

Lesson Title

God knows me

Text

Psalm 139:1-6

Big Idea

David was amazed that God knows everything about him.

Aim

To understand that worship is the only appropriate response to God, who knows everything about us.

Leader's Study Notes

Read Psalm 139:1-6, noting the different ways that David describes God's knowledge of him.

Use the following notes to help you think about the passage in more detail.

As children grow up, they will question their identity and place in the world. Several false messages from their culture will appear to answer these questions and begin to define how they see themselves and others. Psalm 139 provides a clear Biblical worldview – there is a Creator God who knows us better than we know ourselves, is always present with us, and justly tests and guides his people.

139:1-4 – God's knowledge of David is complete and intimate; he has closely and deeply searched every aspect of David's being. God knows each of his movements, actions, thoughts, and words. There is nothing David can think, say or do that would surprise God – he even knows what David will say before he says it! David can't deceive God or hide anything from him – not even a fleeting thought.

139:5 – These words are not to be understood as restrictive but protective. David describes feeling surrounded and enclosed by the protective barrier of God's care – nothing can snatch him away. David also experiences God's gentle hand comforting and guiding him through life.

139:6 – Reflecting on these truths causes David to respond appropriately in wonder and worship. David's inability to understand God's knowledge of him doesn't cause him to fear or despair, but to feel comforted and cared for.

Reflect

- How would your friends, neighbours, or work colleagues answer the questions, who am I, and why do I matter?
 - How does Psalm 139:1-6 begin to answer those questions from a Biblical perspective?
 - Thank God for the comfort and security that his complete and intimate knowledge of you provides.
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Series Intro Idea

Show the children the album covers of different CDs, LPs or a book of sheet music. Examine the track titles on the covers or the book's index and discuss the titles. What do they think each song might be about?

Explain that the Book of Psalms is a songbook, and each psalm has a different theme or subject. Psalm 139 is a song about God and the people he made. Like a song with four verses, this psalm has four sections that tell us something about God and us. We will be learning about one of these sections each week.

Introductory Idea – Option 1

Would You Rather? Before the lesson, draft a list of scenarios your children will relate to. For each round, ask the children to choose between the two alternatives while pointing to opposite sides of the room. The children stand on the side, which represents their preferences. Scenarios might include:

1. Would you rather eat ice cream for breakfast or pizza for breakfast?
2. Would you rather be able to fly like a bird or swim like a fish?
3. Would you rather have a pet dinosaur or a pet unicorn?
4. Would you rather have super strength or the ability to turn invisible?
5. Would you rather live in a castle with dragons or a treehouse with monkeys?
6. Would you rather have chocolate-flavoured broccoli or broccoli-flavoured chocolate?
7. Would you rather be able to talk to animals or speak any language in the world?
8. Would you rather have a magic wand or a magic carpet?
9. Would you rather go on a treasure hunt or explore outer space?
10. Would you rather have a never-ending supply of your favourite candy or your favourite toy?

Once all the children have chosen, select one or two and comment on their choice. You might say, "I would never have thought you would choose this side!" Or, "I knew you'd prefer that!" [Use the Bridge Questions below to create a link with the lesson.]

Introductory Idea – Option 2

For Older Children. Play Two Truths and a Lie. It's best to play this game in smaller groups. Ask the children to think of two truths about themselves and something they have made up about themselves that is untrue. Group members take turns making their three statements to the group, who then vote to decide which statement is not true.

Discuss the game and ask:

- Who was best at detecting the lies?
- Who knew group members the best?

[Use the Bridge Questions below to create a link with the lesson.]

Bridge Questions

Explain that while we can know some things about our friends, we cannot know everything. In the first part of Psalm 139, David says that the person who knows him best is God. The children must listen carefully to today's true Bible lesson to discover the answers to the following questions:

- What does God know about David? [*Everything – actions, thoughts, and words. (139:1-4)*]
 - How does God know these things? [*He is always with David (139:5)*]
 - How does this make David feel? [*Amazed (139:6)*]
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Teaching Plan

There are three key ideas that you will need to cover in this lesson:

- God knows everything about us.
- We are surrounded by God's protection and care.
- We should be amazed by God and want to worship him.

You could teach the psalm using the Visual Aids provided in the Media section of the webpage, or other items where possible to illustrate each section.

Begin by discussing how we can see things that we wouldn't usually be able to see with only our eyes. We can use binoculars to see objects far away, and a magnifying lens or a microscope to see tiny objects. We can even use X-ray machines to see inside our bodies. But can we see what someone is thinking?

Introduce King David and place his picture on a board. Explain that he wrote a song about everything that God knows about him. Read slowly through verses 2 to 4 asking the children to pick the images which best fit each phrase and place them around the image of David.

Explain that David knew that God was always close to him, looking after him, protecting and guiding him – he knew that he was safe in God's hands. Can the children imagine having a friend like that? Someone who knew everything about them? Who knows exactly what they like and dislike? Who knows what they were thinking and how they were feeling? Someone who was always with them to help and guide them. David was amazed at how wonderful God is; all he wanted to do was worship God.

For older children – teach the verses using the pictures as above, but read the passage directly from the Bible. You could then go through it a second time, summarising what each section says. Use the following questions to help the children think about the passage in more detail:

- Can you list the things that God knows about David? (139:1-4)
 - How many times the words 'I', 'me' or 'my' are in these verses? Why do you think they appear so many times?
 - What did David say God's protection is like? (139:5)
 - How did David feel, knowing that God knows everything about him and protects him? (139:6)
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Game Idea – Option 1

For Younger Children. God Knows... This is a variation of the game, 'Captain's Coming'.

Teach the children the actions that correspond to a line from Psalm 139:1-6. When a command is given, children must display the correct action. After a few practice rounds, children who are the slowest to do the action or display an incorrect action must sit out.

Commands could include:

- God searches me – pretend to use a magnifying glass to search for clues
- God knows when I sit – sit down
- God knows when I stand – jump up
- God knows when I go out – run around the space
- God knows when I lie down – lie down, pretending to be asleep
- God knows my thoughts – point to your head
- God knows my words – point to your mouth
- God is wonderful – thumbs up

Remind the children that in the first part of Psalm 139, David is amazed because God knows everything about him.

Game Idea – Option 2

For Older Children. Getting to Know You. Before the lesson, print the Answer Cards from the Media section of this webpage – enough for each group member to have one complete set of each, and cut them out.

You will also need to draft several scenarios with three possible answers labelled A, B and C. Using made-up scenarios rather than factual questions about group members will introduce an element of guesswork and prevent any fringe members from feeling excluded.

Example scenarios:

1. How would you rather spend a Saturday afternoon?
 - a. Playing sport
 - b. Listening to music
 - c. Going shopping

2. If someone gave you a birthday gift you already own, would you:
 - a. Give it back, demanding a new gift?
 - b. Politely tell them you already own it?
 - c. Thank them and say nothing?

In turn, invite each child to the front and read out a scenario and the three possible answers. They must choose which answer best describes how they would respond to the scenario by placing the corresponding Answer Card (A, B or C) facedown in front of them, ensuring no one knows what they have chosen. Group members must vote in the same way, guessing which answer best applies to the appointed child.

Once everyone has voted, ask the appointed person to turn over their Answer Card. Group members reveal how they voted and receive one point each for a correct answer. Repeat the voting process with different group members and scenarios. Play as many rounds as time allows. For larger groups, divide into several smaller groups and run the game simultaneously to reduce the time required to complete each round.

Briefly discuss the results; who knew the rest of the group best? Who did you know best? Did that surprise you?

Scoring well in the activity doesn't require knowing facts, such as how many siblings the group members have, but rather understanding them personally to know how they would respond in certain situations. Remind the children that in the first part of Psalm 139, David says that the person who knows him best is God.

Discuss and Apply

For younger children – talk about how their parents are the people who know them best. They know what they like to eat and drink. They know what they enjoy watching on TV or which stories they like to hear read. Parents also know when they are tired and need to sleep, or how to help them when they need it. Parents know a lot about them, but God knows even more. God knows what they think and will say even before they say it. God also knows how they feel – happy, sad, or angry. He sees everything they do. Unlike older children and teenagers, very young children will not feel stifled by the idea that God is always with them and sees everything they do, think, feel and say.

Many young children have imaginary friends who are always with them, even in places and at times when real friends cannot be with them. For very young children, it's wonderful to know that God is real and always with them to help and guide them. For children over four or five, you could also explore that God sees everything they do, hears every word they speak, and knows everything they think and feel – even when those are unkind thoughts, feelings, words, and actions. However, in this section of the psalm, David is amazed and rejoices that God is always with him and knows all about him. Lesson four will focus on sin and the need for repentance. For now, enthuse the children with the wonder of what it's like to have a God who knows everything about us and is always with us to protect and help us through life.

For older children. The idea that God knows everything about us, knowing even what we will say before we say it, might seem unnerving. As above, help the children to understand that God's knowledge of us is not controlling but protecting. David described the feeling of being 'hemmed in', like how a young baby is cradled in a parent's arms or a toddler enjoys playing in a park enclosed by gates and fences, providing protection and care.

You could use the following questions to help the children think about the implications of these truths for how they think about themselves and others:

- Who are the people who know you best? How does that compare to how God knows you?
 - How does it feel knowing that God knows everything about you, even the things you don't tell anyone else?
 - Because God knows everything about us, how do you think that should affect:
 - How you think – what you think about and the decisions you make?
 - How you speak to others and about others?
 - How you treat others?
 - How do these verses help:
 - when you feel that no-one understands you or how you feel?
 - when you feel lost?
 - when you're feeling helpless in a challenging situation?
 - How did David respond to what he knew about God's knowledge of him? Are you also amazed? How will you respond?
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Prayer Idea

Display the visual aid images of all the things God knows about David. Remind the children that God knows all of these things about us too. Ask each child to point to the one that is the most amazing to them and encourage them to pray thanking God that he knows and cares for them better than anyone.

Activity A

For younger children, choose either this activity or Activity B.

From the Media section of this webpage, print Activity A onto paper (one copy for each child).

Children should draw their face onto the body and colour the image.

If time allows, children can draw in the remaining spaces, any other things that God knows about them. I.e. their favourite toy, or activities they enjoy.

Remind the children that God knows everything about them.

Activity B

For younger children, choose either this activity or Activity A.

From the Media section of this webpage, print Activity B (two pages) onto paper for each child.

Before the lesson, cut along the lines as marked. Arrange the pages in order, with the cover on top and the blank page at the bottom. Staple as marked to produce a booklet for each child.

The children colour the pictures.

Remind the children that God knows everything about them.

Worksheets

For older children – choose either Worksheet C or Worksheet D from the Media section of this webpage. Print whichever is appropriate onto paper for each child and use it to reinforce the lesson or as a discussion starter.

Memory Verse

Use one of the memory verse ideas in the Series Introduction to help the children memorise the following verse:

You have searched me, Lord, and you know me. Psalm 139:1
[NIV]
