

**HOW DOES GOD AFFECT MY LIFE? (Part 2)****PSALM 139**

Who affects your life more – Google or God? Are you sure? Earlier this year, *Esquire* magazine gave a scathing critique of the unchecked power and influence of the big four: Amazon, Apple, Facebook, and Google. Describing the supremacy of Google, the author of the article wrote, “As more and more people become alienated from traditional religion, we look to Google as our immediate, all-knowing oracle of answers from trivial to profound. Google is our modern-day god ... Think back on every fear, every hope, and every desire you've confessed to Google's search box and then ask yourself: Is there any entity you've trusted more with your secrets? Does anybody know you better than Google?” Then he offered nine kind of tongue in cheek evidences that Google is god. Google appears to be omniscient. Google is omnipresent. Google answers prayers because it provides answers to your questions and problems. Google is potentially immortal. Google is infinite. Google remembers all. Google seems incapable of doing anything bad. The term "Google" is searched for more than the terms "God," "Jesus," "Allah," "Buddha," "Christianity," "Islam," "Buddhism," and "Judaism" combined. So who affects your life more – Google or God? Hmmm.....

We're nearing the end of our summer message series on several psalms. Each of them address and answer big questions about life and living. Today, we're going to read and think about another psalm written by David, the greatest king of Israel, who wrote most of the psalms. Psalm 139 underlines several ways the real, true God overwhelmingly affects your life and how you live it. What difference does what we just read make to your life today or tomorrow? How does God affect your life past, present, or future? One precious truth that emerges is the fact that because of God...

**I'M NEVER ALONE OR ON MY OWN.**

The first half of this psalm underlines two attributes of God that we all believe in but rarely understand or fully appreciate: the omniscience of God and the omnipresence of God. To say God is omniscient means God knows everything that can be known. David says here, “O LORD, you have examined my heart and know everything about me. You know when I sit down or stand up. You know my thoughts even when I'm far away. You see me when I travel and when I rest at home. You know everything I do. You know what I am going to say even before I say it, LORD.” (Ps. 139:1-4 NLT)

This is an amazing truth about God! His knowledge is complete, comprehensive, and exhaustive. He effortlessly knows everything that has ever happened, is happening at this very second, and will happen at 3:00 this afternoon as well as 40 billion years into the future. God has never forgotten anything. He never needs anything explained to Him. God has never had to learn anything. No one has ever taught God something He'd didn't already know. Likewise, God's knowledge of you and me is both comprehensive and deeply personal. Not only does He know the exact number of hairs on top of your head (or lack thereof), but He's also fully aware of every thought you've ever had and every word you've ever said – or will do or will say – and why. Whoa!

To say God is omnipresent means God is right here with us this morning in this room while also being everywhere else at the same time. There's no place where God is not present. David was rightly overwhelmed as he thought about the implications. "I can never escape from your Spirit! I can never get away from your presence! If I go up to heaven, you are there; if I go down to the grave, you are there. If I ride the wings of the morning, if I dwell by the farthest oceans, even there your hand will guide me." (Ps. 139:7-10 NLT) No place is nearer to God or farther away from God. God is neither everything nor in everything – that's something called pantheism. God is distinct from everything He's created; nevertheless, there's no place in the entire universe where God is absent. Even darkness and light are irrelevant to God. "It's impossible to disappear from you or to ask the darkness to hide me, for your presence is everywhere, bringing light into my night. There is no such thing as darkness with you. The night, to you, is as bright as the day; there's no difference between the two." (Ps. 139:11-12 TPT) Amazing truths about God. He's both omniscient and omnipresent.

All that can be both bad news and great news. If you're trying your very best to get away from God, the fact He's essentially inescapable isn't good news. Do you remember Adam and Eve after they sinned? They tried to hide from God and found it to be impossible. Each of us here have known times in our lives when realizing God sees all and knows everything was not comforting. Instead it only deepened our feelings of guilt and dread. God is everywhere and He knows everything. What happens if you forget that truth? You lose touch with reality. If you think you can hide your actions and attitudes from God, you're no longer living in reality. But there's other problems, too. You take on more responsibility for your life than you should. You forget God is in charge. You become an anxious, driven, over extended, lonely, and miserable person. Life doesn't have to be lived like that, because we're neither alone nor on our own.

On the other hand, there's something wonderfully positive and comforting in this truth. You and I are never truly alone or on our own. Where is God? Well, He's right here this morning. He'll be with each of us when we leave this building today and return with us to our homes. God will be as just as much with you as He will be with me. I don't get more of God than you do. You don't get more of God than I do. He'll be with us as we go off to work or school tomorrow. God was with you ten years ago. He'll be with you 25 years from today. God is now and will always be completely present and available to you. "You've gone into my future to prepare the way, and in kindness you follow behind me to spare me from the harm of my past. With your hand of love upon my life, you impart a blessing to me. This is just too wonderful, deep, and incomprehensible! Your understanding of me brings me wonder and strength." (Ps. 139:5-6 TPT)

If you let the Holy Spirit apply this truth to your mind and heart, you'll experience both God's comfort and confidence. Yes, this life will still provide its share of failure, stress, heartache, disappointment, grief, and loneliness. But you are never truly alone. God is here right now and He will be there tomorrow. Someone put it very well, "Do not be afraid of tomorrow; God is already there!" God's omniscience and omnipresence isn't cold and impersonal. God goes before each of us and prepares the way. His ultimate plans for all of us are good even when our present circumstances aren't good. To the

Jewish exiles languishing in captivity in Babylon, God reminded them of a promise we can claim as well. “‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ says the LORD. ‘They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.’” (Jer. 29:11 NLT)

God is always fully at work without our seeing or feeling it. Have you ever heard of movement without perception? At this very moment Earth is spinning on its axis at a speed of 1,000 mph. Do you have any sense of motion? At the same time, our planet is rotating around the sun at 66,000 mph. Feeling dizzy yet? The earth is moving at tremendous speeds, but we don’t perceive it. Albert Einstein, the great scientist, would strike two quick blows with his fist in rapid succession and then say, “Between those two strokes we traveled 30 miles.” That’s movement without perception. God is fully active in our world and in our lives even though we don’t always see it or feel it. Someone found, scribbled on the wall of a basement in Germany at the close of World War 2, these words: “I believe in the sun, even when it is not shining. I believe in love, even when I cannot feel it. I believe in God, even when He is silent.” Do you? Faith means we keep believing in God even when He apparently does nothing and says nothing. His silence isn’t because He’s inactive or indifferent. God is present and active working quietly and imperceptibly – never too late, never too early, never in error. He’s working in our lives to achieve His glorious purpose even we don’t see it or feel it. This psalm reveals another way God affects your life. Because of God...

### **I’M VALUABLE AND I HAVE A DESTINY.**

Whenever biblical writers wanted to get us to focus on God’s majesty and power, they usually wrote about God creating the universe. But in Psalm 139, David is awed by himself! Not stars, mountains, oceans, or animals, but his own physical body. Now, he wasn’t being arrogant, prideful, or self-important. No, instead David simply realized that he himself - and even his physical body - were incredible examples of God’s power and greatness. “You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother’s womb. Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! Your workmanship is marvelous—how well I know it. You watched me as I was being formed in utter seclusion, as I was woven together in the dark of the womb.” (Ps. 139:13-15 TPT) This psalm underlines the truth that every human being is a masterpiece made by God. Every human being without exception possesses intrinsic value and worth, because each of us is a unique, special creation of God.

It’s true the Bible never addresses abortion itself directly or explicitly. But if you believe Scripture is inspired by God, then the question of when God thinks life begins was clearly implied in the passage we just read. To make abortion a matter of a woman’s right to her own body – which is the great political, social argument in our culture for legalized abortion - is to miss the point entirely. The Bible says right here a human embryo is a creation of God. Therefore, should any other human being – even the mother – have the right to terminate a special creation of God? Of course not. A human embryo – like any human being – already possesses a worth and value bestowed by God alone. The imagery here is of a master weaver who knits together or embroiders the different parts of the human body and spirit into a glorious work of art.

All the bones, muscles, veins, and organs are perfectly formed according to God's design. We aren't the random outcome of genes, chromosomes, and DNA. You and I are the products of a divine Artist who knit us together like a beautiful garment. Being biblically pro-life is never about hating people who are pro-choice or bombing abortion clinics. But it is about reminding our culture often and in every way possible that God has revealed His mind on this issue and we ignore it at our peril.

Only belief in a Creator provides an intellectual and rational basis for the value of human beings. It's no accident that because our culture has now accepted evolution as a "not to be questioned" foundation for our lives, we see the rapid erosion of human dignity and value. Evolution can never convey value or worth to human beings. It can never offer you or me dignity, because – if it's true - everyone in here and out there are just the products of random events over "gazillions" of years. It always amazes me how some of the same people who argue most loudly for human rights on this or that issue leave no place for God or even a Creator. How do you have the one without the other?

By the same token, as followers of Jesus we have to guard against being selectively pro-life. Let's be consistent when it comes to human dignity and worth. We should stand against anything that seeks to cheapen or demean human being. Of course, we should continue to stand against legalized abortion. But we should stand up for the God-given dignity of human life wherever we see it threatened. You know I believe homosexual sex is a sin. There's no question about what the Bible teaches. But sometimes I wince when I hear fellow Christians talk about homosexual human beings. Without sacrificing biblical convictions based rightly on Scripture, can we learn how to better show Jesus' love to a homosexual neighbor, co-worker, or family member? After all, if you don't lose your value to God when you sin, does anyone else lose their value to Him? Let's be consistently pro-life. Let's be at the forefront of opposing racism in any of its ugly forms. Let's be advocates for treating immigrants and refugees with respect and kindness, for refusing to tolerate child abuse or domestic violence in any form, for alleviating poverty however possible including holding accountable those who prey on the poor. Followers of Jesus have the best reasons and rationale to be "pro-life" in the widest and deepest sense of that word. Psalm 139 implies God has built into each human being – however sinful, however broken, however annoying, however disabled – an inestimable value and dignity at the moment of his or her conception.

Ernie Johnson Jr. is at the top of his career as a sportscaster for several networks. He's also a faithful Christian and a father who has adopted children. One of them is Michael who has special needs. When Cheryl, Ernie's wife, was introduced to then 3 year-old Michael, he had a club foot and was unable to speak. When she called home to share her experience, she said she'd wonder for the rest of her life what had happened to this boy. Ernie told his wife to bring him home. Later, Michael was diagnosed with muscular dystrophy, and now as a young adult he's attached to a ventilator and uses a wheelchair. Though his care has been both extensive and expensive, Ernie and Cheryl Johnson haven't shrunk from the challenges or resisted new ones. Ernie says, "Some people can be driven by going on mission trips, digging wells for kids who don't have water. Everybody's wired differently. This is one of the ways we're wired. We have this

heart for adoption. It's rooted in our Christian faith. We're instructed to care for orphans and widows. We don't want credit. We don't want pats on the back. We're getting a heck of a lot more out of it than they are."

You have dignity and value because of God. Yes, but you also have a destiny. David wrote, "You saw who you created me to be before I became me! Before I'd ever seen the light of day, the number of days you planned for me were already recorded in your book." (Ps. 139:16 TPT) For those who know and love Jesus, we've been given an inheritance that will take all of eternity to enjoy. True enough. But also in this life, we have the added joy of becoming Jesus' hands, feet, and mouth demonstrating and offering salvation to this world. The Lord has a plan and a purpose for your life and mine. It's unique, special, and custom designed for you. His desire is that when you put your trust in Jesus, you begin to enjoy and experience the abundant life He offers. He offers you His presence and power. No, it's by no means a life exempt of trouble and hardship. But He goes before us maximizing every relationship and every opportunity. And even when there is pain at different points along life's journey, God redeems it and gives us the power to live life triumphantly, courageously, and joyfully. There's one more way Psalm 139 reveals God affects your life. Because of God...

### **I'M INVITED INTO AN INTIMATE, TRANSPARENT RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD.**

"Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life." (Ps. 139:23-24 NLT) I also like how another translation renders those same verses. "God, I invite your searching gaze into my heart. Examine me through and through; find out everything that may be hidden within me. Put me to the test and sift through all my anxious cares. See if there is any path of pain I'm walking on, and lead me back to your glorious, everlasting ways—the path that brings me back to you." (Ps. 139:23-24 TPT) David was simply working out his theology. At first the truth that God is everywhere and knows everything was a bit unnerving and uncomfortable to David. The Hebrew word for search means a deep, diligent probing. We simply cannot fool God. His knowledge of us is absolute, comprehensive, encyclopedic, exhaustive, and total.

So – David asks - why not welcome this truth rather than fight or resist it? Yes, to be searched by God can be uncomfortable because God will always be faithful to reveal what's dirty, ugly, hard and hateful in us. But He never uses that intimate knowledge of you and me destructively. David realized it's far more dangerous not to be searched by God than to be examined by our loving Creator and Father. This is part of the privilege of having a relationship with God. He loves us too much to allow us to fool ourselves by rationalizing actions and attitudes that will destroy us and cause others pain. So He graciously reveals our innermost selves to us at times. No, it's usually not a pretty picture. But it keeps us clean. It keeps us trusting in God not ourselves. Most importantly, it helps us maintain an intimate, transparent relationship with God.

Are you 100% open to God all the time? Utterly and completely transparent every waking moment of the day? You and I might as well be because God is everywhere

and knows everything anyways. Why is it that some followers of Jesus just seem to live closer to God than others? God is not nearer or farther away from one person than another. He is equally accessible to anyone. So why does it seem like God is more real to some people than others? Does God pick favorites? No. Are some people just born with a kind of “holy personality” that makes them live closer to God? No. The main characters in the Bible had all sorts of different personalities and temperaments. I believe the difference between some followers of Jesus and others is this factor. Are you truly willing to have an intimate, transparent relationship with God all the time? Are you spiritually receptive? Are you open to being lovingly searched, probed, and examined by God even if it's not always pleasant, because you realize it's the safest and best place to be at any given moment? How truly open are you to God?

The bad news is that all of us try to hide from God at times. It's kind of our default position. The good news is that intimacy and transparency with God can be developed and cultivated. You and I can get better at being completely open to God all the time. The ability to be transparent before God all the time can increase through my effort or diminish through my neglect. Again, we might as well move in the direction of complete intimacy and transparency because the God we worship knows everything about us anyway and He's not going anywhere. God's not asking you to become a David, a Paul, a Martin Luther, a Mother Teresa, or a Billy Graham. Millions of humble followers of Jesus over the centuries you've never heard about learned how to stay open to God continually and cultivated a relationship with Him marked by intimacy and transparency. The result? God blessed them richly and they became a great blessing to others.

Wayne Cordeiro, a pastor in Hawaii, tells about a time years ago when some wonderful people in their church gave Anna, his wife, and him a dinner certificate to a nice restaurant for \$100. They thought, “Wow, a \$100. Let's go for it.” They found a free evening. They dressed up. They put on deodorant and cologne—the whole thing. Wayne even washed and waxed their car, because they wanted to take it through the valet. He didn't want his Ford Pinto to look bad. The night came, and they were so excited. They went to this ritzy restaurant and walked in. They got a nice, candlelit table overlooking a lagoon adjacent to a moonlit bay there in Hawaii. Oh, it was nice. And they thought, “A \$100 just for the two of us. We could eat high on the hog.” So they ordered the most expensive thing there. It was wonderful. When the bill came, Wayne said, “Honey, why don't you give me the certificate.” She said, “I don't have the certificate. I thought you brought it.” Wayne said, “You have to have it. You're supposed to have it. You're the wife!” (I like the way Wayne's mind works very much.) She said, “I don't have it.” Wayne thought to himself, “We are in deep trouble. Here we are. We look rich, we act rich, we even smell rich. But if we don't have that certificate, it invalidates everything.” There are times in our lives when we can look holy, we can act holy, we can smell holy. But without an intimate, transparent relationship with the Lord, we've forgotten something. It's our relationship with Him that validates everything else.

Psalm 139 teaches us that because of God, I'm not alone or on my own. Because of God, I'm valuable and I have a destiny. Because of God, I'm invited into an intimate, transparent relationship with God that validates everything else.