

Lesson Title

God is with me

Text

Psalm 139:7-12

Big Idea

David was comforted, knowing God was always with him to protect and guide him.

Aim

To understand that God is always with us to protect and guide, even in difficult situations.

Leader's Study Notes

Read Psalm 139:7-12, noting how God's presence with David is described and depicted.

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

Psalm 139:1-6 describes God's detailed, complete and intimate knowledge of all people. Such knowledge provides comfort and a sense of protection for his people. The second section of the psalm highlights God's constant presence. Regardless of where they may find themselves, even in the depths of life's trials, God is always present with them – holding them fast and guiding them.

139:7 – In 139:1, David affirms that God knows all about him and provides examples of God's knowledge regarding his actions, thoughts, and words (139:2-5). Similarly, in 139:7, David uses two rhetorical questions to affirm that God is always with him, followed by images to support his point (139:8-12).

It's unlikely that David's questions express a desire to flee from God because he has already expressed his wonder at God's knowledge of him (139:6) and later invites God to test and guide him (139:22-24). Instead, his questions highlight the comfort and security of always being in God's presence – it's impossible to be separated from God.

139:8-10 – David uses two pairs of opposite images to illustrate the resounding 'nowhere' answer to his opening questions. From the highest of heights to the depths of the earth and everything in between, God is present. Any place from where the sun rises in the east (the wings of the dawn) to the far side of the sea in the west, God would be with David. In any situation David might find himself, he was confident that God would guide and hold him fast.

139:11-12 – Those who do wrong often act under the cover of darkness, where it's easy to hide from people and escape. But David reveals that darkness cannot obscure God's vision and presence – he sees as well in the dark as he does in broad daylight. No matter where he finds himself, God sees him and is also with him.

Reflect

- When are you most likely to question whether God is with you and aware of what you are going through?
 - How might these verses comfort you when you feel this way?
 - Give thanks to God that he is always with you in every situation, even when it doesn't feel like it.
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Review

Review the previous lesson using 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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Introductory Idea – Option 1

Can you hide it? Before the lesson, gather two objects: one very small and easy to hide and one very large and impossible to hide in your meeting room.

Ask for two volunteers and explain that you will give them each something they need to hide somewhere around the room. Ask the group members to close their eyes and give the two volunteers the items to hide while you count down slowly from ten. Then, ask the rest of the group to find the items. Which did they discover first? Why was it easier to find? The group may be keen to play again with different volunteers, hopefully none of them will be able to successfully hide the larger item.

Some things are easy to hide, and others are much more difficult. David says in Psalm 139 that hiding from God is impossible because he is always with you. [Use the Bridge Questions below to create a link with the lesson.]

Introductory Idea – Option 2

For older children. Before the lesson, draft a list of about five places where the children might find themselves either stranded or stuck, and for each one, ask who they would rather be within that scenario and why. Scenarios might include a lift, the jungle, a burning building, a theme park, or the cinema. For some of these scenarios, children might choose to be with someone who they believe could help them out of the situation; for others, it might just be the person whose company they enjoy most. Did they select different people?

David says in Psalm 139 that God is with him in every situation, and he's very happy about that. [Use the Bridge Questions below to create a link with the lesson.]

Bridge Questions

The children must listen carefully to today's true Bible lesson to discover the answers to the following questions:

- When and where is God with David? [*Everywhere – high, low, east, west, dark, and light situations (139:7-12)*]
 - Why does David like having God with him? [*Guiding and helping him (139:10)*]
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Teaching Plan

There is one key idea in this section of the Psalm, but it has two important implications.

Key idea: No one can ever escape God's presence.

- There is no place people can go where God is not present.
- No situation is too dark or difficult for God to help and guide.

Before the lesson, gather pictures to represent the following:

- Heavens (cloudy sky or even a picture of space)
- Depths (a deep cave or for the bottom of the ocean)
- Dawn (sunrise)
- Far side of the sea (a vast ocean stretching over the horizon)
- Hand will guide me (adult holding child's hand)
- Darkness (either a black block or a thermal image)

A simple internet search will provide many possibilities, choose those suitable for the age group you're teaching.

Begin by talking about the different places people can travel to. Some travel to the next village or town. Some travel to a different country by road, sea or air. Some people are fortunate enough to travel to space or the moon! Some people travel to be with friends and family; others travel to get away from people! Have any children tried to get away from people and hide somewhere?

Explain that David knew he could go nowhere where God was not with him. As you read verses 7-9, display the associated pictures. Paraphrase verses to simplify them for the age group you're teaching.

Help the children understand David's mood – he was not trying to escape from God because he was scared of God. He thought it was brilliant that there was nowhere he could go where God would not be right there with him to help with his guiding hand.

Read or paraphrase verse 10 and ask if the children imagine situations where someone has held their hand to help and guide them. Perhaps when they cross a busy road or balance on a climbing frame at the park. How did holding onto someone's hand make them feel safe?

Read or paraphrase verses 11-12 and discuss how dark places can be scary. Can the children think of examples? Explain that being unable to see clearly and understand what is around you makes it scary. Once we turn on the light, we see there is nothing to be afraid of. A child may be frightened of an object in their room at night, as the lack of light causes it to appear different.

You could show them a thermal image or a picture of night vision goggles, which helps people see in the dark, but they still can't see everything clearly and cannot see colour. God doesn't need special goggles to see in the dark; he sees perfectly well in the day and the night.

For older children – teach the verses using the pictures as above, but read the verses directly from the Bible. You could then go through it a second time, summarising what each section says. You could introduce the children to the word 'omnipresence'. This means that God is present everywhere all at the same time. What is so amazing about this truth?

Use the following questions to help the children think about the passage in more detail:

- What are the opposites that David uses to describe the many places he could go? (139:7-9) Why does he use these opposites?
- How is having God with him everywhere so good? (139:10)
- Do you think David is only speaking about places where there is no physical light in verse 11? What else might he be speaking about?
- What is it about God that makes David want to have him close in dark and difficult times? What is God able to see that David cannot see? (139:11-12)

Game Idea – Option 1

For younger children. You will need two sets of the four pictures used in your lesson to represent the heavens, depths, dawn, and sea. Use one set to label each corner of the room as either heavens, depths, dawn, and sea – place heavens diagonally opposite depths and dawn opposite sea.

For each round, the children must choose a corner – the leader counts down from five to force a quick decision. Once all the children have moved to their chosen corner, the leader holds up any of the four images, asking the following every time: Who went to the right corner? Then ask, 'Is God with the children who went to the heavens?' Repeat the question for each corner.

Award a point to everyone standing in a corner where God is – which is all the children every time. The children may soon determine that it's irrelevant which corner they go to because they will all receive a point anyway. Remind them that no matter where they go, God will always be there.

Game Idea – Option 2

For older children. Divide the children into two teams. You will need five random objects per team placed on a tray and covered with a cloth. You will also need a blindfold and a screen behind which a player can sit – a bedsheet or large towel held by two leaders will also work.

Each team nominates one person who must describe the items to their team without saying what they are. The team that identifies all their items the fastest wins.

Blindfold the first volunteer so they can only describe the items using touch – a leader will need to confirm when an item is correctly identified. The player can only describe the feel and shape of the item, even if they think they have identified it. For example, they cannot say, "It feels like a cup", but rather, "It is plastic, and you can drink out of it". Be sure to time how long it takes the first team to guess the items.

When the second team's player is behind the screen, do not blindfold them or reveal that they have not been blindfolded. This player will, therefore, also be able to describe the colour and more easily identify the composition of the objects, which should make guessing much easier and quicker.

Reveal that the second player was not blindfolded, and discuss which player they would rather have helping their team.

Remind the children that because God is always with us and sees everything, he is the best person to help and guide us.

Discuss and Apply

Discuss places children go in an average week: nursery, grandparents' home, church, shops, park, doctor, etc. Which adults are with them when they are at these places? Remind them that while there may be different adults with them at different times and in different places, God is with them in every place and at every time of the day or night. God is always with them.

Ask them to list the different things they do every day. After each suggestion, remind them that God is with them when they are doing that activity.

Ask them about different emotions they may feel. After each suggestion, remind them that God is with them when they are happy, sad, afraid, etc.

Before the lesson, use a white wax crayon or candle to write 'God' on a sheet of thick paper. You will also need a pen and dark watercolour paint.

Ask the children to share times and situations when they feel lonely or scared. Write their answers across the paper. Talk about how these times can feel like being in darkness, and paint over the whole sheet. The word written using wax should become visible. It's essential to test this before the lesson to ensure that the wax content of the crayon is high enough to repel the paint. Although very young children may be unable to read, they will see the word 'God' appear, and you can tell them what it says.

Remind the children that David says even the darkness is like light to God. He knows where they are, what they are doing and how they are feeling – all the time. When we pray to God about things that make us sad or worried, he knows exactly where we are, what the problem is, and how we feel because he is always with us – he sees and hears everything.

For older children. As they grow, children rightly gain more independence – perhaps they go to their friend's house without a parent or are given more choice over what they wear, play with or watch on TV. They might, therefore, find it restrictive to have their parents or other adults with them all the time. However, like God's complete knowledge of us (lesson 1), his constant presence is not to control but to help and guide us (139:10).

Discuss how we often act differently in situations depending on who is with us. Do the children think, act or speak differently at school when the teacher is out of the room? Are they unkind to their sibling only when their parent isn't there?

Remind them that God is always with them and knows everything about them. Ask them if knowing this truth should impact how they respond to various situations in their daily lives. Why and how? To prompt discussion, ask the children how remembering God's presence impacts their attitude and actions when:

- taking a school test.
- visiting the doctor when they are sick or injured.
- facing a challenging friendship.
- talking with their friends who don't believe in Jesus.
- a teacher gives them instructions.

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:

- How does it feel, knowing that God is always with you?
- Do you ever wish you could escape from God? When? Why?
- Are there times when you particularly feel that God is with you? When?
 - Does it impact how you think, speak or act?
- When do you find it difficult to trust that God is with you? How can you remind yourself that he is always with you?
- Why is God always with us? What does he do for us? (139:10)
- How does it help to know that God is always with you, even in dark times? Does he promise to solve every problem? What does he promise?

You could also include the wax and paint object lesson used above for young children to express some of these ideas visually.

Prayer Idea

Use the wax and paint visual from the Discuss and Apply section to remind the children that God is always with them and will help them even in the most challenging situations. Encourage them to pray:

- thanking God that he is always with them to help and guide them.
 - asking God to help them remember that he is always present in the lonely and sad times they mentioned in their discussions.
 - asking God to help them act and respond to every situation, conscious that he sees and hears everything.
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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 pictures.

Remind the children that God is always with them, wherever they go.

Activity B

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

From the Media section of this webpage, print Activity B-1 onto paper or card (one copy for every two children) and print Activity B-2 onto paper (one copy per child).

Before the lesson, cut along the marked lines and use a craft blade to cut away the shaded area on pages numbered 1-4. Arrange the pages in the correct order with the cover on the top and the back page with 'God' written on it. Staple as marked to produce a booklet for each child.

The children colour the pictures on each page. You could also provide stickers, such as stars, for extra decoration. Encourage the children to draw themselves on each page.

Remind them that God is always there with them wherever they go.

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:

Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? **Psalm 139:7** [NIV]
