



GOALS

- For students to see that God created them personally.
- For students to recognize God is present everywhere around them.
- For students to realize God knows everything about them.

MATERIALS: Group

- Variety of colored pencils
- Whiteboard and markers
- Timer

MATERIALS: Each Student

- Student journal pages
- Bibles
- Scripture sheet, Psalm 139
- Pen and colored pencils

SESSION INTRO

Prayer

After your group has gathered, open your session in prayer, thanking God for creating us and desiring an intimate relationship with us.

Open

If your group is more than five in size, form smaller groups of three to four. Explain that you are going to spend the next five minutes playing the game, *"If You Really Knew Me."* Each person will get one minute to finish the sentence "if you really knew me..." with as many responses as they can. The object is to share things people wouldn't know unless they really knew them.

You go first as the leader to give an example. Then set your timer and allow each student to have a turn in his or her group.

After all have shared, ask:

Did you find it difficult or easy to share things? Would you rather be the sharer or the listener?

What did you learn about fellow students that you didn't know before?

Transition into Psalm 139 by sharing in your own words some or all of the bullet-point background below:

The book of Psalms is different from any other book. Most of the other books in the Bible primarily consist of God's dealings with mankind, but the psalms are unique in that they place far greater emphasis on the heartfelt, gut-honest responses of real people to the God who made them and understands them—who really knows them. They consist of real people honestly searching for God in the midst of real struggles. In today's world this is something we could all benefit from—to be able to live openly and honestly before God, in relationship with the one who created us.

David is often described as a man after God's own heart. He knew God in the same way we know our best friends. Think of the person you know the most about in your life. Imagine knowing God as well as you know that person. Imagine hearing Him just as clearly as you hear your friend.

We have been invited to speak to God as openly and honestly as we will see David do. The pages of the book of Psalms are going to help us know God intimately (this is just a fancy word for closely/personally) and better connect with Him. Through this study we will use Scripture as a guide in hearing His voice and understanding His wisdom.

DIGGING IN

Let's jump into Psalm 139.

Ask students to come up with a symbol to mark the author of the psalm. This may be a circle, a box, or even a stick figure (they can use their colored pencils for this exercise.). Using their Scripture sheets, have them read the psalm slowly and carefully to discover everything they can about the person who wrote it. The group should use the symbol to mark any mention of the author of the psalm whenever it occurs. This includes pronouns, like "I," "me," and "my."

If there is room, let your students spread out to different parts of the room or building to be alone with God while digging into His Word.

After most students have finished reading, gather them back to discuss what they've seen in Psalm 139. (Let students know that it's okay if not everyone finished the entire exercise.)

Use the following questions to guide your group through discussing the psalm.

Who wrote Psalm 139?

David

Just by reading this psalm, what do you think this guy (David) is like? What was his relationship with God like?

Why (based on Psalm 139) would you use these words to describe David's relationship with God?

David said a lot of things about himself in this psalm. Do you think that the things David said about himself could be said of us? Why or why not?

TAKING IT INWARD

Part 1

For this segment divide your white-board into 4 quadrants and label them 1, 2, 3, 4. After students have discussed the questions explain that you're going to break down the psalm into four bite-sized sections (like you did in your personal prep).

Share with your group that anything David wrote about himself in this psalm is also true of us. So, beginning with verses 1-6 have students look at the references to David that they marked and to identify two things that they're glad pertain to them. Then invite them to share these two favorite facts about themselves. As they feed you the details, record the information on the board in Quadrant 1.

Possible responses include:

I'm searched and known by God (v. 1)

God knows when I sit down and get up (v. 2)

God knows what I'm thinking (v. 2)

God knows when I go out (v. 3)

God knows my sleep habits (v. 3)

He's familiar with all my ways (v. 3)

He knows what I'm going to say before I say it (v. 4)

He's all around me – right in front of my face/right behind my back (v. 5)

His hand is right above me (I'm surrounded) (v. 5)

Ask students to create a bumper-sticker phrase as a title for Part 1 of the psalm (verses 1-6). They can write this title in the space provided on their Scripture sheet. Examples: *God Knows*; *God Knows My Nose*

Part 2

Now have your students do the same thing for verses 7-12. Once they have had a minute to review the info they marked about David, have your students shout out one favorite fact they learned about themselves and about God from Part 2.

Possible responses include:

I can't get away from God's Spirit (v. 7)

I can't flee from His presence (v. 7)

Wherever I go, He is there (v. 8-9)

Wherever I go, His hand guides and holds me (v. 10)

I can't hide in the dark from God; He sees everything (v. 11-12)

Ask students to make up a bumper-sticker title for Part 2 of the psalm (verses 7-12). They should write the title in the space on their Scripture sheet.

Part 3

Time for Part 3 (verses 13-18). Again, give your students a minute to review this section of the psalm. Then, have them shout out their top 2 favorites and write them on the board. Your list may look something like this:

Possible responses include:

God created my inmost being (v. 13) *God saw me when I was made in the secret place (v. 15)*
He knit/wove me together in my mother's womb (v. 13-15) *His eyes saw my unformed body (He saw my cells) (v. 16)*
I am fearfully and wonderfully made (v. 14) *God knew all the days of my life before they even began (v. 16)*
God's works are wonderful (and I am one of them!) (v. 14)

In case your students ask, in the Hebrew language the phrase “in the depths of the earth” (used in verse 15) was a figurative or poetic way of saying, “in the womb.”

Ask your students to make a bumper-sticker title for Part 3 of the psalm (verses 13-18). They should write the title in the space on their Scripture sheet.

Part 4

Last one! This part of the psalm, verses 19-24, seems to take a little bit of a twist. All through Psalm 139, David has seemed like a pretty sweet guy in a generally good mood. Now, all of the sudden, he seems ticked off – he’s not even being very “Christian” about it either! (Yeh, we know David was Jewish and not Christian. But he knew God’s law and he knew how to behave – so what’s the deal?)

Have you students read the verses, marking the references to David and then have them share a favorite fact they learned. List these in Quadrant 4 on your whiteboard.

Possible responses include:

He wants God to slay the wicked (v. 19) *He wants God to search him and his heart (v. 23)*
He wants God to get the blood thirsty men away
from him (v. 19) *He has anxious thoughts (v. 23)*
He hates those who hate God (v. 20-21) *He wants God to point out any offensive ways he has (v. 24)*
He counts these people as his enemies (v. 22) *He wants God to lead him in the everlasting way (v. 24)*

Now have your students make a bumper-sticker title for Part 4 of Psalm 139.

Look over your board and all the things you have listed. Ask your students some of the following questions to help summarize this exercise:

How would you sum up what you have learned about God?

Is this scary? Comforting? Why?

Have you ever wished that God seemed more near to you?

Based on this psalm, where was He when you were wishing this?

If God is truly all around you, why do you think you don’t experience Him as near to you as often as you’d like?

Faith vs. Feelings –students may answer this question in a variety of different ways. But you will want to be prepared to talk about the difference between faith and feeling. Faith is believing in God’s presence because of what the Bible says (even when you don’t feel it). Feeling is going on emotion, as in, “God doesn’t seem to be with me, so He probably isn’t.”

In Part 4, what do you think David was so upset about?

Do you think he was right or wrong to express the thoughts to God?

If your students think he was wrong direct them back to verse 4 and remind them that God already knew.

Which do you think God prefers in our relationship with Him: honesty or hypocrisy (pretending to be someone we are not)?

Explain to your group that you're going to close your session by playing the game, *If You Really Knew Me...* with God. Direct your students to the bottom part of their journal pages, *If You Really Knew Me...* In this spot, they are going to be given the opportunity to let God in on who they really are – openly and honestly. Invite them to play, *If You Really Knew Me* with God. Set your timer and give them one minute to tell God as many things as they can.

Once their minute is up, consider asking the following questions:

Was it hard to tell God what you just told Him?

Why or why not?

How close would you like your relationship with God to be?

PUTTING INTO PRACTICE

Close your time by discussing these questions with each other. Give students a minute to write a response on their journal pages before sharing with the group.

What does Psalm 139 tell you about God?

God wants to know you.

God speaks to you and He wants to speak to you even more!

He isn't interested in robots following Him. He wants a real, honest relationship.

What does this psalm teach you about your relationship with God?

You don't have to have it all together to have a real relationship with God. In fact, it is often when we don't have it all together and go to Him that we best experience Him.

What is one thing you can do this week to become closer to God?

Have students write an idea in the space provided on their journal page and then discuss the question as a group.

Close your session by sharing this idea that students can do this week to show God that they “get” what Psalm 139 is teaching us.

Take some time to listen to God finish the sentence “If You Really Knew Me...” Journal what you hear from God and then text/Tweet/post to the group what you journal.

One more thing:

Your students may have noticed that because they used the Scripture sheets that they haven't used their Bibles in this session. In most sessions they will be using their Bibles to look up other passages. To encourage personal use of their Bibles, have students open their Bibles to Psalm 139. Invite them to make notes from the session in the margins of this psalm.