

“Search Me, O God”

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Scriptural Text: Psalm 139, ESV

Search Me, O God, and Know My Heart

To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David.

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.

¹³ For you formed my inward parts;
you knitted me together in my mother's womb.

¹⁴ I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully
made.

Wonderful are your works;
my soul knows it very well.

¹⁵ My frame was not hidden from you,
when I was being made in secret,
intricately woven in the depths of the earth.

¹⁶ Your eyes saw my unformed substance;
in your book were written, every one of them,
the days that were formed for me,
when as yet there was none of them.

¹⁷ How precious to me are your thoughts, O God!
How vast is the sum of them!

¹⁸ If I would count them, they are more than the sand.
I awake, and I am still with you.

¹⁹ Oh that you would slay the wicked, O God!
O men of blood, depart from me!

²⁰ They speak against you with malicious intent;
your enemies take your name in vain.

²¹ Do I not hate those who hate you, O LORD?
And do I not loathe those who rise up against you?

²² I hate them with complete hatred;
I count them my enemies.

²³ Search me, O God, and know my heart!
Try me and know my thoughts!

²⁴ And see if there be any grievous way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting!

Some evangelicals have grown fond of saying, “Christianity is not a religion. It is a relationship.” Have you heard that? This statement, while potent, is not entirely true and it can be very harmful if we believe it in its entirety. This statement presents a false dichotomy in which two good things are set against one another as though they are in opposition to one another. Indeed, the Bible reveals Christianity is a religion. It concerns me that modern evangelicals believe we can jettison the religious nature of Christianity and still remain faithful.

At our very center, New Testament Christianity possesses every vital component of a religion. It possesses established doctrine, faith, worship, rituals, recognized leadership, and detailed organization. The religious aspect of Christianity is vital to our faith. We destroy Christianity if we removed religion from it.

Think a bit with me about the early church and ask yourself, “Were the early Christians religious?” The early Christians were religious in that they devoted themselves to the Apostle’s doctrine. They held dear a body of truths

that each church and each member of each church confessed. One of the main purposes for their gathering together weekly was to learn more about these doctrines God had given to them so that they could know Him.

The early Christians were religious in that they received and practiced uniform worship rituals. Every church in every place met regularly for worship. They sang worship songs. They prayed prayers. They listened to sermons. They gave offerings. They baptized new believers. They celebrated the Lord's Supper together. These rituals were not culturally bound, but they are a part of a faithful Christian's experience in every place in the world, at every time, down to the present age.

The early Christians were religious in that they recognized specific men to be leaders in each local congregation. God commanded these leaders to shepherd His church in humility and in love and He commanded the members to respect them and to submit to them as they cared for their souls.

Finally, early Christians were religious in that they were highly organized. Each member lived in a strong connection with other members as they recognized their need to work together for the glory of Christ. The Apostle Paul even used the illustration of a physical body to highlight the need for detailed, specific organization among the members of the church as they each were given specific gifts to be used in tandem with other gifts in order to fulfill God's mission.

Christianity is indeed a religion and we do damage to Christ's church when we say it is not. James commends Christianity as a religion when he writes,

^{James 1:26} If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless. ²⁷ Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

James argues religion is good, but not worthless religion. Yet, while the statement, "Christianity is not a religion. It is a relationship," is not entirely true, I appreciate the intention behind it. I believe the statement is so accepted among evangelicals because often, in our history, Christianity has become a hollow shell, a whitewashed tomb, a church which emphasizes rules over relationship. Christianity has become often works-based as opposed to Christ-centered. It often showcases the externals at the expense of the vital life that is to be inside of her. The Apostle Paul says a such a works-oriented religion is a self-made religion. He talks about how the church in Colossae, from the early period, was being tempted by these false teachers to follow after rules,

^{2:20} If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations— ²¹ "Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch" ²² (referring to things that all perish as they are used)—according to human precepts and teachings? ²³ These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.

These are of no value in a true relationship with God. Christianity is a religion which leads us into a living, personal relationship with the living God. Communion with God is the most important part of our faith and that is why everything else exists. All the externals of religion are nothing if they do not bring us into a personal relationship with God Himself. Jesus teaches us this very thing in John 17, when He tells us about eternal life,

³ "And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent."

The use of the word "know" means a personal, intimate knowledge.

In our text, we are seeking for life eternal and the knowledge of God. We find David writing this worship psalm and as he does, he is thinking deeply about God and his personal relationship with God, a God who is and a God who interacts with him. He writes this deeply religious poem filled with mind-stretching theology and doctrine about God. Yet, it is a poem which is fired full of joy and personal communion with God. It is a song with theology that walks; a theology with shoe leather.

This psalm first captures our mind with the awe of God's majesty and power, but then it captures our heart in awe of God's love and His care for us personally. David writes four specific stanzas, or verses. Each stanza is six verses long in the text we are reading. The first three stanzas focus upon the attributes of God. The first stanza will focus upon God's omniscience.¹ The second stanza will focus upon God's omnipresence.² The third stanza focuses upon God's omnipotence.³ The fourth stanza is a prayer, a plea, for God to be glorified through David's life. Since God is so intimately acquainted with David it makes sense his response would be for his desire for his life to be lived for God's glory.

That is what God's revelation does to us. Are you just bouncing against the surface of the Christian faith, the religious aspects, the doctrine, the rituals, the habits, and the morals, but not entering into this life of God's Spirit. If so, you are missing everything, if that is true.

The main idea behind this psalm is a call for us to pray to rejoice in God's personal relationship with us. In the first stanza, Verses 1 through 6, David is calling us to rejoice in God's personal knowledge, and we are to be **rejoicing in God's personal knowledge of me**,

¹ O LORD, you have searched me and known me!

These are personal pronouns David is using. He is talking about God's individual focus upon him, which is true of every believer and every person who is found in Christ.

One of the healthiest practices a believer can possibly grab onto is the practice of meditating upon the person of God, who God is, what God is like, and opening Scripture to help us to think great, worthy thoughts of God. The ideas we have of God shape every part of our life. These ideas about God will shape our ideas about our families, our work, our friendships, our morals, our hopes, our habits, our attitudes, and our worship. Everything in our life is affected by our thoughts about God. Right thoughts about God lead us to joy in all areas of life. Wrong thoughts about God lead us into disaster in all areas of life.

A.W. Tozer writes this, "What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us... For this reason the gravest question before the Church is always God Himself, and the most portentous fact about any man is not what he at a given time may say or do, but what he in his deep heart conceives God to be like."⁴ What comes into your mind as you think about God? Whatever that is, it is the most important thing about you. So that we might think of high and lofty thoughts about God and of Him is the reason why God has given us this Book, His Word.

Thinking deeply about God moves us toward worthy views of Him. I urge you to take time in your life to quiet your soul before God often, daily, and meditate upon who God is. He is infinite so that means our thoughts can never come to an end about Him. We can never say, "Okay, I have that aspect about God." He is infinite and every attribute about Him is infinite. I urge you to seek Him out so that you might enjoy Him by chewing upon Scripture daily which reveals Himself and His nature to us personally.

David begins this psalm by writing about God's omniscience. As David meditates upon the all-knowing nature of God, he does so not in abstraction but he personalizes it. He does not talk about how God knows everything, but he says, "You search me and You know me." This Doctrine of God's Omniscience is a wonderful, awesome truth to ponder. God is infinite and everything about Him is infinite so God's wisdom and knowledge is without limit and measure.

¹ Omniscience. The attribute by which God perfectly and eternally knows all things that can be known – past, present, and future. God knows how best to attain his desired goals. God's omniscience is clearly taught in Scripture. NIV Compact Dictionary of the Bible, J.D. Douglas & Merrill C. Tenney, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 1989.

² Omnipresence. The attribute of God by virtue of which he fills the universe in all of its parts and is present everywhere at once. Not a part, but the whole of God is present in every place... This is true of all three members of the Trinity. They are so closely related that where one is the others can be said to be also. Ibid.

³ Omnipotence. The attribute of God that describes his ability to do whatever he wills. God's will is limited by his nature, and he therefore cannot do anything contrary to his nature as God, such as to ignore sin, to sin, or to do something absurd or self-contradictory. God is not controlled by his power but has complete control over it: otherwise he would not be a free being. Ibid.

⁴ The Knowledge of the Holy, A.W. Tozer.

That is completely unlike our knowledge. Our knowledge is always incomplete, always partial, and always imperfect. But, God's knowledge is the opposite. It is complete. It is infinite. It is perfect. God knows the future as perfectly as He knows the past. Consider that. God never, ever "learns". If God were to learn something it would mean He did not know something. He never, ever learns new information because He knew everything instantly, completely, fully from eternity past. This means God is never surprised, He is never in a quandary, He never asks questions for information's sake, He never asks to investigate a matter, He never asks to do research. As John writes in 1 John 3,

^{20b} ...God...knows everything.

One theologian, Arthur Pink, writes, "God knows everything, everything possible, everything actual, all events, all creatures of the past, the present, and the future. He is perfectly acquainted with every detail in the life of every being in Heaven, in earth, and in Hell. Nothing escapes His notice. Nothing can be hidden from Him. Nothing is forgotten by Him. He never errors, never changes, never overlooks anything." David, in thinking about this attribute of God exults, "O LORD, you have searched me and known me!"

This word "search" means to seek carefully and thoroughly. God does not search for knowledge like we search for knowledge. David is giving God human characteristics so we know God's omniscience is personal and caring. God is not some cosmic hard drive that simply stores infinite amounts of information. The word "know" means God knows us intimately as a person.

Do you realize God has searched you and He knows you? This is a statement of fact. What does God know about you and me? David writes,

² You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar.

He knows us when we take a break from working in our garden. He knows when we wake up when the alarm goes off and they when we really wake up and get up. He knows our thoughts no one else knows; thoughts we keep to our self an which we hardly even allow our self to consider deeply. He knows them.

³ You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways.

He does not only know our thinking, but He knows our actions and every step and every movement we make. He is intimately familiar with every event that happens in our life, even events we are not familiar with and we do not know about.

⁴ Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O LORD, you know it altogether.

I am not sure of what I am going to share with you in the immediate future. I have notes, but I do not know exactly what I am going to share with you or the words I am going to use, but God does. He knows that before I even speak those words. He knows what I am going to say before I say it. He knows us better than our spouse knows us, better than our parents know us, better than we know our self.

After twenty-six years of marriage, I have so much to learn about my wife, yet God never has anything to learn about me because His knowledge is already complete, comprehensive, perfect, and infinite.

⁵ You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me.

The phrase "hem me in" does not mean God imprisons us with His knowledge. It means God guards us, secures us, with His knowledge. He secures us because He values us.

In our church building we have a security system which is armed each night. We do so because this system helps us to watch over the building when no one is here. There are electronic eyes throughout the building looking for movement when there should not be movement. If there is movement, the system phones the appropriate people to come and check out the church. This knowledge helps us to secure the building, but its knowledge is incomplete, faulty, and partial. It is possible still for a whole bunch of mischief to be done because it is possible for people who know how avoid the eyes of the electronic system to avoid them.

We are much more secure than any other kind of security this world or its people could give to us. David rejoices that God in His infinite love uses His infinite knowledge to keep him safe. Isn't that awesome?

God knows everything about our physical bodies, our intimate thoughts, our emotions, and about our soul and He uses His knowledge to protect us and to secure us, to hem us in and guard us. How precious is that?

There are a few applications to God's all-knowing nature. First, God observes everything about. We cannot deceive Him. Let us confess our sins to Him. He knows our sins already anyway. Cain tried to hide the murder of his brother from God. He thought if he could bury Abel in a pit really deep God would not see it. But, Abel's blood cried out from the ground. God knew because God always knows. How terrifying it must have been for Cain to discover that God actually knew when God confronted him, thinking he could out do God, "Am I my brother's keeper?" He tried to think, "Maybe God does not know, so I will answer God's question, 'Where is your brother, Abel?'" He tried to avoid it believing he could keep this information from God Himself. How terrifying it must have been for him when he realized, "God knows!"⁵

In Hebrews 4, we read,

¹³ And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

Everything about us is exposed before Him who is the Judge of all the earth. And before Him we will stand and give an account of every thought, word, action, or deed. God uses His knowledge to perfectly judge sin. What will we do on that day? I tell you, there will be no hope. There will only be a certain expectation of terror and of infinite sorrow, pain, and suffering if we do not run to Jesus to be our Savior, to an Advocate who will present us before God as faultless because He has borne our sins away in His own body. That is the message of the Gospel. God knows everything and sees everything so we should prepare our self by running to a Savior who can rescue us.

Secondly, God know what is good for us and His plan for us is absolutely perfect. We are wrong when we believe our plan is better than God's plan. We are right to submit to His wisdom regarding all matters of life, regardless how difficult it is. That is the wisest choice because God always chooses the best outcome for our life and the best means to arrive at that outcome. Temptation to sin challenges God's knowledge and wisdom at this very point. Temptation to sin comes and says, "I am not sure if that outcome God has for you is the best outcome. Here is another outcome I believe is better." We are drawn away from God's wisdom and knowledge thinking this other source, whether it is coming from our own flesh or the world or the Devil himself, may know what is best and we are tempted to look. If the temptation cannot fulfill the accomplishment of making us to see or think or deceiving us to believe this outcome is better than God's outcome, it will allow us to have God's outcome, but then it will say, "This is the means by which you can get to God's outcome. Here is another path."

Once we understand the doctrine of God's infinite knowledge and wisdom, we look to Scripture because we realize we do not have it and we need it. We do not want to get on a path that will lead our life down into death and disaster. The truth is we do not know what will make us eternally happy, but God does. We do not know the path to find that place of happiness, but God does and He gives us a map which shows to us the destination and the step-by-step as to how to get there.

Third, God knows us intimately and He loves us anyway. This is amazing that God loves us even though He knows everything about us. There are many people who feel as though they are living their entire life without anyone really knowing them. They feel alone in their own home. They feel alone in their marriage. They feel alone with their children. They feel alone with their parents. They feel alone around their friends; no one really understands them. They have secrets inside they are afraid to tell because if others knew of these secrets they are afraid people would not respect them or love them so they keep them locked up and keep their self isolated from genuine community.

Think about this: God already knows everything about us and He loves us perfectly. If we are in Christ, there is nothing God will find out about us to cause His love for us to weaken or be removed. We are absolutely secure in His love. That is why David writes, in Verse 6,

⁵ Genesis 4:8-11

⁶ Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it.

David is overwhelmed that God would love him as He knows him.

In the second stanza, **we rejoice in God's personal presence with us**, and David rejoices in God's personal presence with him. He moves from thinking about God's infinite knowledge to thinking about God's presence everywhere, at the same, at the same time. God is not limited by space and that is hard for us to even conceive,

⁷ Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence?

David is aware he is not able to escape from God's watchful eye. Adam and Eve tried and they could not. Jonah tried to run when he was defying God's command to go to the Ninevites. Adam and Eve were not successful in hiding with fig leaves in the Garden and Jonah was not successful by getting on a ship. All escape routes from God's presence are completely shut off,

⁸ If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!

Sheol, I believe, is a reference to the grave and death. There is no condition that can keep us from God's presence, not life, not death, and not anything in between, and we need to understand that.

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.

I believe David is referencing going as far as he can to the east and to the west to the sea. It does not matter, God is still there in any direction.

¹¹ If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light about me be night,"

I believe David is speaking about evil that is coming upon him, his enemies, and bad things that are happening to him. Isn't it true that Satan wants to deceive us into thinking when dark times occur to us in our life God is absent from those times? It may be the death of someone we love, the loss of a job, an illness, a broken relationship. Darkness comes and Satan wants us to believe that God is not in the darkness and He is absent. David knows even in the darkest of times God is still there because darkness is not dark to God; He is light,

¹² even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is bright as the day, for darkness is as light with you.

The darkest, evil things in this world are as bright as the day because darkness never, ever wins. God always triumphs over darkness. Some people actually believe they can go to dark places, and they are rebelling against God, in order to hide from Him. So, they go to bars and strip clubs and wild parties and they stay out of church. They believe if they stay out of church they can escape from God's presence, but God is Light and He is never enveloped by darkness; even the darkness is light to Him.

There are two applications to share. First, since God is everywhere present, it is foolish to attempt to run from Him. We can never get away. No sinner escapes God's presence. The wisest thing to do is to humble our self, fall upon our face, and say, "Mercy, O Lord, mercy!"

When I was a little boy, I am sure I did something that deserved discipline. I had learned by this time that God had given to me some fast, little legs and I thought I could outrun my mom at this time. I may have been five years old. Mom to me to come and I said to myself, "Nope!" and I set off running. My mom did not run, she just walked. As she walked behind me I was staying ahead and I thought I could do that all day long. My mom kept saying, "It is going to get harder, Ritch. It is going to get harder." I realized I could not escape. Finally, I stopped trying to escape and I fell down in a heap, in tears, "Mom, please forgive me!" I was looking for mercy.

When we understand God's omnipresence, we cannot be successful in escaping and alluding His grasp. We fall down, "God, be merciful to me!"

Secondly, since God is everywhere present, we are never left alone. No saved person escapes God's tender care. I believe this is David's heart. This is a psalm of rejoicing. There are some negative aspects when we are committing our self to sin about God's knowledge and about God's presence, but this is a psalm in which David is rejoicing, "God knows me and He loves me still. God is present with me so that means He cares for me. I am never, ever left alone.." He is always with us.

In dark places, sometimes we feel God abandons us but He is there. He is there in the hospital. He is there in the cemetery. He is there in the nursing home. He is there in jail. He is there in the locker rooms and the school buses. He is there and never absent.

The third attribute, which David rejoices in, is **God's personal formation of me**. This is God's omnipotence. He is all powerful,

¹³ For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. ¹⁴ I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well.

¹⁵ My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth.

David is saying, "God knows everything about me. He is ever present with me. He is also actively powerful toward me." David meditates upon God's power at work in the creation of his life. He thinks back about what happened there when he was conceived in his mother's womb and he had to grow, even before he took his first breath and saw his first bit of light. And, he thinks, "Wow! What a wonder of God's active power in creating me."

What an engineering wonder these bodies of ours are. I wish we had more time to discuss extensively about God's amazing design for our bodies. I believe that is one of the joys of college students – to be able to study biology and human anatomy. It should cause us to say, "We are fearfully and wonderfully made! I can worship in this anatomy class because God did that. He knit me together while I was in my mother's womb."

Look, for a moment, at a one inch patch of skin. I am told that one inch square patch of skin contains six hundred and twenty-five sweat glands. Can you see them? Can you count them? These sweat glands are given to moderate the temperature our bodies so that when it is hot out we get cool and when it is cold out it hold heat in and this is amazing. That one patch of skin has nineteen feet of blood vessels. There are nineteen thousand sensory cells to help in the sense of touch. If you would extract out of that patch of skin just one DNA⁶ molecule, that molecule contains twenty billion bits of information. That is the equivalent of the information printed in four thousand books with five hundred pages in each book. That is a library in one DNA molecule. David does not know all of those scientific facts, but he knows enough to say, "This is amazing!" and he is meditating upon God's power at work in His creation and considers God knitting each tiny piece together.

What a contrast there is between David's Psalm 139 and Charles Darwin and the theory of evolution. What a faith there is one has to believe in evolution, a godless philosophy. Evolution tells us our existence is owed to purposeless chance; all just happened to be. We came to be, our being, as a result of a material process with no eternal meaning and no designed purpose. In other words, we did not come from anywhere and we are not heading anywhere. We are material only and when we die we cease to be and there is nothing more.

In contrast, God's Word tells us our existence is owed to a purposeful Creator who is personal and One who infuses into our being purpose. We have come to be as a result of this intricate design of God who has given to us eternal meaning and we are body and soul so that, when we die, we do not cease to be, but we continue on into an eternal future.

Observe the great differences between these two philosophies of life. Which one matches your experience? Do you really believe that when you die there is nothing more? I do not believe you believe that. I believe God has set eternity into hearts and we know there is something more than just being a blob of cells mashed together.

⁶ Deoxyribonucleic Acid. A polymeric chromosomal constituent of living cell nuclei...bonded in a sequence that determines the individual hereditary characteristics. The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, New College Edition, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1976.

I love David's words in Verse 13, "you knitted me together." I have been around some knitters. When I see them knitting, I ask the question, "What are you knitting?" No one has ever said, "Nothing." They tell me they are knitting something: a hat for a baby nephew, mittens for a little niece. Knitting implies purpose. God has knit you and me together in our mother's womb for a specific, eternal purpose.

David is not writing this passage to teach us about the evil of abortion, yet it is applied to abortion often and rightly so. It tells us personhood begins in the womb of a mother. It tells us from the very beginning of our conception in the secret place of our mother's womb, where no can see but God, God is sovereignly, personally, with focus at work to design us for His glory.

Imagine you are knitting some socks, working on these socks for some time. A stranger comes up as you are knitting and grabs your work from your hands, walks over to a fire, and throws it in the fire. Do you believe that is right? Would you be upset for that? You are almost finished with your work and someone throws it into the fire! You would have a right to be upset. That is not right and something really, really wrong happened.

Consider what God is telling us. We are in our mother's womb and He is knitting. It is not the mother's knit work. It is God's. It is not the father's knit work. It is God's. The mother is the instrument God is using, but God is knitting and it is His work. So, a doctor, with the permission of the mother, grabs that knit work out of God's hands and throws it into the fire. This is not just a pair of socks. This is an eternal being God has created for His glory. Do you believe God is upset?

There are two applications regarding this. First, I cannot vote for anyone, any politician, who promotes abortion as a moral and legal action in the United States of America. I understand what that means for me. I am full aware our culture is moving into darkness.

For instance, in this governor's race in Illinois, I cannot vote for the Republican candidate and I cannot vote for the Democratic candidate. I have no one to vote for. I know there may be some minor candidate I may be able to vote for. I cannot have someone represent me, who, regardless of whatever else good they may do, says, "That is a moral act." I cannot.

Secondly, I urge you to get involved in the lives of these precious women who are being so sorely tempted. Get in involved in caring for orphans, caring for children, and caring for these mothers. Perhaps you are someone who says, "Pastor, I have already destroyed God's knit work. I have had an abortion. What do I do now!" Simply do what every sinner is called to do. All of our sin is infinite because God's holiness is infinite. We fly to the cross of Jesus to find mercy and grace. That is what His blood is for; it is to cleanse us of all our sin,

¹⁷ How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! ¹⁸ If I would count them, they are more than the sand. I awake, and I am still with you.

God constantly thinks about each one of us every day. What is true of David is true of each of us. We are on the mind of God every moment of every day, actively so.

The final stanza is a request that David's life would reflect God's glory. He moves from rejoicing in God's attribute to requesting God to work in his life. This is the Old Testament expression of Jesus' line in the prayer He taught His disciples and us as to how to pray, "Hallowed by Thy name,"⁷ that God's name would be hallowed and His name would be glorified in David.

There are two parts to this prayer. First, that David would never join with evil people to oppose God and His glory,

¹⁹ Oh that you would slay the wicked, O God! O men of blood, depart from me! ²⁰ They speak against you with malicious intent; your enemies take your name in vain.

²¹ Do I not hate those who hate you, O LORD? And do I not loathe those who rise up against you?

²² I hate them with complete hatred; I count them my enemies.

⁷ Matthew 6:9b

It is true God would have us love our enemies. It is true God would have us love sinners. It is true God loves sinners, but we must understand David is choosing sides. He is deciding to follow God even if everyone else in the world opposes and defies Him. These are war-like words David is using because he recognizes there is a spiritual war in this world. There are those who have decided and chosen to commit themselves to the forces of darkness and to be used by darkness to rob God of His glory. As much as they are pushing against God's glory, David is pushing for God's glory and that will cause a great clash. David knows there will be conflict as a result of that. David is simply saying, "I will not love them in their wickedness when they are trying to defy You. I must oppose them because I am zealous for Your glory. I will not bring my life into such association with them so as to make a smooth path for them to dishonor Your name. I must separate myself from them as they jeopardize my relationship with You and Your glory in Your world."

The application is: What are we doing about relationships that are dragging us away from God and His glory? David already knows the stand and what side he is going to choose. As he says this, he recognizes there is sin in him. He is not saying there is no evil or sin in his own heart. He recognizes there is, yet he is making this statement of faith that he will not stand with those who commit themselves to defying God and he will not let his flesh, this thing inside of him that wants to push him to their side, to become active and victorious in his life. He offers this simple prayer,

²³ Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! ²⁴ And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!

David is praying that he would be purified by God so that God would be glorified in his life. He knows the problem is not simply "out there". That is one of the things we often miss as evangelicals. We complain about how much sin is out there and we may even make statements like David, "I am standing against this world," but we do not go forward with David's prayer.

Every Christian is wise to be deeply concerned about hidden sin in each one's life. Hidden sin will destroy our relationship with God and our relationship with others. We do not have to be conscious of our sin in order for our sin to be present. We do not have to be conscious of our sin in order for sin to have an incredibly destructive work in our life. Often times we believe if we are not conscious of sin there is nothing to really worry about. But, that is not true! We cannot search our own heart because our heart is deceitful and blind to things it should not be blind to.

Have you ever noticed how easy it is to see sin in another person's life? I believe most marital conflicts would be gone today if we were able to see the sin in our own life as clearly as we see the sin in our spouse's life. A husband and wife may talk right past one another and both may be talking the truth, but they are talking about the other person's sin and not willing to say, "Here is where the solution lies. It is me," humbling our self before the Lord, confessing our sin, seeking His face, asking Him to search us, to know us, and to lead us in the way everlasting.

Verse 1 and Verse 23 become bookends,

¹ O LORD, you have searched me and known me!...²³ Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts!

How can this be? David is admitting God already has searched him and He knows him, but now he is inviting God in to do a good work through His searching and through His knowing of David. The assumption David has, as he prays that prayer is: there will be some grievous and wicked ways He will find, but he is asking Him to do it.

I believe it is a tragedy that man believers rarely, if ever, invite God to examine their soul. We just get busy. We rarely say, "I must take some time," and I believe this is something God intends for us to do daily, "Search me and know me. I see how glorious You are. You are the all-knowing, all-present, all-powerful Being. You love me and You care for me and You have done so much. Lord, for Your glory, search me and know me. Try me and see if there is any wicked way in me. Then, Father, lead me in the way of everlasting life. I am ready to follow you because You are worthy of my worship."