives of all His children.



## Psalm 139

*God's Character and Care for Man*

A Psalm of David



- 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.

- 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.

- 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 were 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.

- 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!

## OBSERVE

**“Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law.”** – Psalm 119:18

The basic thing to remember about observing a psalm is that it is poetry—and poets think in images. Whatever type of psalm it may be (praise or lament, meditation or petition, just to name a few) the psalmist uses familiar images to turn his experience into a picture. He uses figurative language to reflect on God’s character and express the stirrings of his own soul.

Start by reading the entire psalm through a few times. You might try reading it aloud, or have someone else read it while you listen intently.

Some things to look for: Does the psalmist compare or contrast one thing to another? Does he repeat a specific word or phrase to emphasize a theme? The psalmist may use hyperbole (an exaggeration for the sake of effect, not meant to be taken literally). What experience does he describe? What emotions does he express? What characteristics of God does he mention? Does he make a vow or a declaration? Use the **first column** to describe what the psalmist says. Use the **second column** to jot down your own notes, thoughts, impressions or questions.

Write the definition of words listed in each section. Use a regular dictionary or an Old Testament Word Study dictionary if you have one.

### Psalm 139:1-6

What the psalmist says:

My notes and personal observations:

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search (v.1,3) \_\_\_\_\_

What does David declare about the Lord? \_\_\_\_\_

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**Psalm 139:7-12**

What the psalmist says:

My notes and personal observations:

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Sheol (v.8) \_\_\_\_\_

lead (v.10) \_\_\_\_\_

hold (v.10) \_\_\_\_\_

What does David declare about the Lord? \_\_\_\_\_

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**Psalm 139:13-18**

What the psalmist says:

My notes and personal observations:

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fearfully (v.14) \_\_\_\_\_

wonderfully (v.14) \_\_\_\_\_

made (v.14) \_\_\_\_\_



**Did you know . . .**

At conception, 46 chromosomes with 30,000 genes combined to determine all of your physical characteristics: gender, facial features, body type, color of hair, eyes and skin. You already carried within your DNA the personal and family characteristics that would make you uniquely you! Your heart began to beat at 18 days. At 8 weeks, all your organs were formed and beginning to function. Cartilage was being knit into bone. At 10 weeks, you could make sounds with your new vocal chords. At 12 weeks you could wrinkle your forehead, raise your eyebrows, and turn your head. At 16 weeks your fingerprints were fashioned in the delicate new layer of your skin. At 25 weeks you could open your eyes and react to sudden noise. By 30 weeks you were exercising all your senses: vision, hearing, taste, and touch. You may even have sucked your thumb!

**Psalm 139:19:24**

What the psalmist says:

My notes and personal observations:

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search me (v.13) \_\_\_\_\_

try me (v.13) \_\_\_\_\_

What does David declare to the Lord? \_\_\_\_\_

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**CONSIDER**

According to Psalm 139 . . .

What does God know about you? \_\_\_\_\_

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What do you know about God? \_\_\_\_\_

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## INTERPRET and APPLY

***"The unfolding of Your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple."***

*- Psalm 119:130*

**Look for a spiritual lesson.** The imaginative language of the Psalms helps us to understand that God's Word provides guidance for our feelings as well as our faith. As you look for spiritual lessons, keep in mind that this collection of prayers and songs teaches us how to worship God—not just with our lips but with our lives. While the Psalms address all aspects of life and human experience, ultimately they point us back to our Creator.

Ask: What is the theme of this psalm? How does the psalmist express himself to God? What does this psalm reveal about God's character or His relationship with His people? Is there a command to obey? Is there a promise to claim? Is there a condition to that promise? Is there a warning to heed? Is there an example to follow or avoid? **State the lesson in one simple sentence.**

***"I pondered the direction of my life and I turned to follow Your statutes.  
I will hurry, without lingering, to obey Your commands."***

*- Psalm 119:59-60 NLT*

We don't read the Bible just to gather information—we want to spiritually grow. Our heart needs to be open to change. The only way to move truth off the pages of your Bible and into your life is to **put it into action.**

To apply a spiritual lesson, we must examine ourselves and take deliberate steps to obey what we have learned. Ask yourself: What can I learn from the psalmist's experience? How does this help to line up my feelings with my faith? Does it provide comfort? Does it provide correction? Think of how the lesson relates to you and what specific course of action you will take. **Write your application in the form of a question to make it personal.**

### **Psalm 139:1-6**

Lesson: \_\_\_\_\_

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Application: \_\_\_\_\_

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### **Psalm 139:7-12**

Lesson: \_\_\_\_\_

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Application: \_\_\_\_\_

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### **Psalm 139:13-18**

Lesson: \_\_\_\_\_

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Application: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Psalm 139:19-24**

Lesson: \_\_\_\_\_  
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Application: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_?

**Summary**

Write a simple sentence that summarizes what the psalm is about. \_\_\_\_\_  
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Give your own title to the psalm to help you remember what it says.  
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## Up close and personal

**Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my anxious thoughts;  
And see if there be any hurtful way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way.**

Psalm 139:23-24 NAS

### Memorize God's Word

Choose the translation you prefer to memorize the verse in and re-write it here.

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### Meditate on God's Word

As you memorize this verse, let it work into your heart and mind. Scripture meditation is like a good cup of tea: the longer it steeps, the richer the flavor. So give yourself permission to slowly savor God's Word! Use the questions below (like a tea bag) to keep dipping into this verse.

Challenge alert: You won't always see an obvious answer directly from the verse. Just *think and pray* about it and share what the Lord brings to your heart and mind.

**Look up.** What does this verse teach you about God? (For example, look for signs of His character, His attributes, His works, His promises.)

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**Look around.** What does this verse teach you about the world and people in general?

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**Look within.** What does this verse teach you about yourself?

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**Look ahead.** Does this verse give you reason to hope? Briefly share your thoughts.

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**Look alive!** Given the opportunity, how would you express the truth found in this verse to someone who needs to hear it?

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## Make God's Word Your Prayer

As you memorize and meditate on this verse, pray it back to the Lord. Let the Holy Spirit examine your heart, increase your understanding, and help you to pray. Ask Him for faith and strength to *act* on the truth of God's Word.

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## A Lamp to my Feet and a Light to my Path

What has been the most important lesson, for you personally, as you studied this psalm? How will you begin today to put what you are learning into practice?

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