

THANKING OUR GOD STUDY TWO

For These Reasons, Lord, We Thank You! (Part Two)

Psalm 139:13–18, 23–24

If anyone attempts to tell you that life doesn't begin until after birth, remind him or her of Psalm 139:13–18. God is at work. He watched as we were in that womb before birth. "Your eyes saw me in my very first stage of life, hours and days of existence, still wrapped in embryonic form. You were there watching over every moment of my being formed."

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

ALL creation proclaims the glory of God (Psalm 19:1). From the spinning galaxies that fill our vast universe to the tiniest grains of sand sitting on the most remote seashore, God's brilliant design shouts and shines everywhere we turn.

Yet, nothing in creation proclaims God's poetic power more than the image of a frail newborn child. If you've ever seen an ultrasound scan of a fetus or witnessed a small baby in a mother's arms, you've seen how every part of that little human is a miracle—the wiggling body, the quickly-beating heart, the fragile head.

Psalm 139 records King David's poem that tells of the astonishing miracle of a baby developing in a mother's womb. He shows how the smallest human embryo declares God's power *more* loudly than even the grandeur of the cosmos. And David has only one response to God's majestic power . . .

GRATITUDE!

This *Searching the Scriptures* study on Psalm 139 explores King David's masterful song about God's power over His creation—which invites both our wonder and our gratitude.



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

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STUDY

Psalm 139:13–18, 23–24



PREPARE YOUR HEART

God’s cosmic power might make Him seem distant, or even unconcerned about our day-to-day struggles. But God is near, and He hears *and answers* our prayers. Ask Him to guide you as you search the Scriptures today.

Father, I praise You because You are the almighty creator God. Thank You for creating me and giving me a role to play in Your plan for creation. Give me eyes to see Your power in my life as I study Your Word. In Jesus’ mighty name, amen.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Psalm 139 is a song of gratitude composed by King David. This psalm contains four separate stanzas, each focusing on a different theme that highlights a different attribute of God’s character for which David offers thanks.

The first stanza celebrates God’s *omniscience* and reveals how God knows everything about David (Psalm 139:1–6). Next, David describes God’s *omnipresence*, showing that He’s always with us (139:7–12). The third stanza moves to God’s *omnipotence*—His absolute power over creation (139:13–18). Finally, David concludes with a refrain of reverence for God (139:19–24).

These three attributes—God’s omniscience, omnipresence, and omnipotence—call upon all to worship Him because He made us, He is near us, and He knows us. The truth that God had mapped out David’s life before he was even conceived specifically leads David to praise God in Psalm 139:13–18, 23–24.



Observation: Fearfully and Wonderfully Made

In his book *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs*, Pastor Chuck lays out his method for understanding Scripture and applying its truths to life. Before asking questions about meaning and application, the first step observes the passage and asks, “What does it say?”¹



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SEARCHING
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Read *Psalm 139:13–18*. Which specific element of God's creation does David use to highlight God's omnipotence?

According to *139:13*, who ultimately is responsible for David's existence?

This is the inception of life. "Knit me together" suggests a network, like a thicket. Except in this case, the network is the veritable thicket of bones and muscles and glands and veins and tendons and arteries and lungs and blood that flows through the system to cleanse and energize the body. It's a phenomenal system. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

According to *139:14*, why does David consider God worthy of praise?



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According to *Psalm 139:16*, who laid out the plan for David's life? When was this plan established?

David concludes his psalm by making a request of God. What does he ask of God in *139:23–24*?

David saw the power of God demonstrated in his own life, *from womb to tomb*. God personally formed David in his mother's womb, and He ordered each moment of David's life until his very last days. Such an image is not one of a cruel dictator or a distant, aloof deity, but of an ever-present, all-loving, all-powerful God.



Interpretation: God's Omnipotence

After making observations about Psalm 139, the interpretation phase asks questions about the meaning of the passage to determine its theological truths that are relevant across time. What truth does *Psalm 139:13–16* reveal about how God views human life?



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God's thoughts about David "outnumber the grains of sand" (*Psalm 139:18*). He thinks of you as much as He thought of David. God knows everything you've ever said, done, or thought. This might make many people feel uncomfortable, but not David. It compelled him to praise God even more.

Why is God's intimate knowledge of us good for us?

Summarize the main theme of this psalm's third stanza (*139:13-18*).

The ideas expressed in the original Hebrew of *Psalm 139:23–24* are difficult to communicate in English. Read these verses in a few different Bible translations to get an idea of David's profound emotion. Why does David make this request of God? For some guidance, see *Constable's Notes* at netbible.org.²



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God doesn't search us so He can learn. He never learns anything. He's omniscient, remember. He searches us so that we can learn the condition of our hearts. He can reveal to us the truth. See, He's able to search under every rug of coverup, every closet of concealment, every secret room of sin. He knows our every passing thought. He even knows our anxious thoughts. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: The Image of God

No biblical passage expresses God's omnipotence quite like the creation account in Genesis 1–2. As God unveiled the masterpiece of the universe piece by piece, He paused when He reached the pinnacle of creation: human beings.

Read [Genesis 1:27–30](#). According to these verses, what does it mean for humans to be made in the image of God? (Hint: look at how the author describes the humans and the commands God gives them.)

What is the relationship between humans and all other created life according to [1:28](#)? In what ways are humans similar to the rest of created life? In what ways are they different? See [1:24–26](#) for the back-to-back creations of animals and humans.

These verses make clear that we play a special role in God's plan for His creation, but what does Psalm 139 specifically teach us to do in light of these truths?



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Application: From Womb to Tomb

Pastor Chuck nicely summarizes the overarching theme of Psalm 139:

God ordered our birth and authored our days. He is in control—from womb to tomb.

Many in the public square might feel challenged or even offended by the theme of this song of gratitude. As followers of Christ, however, we can follow King David's example and thank God for His power over *all* creation.

How should this psalm's discussion of human life affect how you see others—such as the unborn, people who look or act differently from you, even your enemies? Write down how you sense God is leading you to apply this truth.

Take a moment to reflect on some difficult moments you've faced in recent years. How was the power of God, made available to you through Jesus, evident to you in these circumstances? How can you actively show Him thanks for His mighty mercy?

God is in control! He orchestrated the creation of the cosmos and ordered the events of history. Despite His greatness, though, He knows each and every person intimately, and He cares deeply. God sits on the eternal throne, and through Psalm 139, King David invites us to acknowledge Him as the King of our lives and to show gratitude for all He's done for us.



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A FINAL PRAYER

Wrap up your study of Psalm 139 by pondering this prayer of Pastor Chuck. Offer it in your own words as an expression of thanksgiving:

How grateful we are, our Father, for Your will and plan, for Your interest in even the most minute details of our lives from our conception to the end of our days. From the womb to the tomb, You are there. You are ever aware. You care about the things that make us anxious. You meet our needs. You remind us again and again that You are here . . . ever available, full of compassion, marked by mercy and always grace. Amen.

ENDNOTES

1. To learn about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, go to the Web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#)."
2. Other tools we recommend are a whole-Bible commentary, such as the two-volume *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament* and *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*. Pastor Chuck's favorite Bible dictionary is *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary*.

