



### 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
- A pen

### 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 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 speak to God. 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 get started by digging into Psalm 139.

Ask students to create 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 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. (Be sure to 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?**

*If your students have trouble describing David's relationship with God, refer them to the list of descriptive words on their journal pages. Ask them to circle the descriptions they think apply. Then ask them to share their answers.*

### **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

For this segment divide your whiteboard into 4 quadrants and label them 1, 2, 3, 4. After students have discussed the questions explain that you're going to look at four bite-sized chunks of Psalm 139. [LEADER NOTE: To better accommodate the middle school attention span, you'll not be looking at every verse of each section as it's divided on the Scripture sheet.]

### **Bite-Sized Chunk 1**

Share with your group that anything David wrote about himself in this psalm is also true of us. So, beginning with verses 1-3, and with their Scripture sheet in front of them, have your students look at the symbols they drew over references to David. These are facts they can learn about themselves. Ask them to shout out their favorite two things and write these on the whiteboard in Quadrant 1.

#### **Possible responses include:**

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

*God knows when I go out (v. 3)*

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

*God knows my sleep habits (v. 3)*

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

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

Now discuss the following questions:

**How would you sum up what you learn about God from these verses?**

**Is that scary? Comforting? Why?**

Ask your students to create a funny or interesting title for this section of the psalm. Agree as a group on the best title and have them write this in the quadrant labeled "Bite Sized Chunk 1."

### **Bite-Sized Chunk 2**

Now have your students do the same thing for verses 7-10. With their scripture sheet in front of them ask them to shout out the one thing that excites them the most and write these on the whiteboard in Quadrant 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)*

Now ask your students:

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

**Based on what you just read, where was God 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 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."*

Ask your students to create a funny or interesting title for this section of the psalm. Agree as a group on the best title and have them write this in the quadrant labeled "Bite Sized Chunk 2." Write this in Quadrant 2 and have them write the title in the space on their journal page.

**Bite-Sized Chunk 3**

Have your students look at what they marked in verses 13-16 and shout out the one thing that grabs their attention the most from this section.

**Possible responses include:**

*God created my inmost being (v. 13)*

*He knit/wove me together in my mother's womb (v. 13-15)*

*I am fearfully and wonderfully made (v. 14)*

*God's works are wonderful (and I am one of them!) (v. 14)*

*God saw me when I was made in the secret place (v. 15)*

*His eyes saw my unformed body (He saw my cells) (v. 16)*

*God knew all the days of my life before they even began (v. 16)*

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."

You might want to ask your students the following questions about Part 3.

**What big point do you think David is making in these verses?**

**Based on this list on the board, how can this psalm help you if...**

- **The circumstances of your birth weren't ideal?**
- **You don't like your body or the way you were made?**

Ask your students to create a funny or interesting title for this section of the psalm. Agree as a group on the best title and have them write this in the quadrant labeled "Bite Sized Chunk 3." Write this in Quadrant 3 on your board and ask students to write the title in the space on their journal page.

**Bite-Sized Chunk 4**

Last one! This part of the psalm, verses 19-22, 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?)

Work together as a group to list everything you can on the board in Quadrant 4 about David and the reason for his bad mood. Your list should look something like this:

*He wants God to slay the wicked (v. 19)*

*He wants God to get the blood thirsty men away from him (v. 19)*

*He hates those who hate God (v. 20-21)*

*He counts these people as his enemies (v. 22)*

As the group looks back over the list, ask them a few of the following questions:

**What was David really upset about?**

**Was he mad at his enemies or God's enemies? Why?**

**Do you think he was right or wrong in expressing his thoughts to God?**

*If your students say he was wrong you might want to direct their attention back to verse 4 to see what God already knows!*

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

Ask your students to create a funny or interesting title for this section of the psalm. Agree as a group on the best title and have them write this in the quadrant labeled "Bite Sized Chunk 4."

Direct students to the bottom part of their journal pages where they will see "God, 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, discuss the following questions:

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

**Why or why not?**

## 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 under Putting Into Practice before sharing with the group.

**What does Psalm 139 tell you about God?**

*God wants to know you.*

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

*He isn't interested in a bunch of 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 anyways, we best experience Him.*

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

*Have students write an idea 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.