

Growth Group Leader Guide

This “growth group leader guide” is meant to be just that, a guide. Please feel free as the leader of your group to add questions or comments as you feel necessary to fit your group’s dynamics.

Also, don’t feel pressured to cover every question.

Psalm 139

- Read through Psalm 139
- What insight, principle, or observation from Sunday’s message did you find to be most helpful, eye-opening, or troubling? Explain.
- Why is it surprising that many theologians categorize this Psalm as a lament Psalm?
 - **Leaders Cheat:** *Lament Psalms are songs that cry out to God in distress.*
- How can ignoring verses 19-23 give shallow understanding of this Psalm, thereby missing the main point?
 - **One commentator** – Psalm 139 is often read as a calm reflection and praise to God who is omniscient, omnipresent and omnipotent and how these awesome divine qualities provoke wonder and comfort from the composer. Such a reading simplifies the psalm and ignores the final stanza (verse 19-24), which is an intense statement of hatred towards the psalmist’s dangerous enemies.

4 – Main Points of Sunday’s Sermon

- God is Omniscient (all-knowing)
- God is Omnipresent (all-present – everywhere)
- God is Omnipotent (all-powerful)
- David’s trust in an all-powerful good God

1) God is Omniscient (all-knowing)

- Read verses 1-6 and discuss what it means that God is all-knowing. How does this affect our relationship with Him?

- Verse 1 & verse 23 act like bookends to Psalm 139. How does verse 23 help us see that David assumes God's goodness throughout this Psalm?
- Read Job 42:1-3 and discuss how this relates to Psalms 139:6 and David's distress.

2) God is Omnipresent (all-present - everywhere)

- Read verses 7-12 and discuss what it means that God is all-present (everywhere). How does this affect our relationship with him?
- How does a dad's presence bring comfort and embolden a child in a scary situation?
- Why does David use the metaphor of darkness & light in verses 11 & 12? What does it mean that darkness is as light to God?
 - **Leaders Cheat:** *I believe there is a poetic cross-meaning of not being seen (darkness) and being in distress (darkness).*

3) God is Omnipotent (all-powerful)

- Who gets the glory for being – “fearfully and wonderfully made”? How is this passage often misquoted by giving the glory to man?
- How do verses 15-16 speak to life starting at conception?
 - **Leaders Cheat:** *“being made in secret” is before the mom knows she is pregnant and “unformed substance” is most likely referring to the embryotic state.*
- Discuss the following quote.
 - **Derek Kidner** - *Any small thoughts that we may have of God are magnificently transcended by this psalm; yet for all its height and depth, it remains intensely personal from first to last.*
- Reread verses 1-18 and point out the “intensely personal” aspect of this Psalm, especially verses 13-16.
- Why do you think the greatness of God brought comfort to David in his time of distress?

4) David's trust in an all-powerful good God

- Reflect on the previous 3 points and answer the following question. Why do you think the greatness of God brought comfort to David in his time of distress? Specifically that God is omniscient (all-knowing), omnipresent (all-present) and omnipotent (all-powerful).
- What does this Psalm teach us about handling distress in life?
- Why do verses 19 & 22 seem out of place in scripture as a whole?
 - **One Commentator said this about these hard sayings in the Psalms:** Even if we have not faced the kind of injustice that produces such prayers, the imprecatory psalms can provide a window onto another's world. We ourselves may not feel such emotion (at our moment in history), but others do and have (note: that Psalm 137 was used as a song by African American slaves). These psalms, then, can instruct our compassion as well as give us words and strategies on what to do (and pray) if and when we face similarly dire circumstances.
- Why do you think David ends this great Psalm with verses 23 & 24? Read the following quote by Dietrich Bonhoeffer to help answer this question.
 - **Dietrich Bonhoeffer** - God's vengeance did not strike the sinners, but the one sinless man who stood in the sinners' place, namely God's own Son. Jesus Christ bore the wrath of God, for the execution of which the Psalm prays. He stilled God's wrath toward sin and prayed in the hour of the exaction of divine judgment: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do!" No other than he, who himself bore the wrath of God, could pray in this way. That was the end of all phony thoughts about the love of God, which do not take sin seriously. God hates and redirects his enemies to the only righteous one, and this one asks forgiveness for them. Only in the cross of Jesus Christ is the love of God to be found, as God forgives his enemies and adopts them into his family.