



Wisdom #4

God's Knowledge of Me

w/c 16 February 2025

"What matters supremely is not in the last analysis the fact that I know God, but the larger fact which underlies it, the fact that he knows me. I am never out of his mind." (Jim Packer)

Read Psalm 139

With this psalm – and those around it – we are back with ones ascribed to David. There is though a strand of Jewish tradition that says it was written by Adam, or at least about him. Some of the words used – especially in verse and 16 – carry an intriguing link back to our earliest ancestors being formed from the dust of the earth. We can look at the psalm (borrowing some thoughts from a book by Michael Willcocks) in four sections:

How God knows me (verses 1–6)

This is a poem – one of the greatest in the whole book of psalms – that carries both thoughts of God's omniscience and omnipresence (he both knows everything and is everywhere) yet is phrased in the most personal of terms. How do we balance such familiarity with those big philosophical terms?

Think through the list of words and ideas to do with knowing. Which one strikes a chord with you as to God's intimacy?

How God surrounds me (verses 7–12)

Why do you think the psalmist talks about fleeing?

One writer I came across used the analogy of the game of hide-and-seek to describe our feelings. There is, he wrote, both a thrill of hiding and of being found. Most tellingly, he noted that the worst possible thing is to be never found, to be forgotten and left alone even after the game has finished. So too for us, we long to be found, yet we hide – from others, from God, even from ourselves. We continue to hide even as loneliness is one of societies greatest problems. How do we help others to be found?

In verses 11 and 12 the psalmist describes how *"the darkness will not be dark"* for God should we try to hide in it. Fast forward to Jesus' command (Matthew 5:14) that we are to be the light of the world. How do these two ideas interact?

How God has made me (verses 13–18)

This passage reminds us that in Genesis 1 only three things are actually 'created' (the others are 'made') – the universe itself; life (initially the 'creatures of the sea' and the birds) and, finally, human beings. It is the earth which 'brings forth' all the creatures of the land.

Read Genesis 2:7 and 5:1b–2. How does the idea of your descent from this first created human and their intimate contact from God make you feel?

How God tests me (verses 19–24)

How do you reconcile the sentiments of verses 19–22 with those of the verses around them? It's not the only psalm with such a gear change – many of us will know the opening verses of Psalm 137, but we're probably less familiar with its closing one. How far is it perhaps really to do with a desire by the psalmist that any temptation to follow a way other than God's could be simply removed before it touches on us?

"Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God." (Corrie Ten Boom)

The image above shows one of a series of stained-glass windows depicting Psalm 139 by Ted Felen