

ADULT UNIT III: Psalms of Thanksgiving and Praise
ADULT GENERAL LESSON TITLE: God's Promised Presence
ADULT TOPIC: Wonderful Marvelous!

LESSON 13

DATE: November 24, 2024

DEVOTIONAL READING: Exodus 33:12-23

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Psalm 139

PRINT PASSAGE: Psalm 139:1-12

Home Daily Bible Reading

Nov. 18	M	Matthew 1:18-23	God Is with Us through Christ
Nov. 19	T	Exodus 33:12-23	My Presence Will Go with You
Nov. 20	W	Exodus 34:1-9	A Glimpse of the Merciful God
Nov. 21	Th	Psalm 16	Complete Joy in God's Presence
Nov. 22	F	Matthew 18:15-20	Where Two or Three Are Gathered
Nov. 23	Sa	Matthew 28:16-20	I Am with You Always
Nov. 24	Su	Psalm 139:1-12	God Searches and Knows Us

EXALT!

Invocation – Teacher or Leaner

Celebration – “God Is Here” - #5 AME Zion Bicentennial Hymnal

Declaration – Psalm 139:1-12 (Read together by class, by a volunteer or responsively.)

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.

Affirmation – You have searched me, known me, and yet, have chosen me. (*Spoken together by class and teacher*).

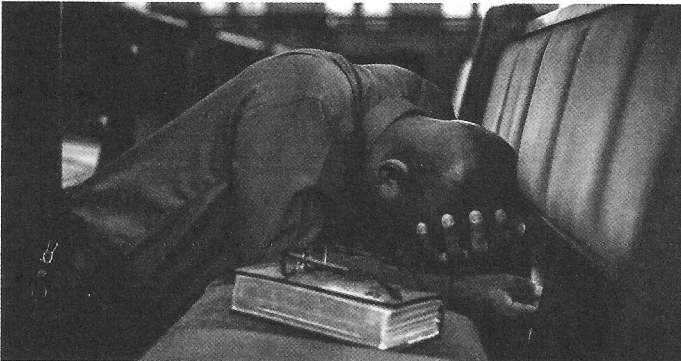
ENGAGE: (5-10 min.)

Know (in Hebrew *yada'*) is a rich word in biblical Hebrew. Adam "knew [*yada'*] "his wife Eve, and she conceived and bore Cain" (Genesis 4:1). God tells the people they will "know that I am the Lord" (Ezekiel 6:7, 13). We are to know God, just as God knows us.

It was common in the ancient world to claim that gods and kings knew everything, without limits. In Psalm 139, Yahweh's knowing is judicial; he is the judge who has all the information for judging the psalmist's case wisely and fairly.

Wonderfully (v. 14; Hebrew *pala'*), "to be different," "remarkable." The word is often used to describe the benevolent acts of God (cf. Psalms 9:1-2; 40:5; 78:4; 105:5).

"Psalm 139 is something of an exception in the Old Testament, speaking strongly and positively about the individual. Nevertheless, it acts as a foil to the modern obsession with privacy and the individual. . . While Psalm 139 is about the individual and has a very private feel to it, the psalm is even more about the invasion of our privacy—by none other than God. This is a comforting psalm in terms of God's intimate knowledge of us and care for us. It is also a frightening psalm because to be known so intimately is ultimately to be open to the other." (<http://hwallace.unitingchurch.org.au/WebOTcomments/OrdinaryC/Pent15Psalm139.html>. Accessed May 6, 2020.)



"Where can I flee from your presence?" (v. 7) is reminiscent of the meditations of Job. It is a hymn of praise to the God who knows "me." Be attentive, however, to the fact that while the psalmist's relation-



ship with God is profoundly personal, it is never private. The psalms were always used in the community's worship, not individual worship.

Break into small groups. Think about and discuss the following questions:

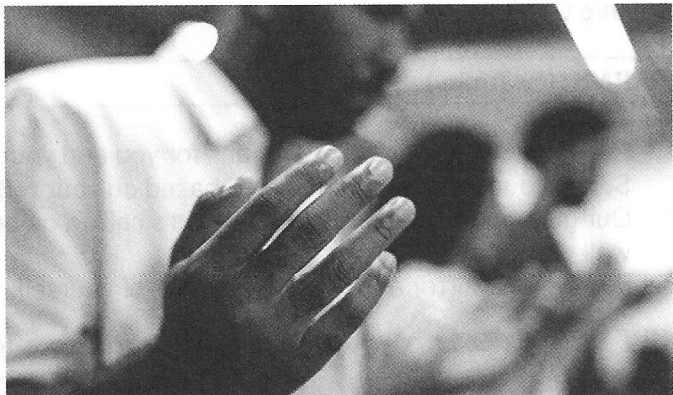
1.) Adults keep secrets about themselves, hiding their true selves away. Do you agree with that statement? Why or why not? Give examples. 2.) Adults who are fully known and loved marvel at and celebrate the joy of being known. Discuss some ways that this statement is true? 3.) Adults want to be understood fully and loved regardless of their flaws. Discuss how God loves us regardless of our flaws.

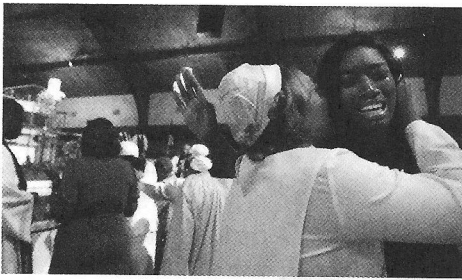
EDUCATE: (10-15 min.)

An Omniscient God (Psalm 139:1): The psalmist, David, starts with a reminder that God knows about and cares for all of us. In his rendition, *My Understanding of Psalm 139:1*, Joe Carrigan writes, "He, God Himself, knows me. An insignificant life. Ordinary. One of millions who have walked this earth, and He knows me...I haven't done anything extraordinary that He should notice me. But He knows me...I am a sinner. I've made mistakes, I have fallen flat on my face and still the fact remains. He knows me." He closes with this statement, "Thank you Lord for loving me as I am, and for calling me to be more than I ever thought I could be." These powerful words echo the sentiments of the psalmist who reminds us that God is an all-knowing and caring God.

An Omnipotent God (Psalm 139:2-6):

The psalmist goes on to state not only does God know him, but he knows all about him – when he rises, when he sits, his thoughts, know what I will say before I speak. He reminds the readers that





he cannot begin to fathom the way that God is able to be all these things in his life. He says (v. 6), "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is so high that I cannot attain it." Well, David, some things are not meant for our understanding (just ask Job). God is all powerful and can do all things.

An Omnipresent God (Psalm 139:7-12): As children, many of us played the outdoor game, Hide and Seek. We chose someone to be "it" and they were to cover their eyes and count while we hid. The last one to be discovered was the winner of the game. The psalmist, David, reminds us that there is no place to hide from an omnipresent God because He is everywhere and sees everything – both hidden and revealed. Trapped in a bad game of Hide and Seek, he asks the questions: "Where can I go from Your spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence?" If I ascend to heaven, You are there; to Sheol [hell], You are there; take wings and fly, You are there; to the deepest water, You are there. But here's the blessing in having an omnipresent God, "even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me fast" (NRSV). What a blessing it is to know that wherever we are, God is there!

ELEVATE: (10 min.)

Discuss the following questions as an entire group: 1.) Invite the learners to name someone who has loved and accepted them just as they are. How is this similar to the way the psalm talks about God knowing us? 2.) Compare the psalmist's conviction that God knows persons intimately with the learners' experiences of God. Make sure you have created a safe space for this discussion. 3.) Wonder together on what kind of spiritual practice could cultivate an intimate and trusting relationship with God. How does Psalm 139 inspire you to worship God?

iTHINK: (5-7 min.)

1. Reflect on what Psalm 139 means for you and your relationship with God. Select your personal theme song based on your reflection.
2. Our gifts and talents are clues to God's calling on our lives. Reflect on how well you are fulfilling your calling.
3. Look in the mirror and cherish all parts of yourself.

KEY VERSE: O Lord, you have searched me and known me. Psalm 139:1