

Series Aims

- As you study and teach Psalm 139, various applications will emerge for particular individuals and children's groups in specific contexts. However, the overall aims of the series are:
 - To understand that worship is the only appropriate response to God, who is always with us and knows everything about us.
 - To know that every person has value and purpose because they are wonderfully created and cared for by God.
 - To encourage a desire for God to show us our sin and ask for his help in becoming more like Jesus.
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Series Context

This Psalm is part of the fifth and final section of the Book of Psalms. It was written by David, King of Israel, but the exact context in which he prayed these words is unknown. However, the historical context may not be as important as the current cultural context in which we will teach the universal truths it contains. The world is suffering from an identity crisis. Expressive individualism encourages us to look inside ourselves to discover our identity and determine how we should view ourselves, others and challenges in our world. Gender identity is one particular area of confusion which is dramatically impacting and influencing children with devastating, lifelong effects.

Psalm 139 teaches us that our identity, meaning, and purpose can only be found in relation to the God who made us—when we understand who God is, we will understand who we are. This has profound implications for how we view ourselves, including our physical bodies, thoughts, feelings and behaviour. It also speaks to how we view other people regardless of their race, religion, age, sex, or ability, especially regarding disability, abortion, and euthanasia.

Series Overview

Psalm 139 provides a clear Biblical worldview that helps us understand what God is like and who we are as his image bearers. God knows us better than we know ourselves (week 1) and is always present with us (week 2). These first two truths flow from the truth that God is our loving creator, uniquely crafting each person and sovereignly ruling over every day of their lives (week 3). Because God is our creator, he rightly tests and guides his people and will ultimately judge all people (week 4).

The psalm follows a circular structure – David's final request to 'search' his heart (139:23), echoes his opening statement that God has 'searched' him and knows him completely (139:1). The psalm can be divided into four sections.

- 139:1-6 – God's knowledge
- 139:7-12 – God's presence
- 139:13-18 – God's creating
- 139:19-24 – God's judgment

David's prayer recalls the shelter and security he finds due to God's deep and personal knowledge of him and his constant presence with him. Nothing David can think, say, or do is unknown to God, and there is no place David can go beyond God's presence. Even the darkest situation he might face would be as daylight to God. All of this gives him much cause to worship and praise God.

David knows God's hands to be a comfort (139:5), a guide (139:10), that which knitted him together (139:13) and penned all the days of his life (139:16). He then calls on God to turn his hand against the wicked in judgment (139:19), and lead him in righteous living (139:24). David dissociates himself from those who oppose God and calls for God's fair judgment of their sin. He also demonstrates a humble willingness to submit himself to God's critical searching to expose and correct his own sin. In contrast to the wicked, whose destiny is destruction, David longs to be guided by God to everlasting life.

Memory Verse Ideas

Scrambler: Before the lesson write each word of the memory verse onto a separate piece of paper or [use pictures instead of words for very young children](#). If the verse contains more words than there are children in the class write a couple of words on each sheet of paper.

Choose a number of children to stand in a line at the front of the class and each hold one piece of paper in order. The rest of the class read the memory verse aloud together with you. When you have read through the verse a few times gather some of the pieces of paper, shuffle them together and give them back to the children at the front in a different order. The rest of the class can help you to rearrange the children in the line so that the verse reads correctly again.

If there are not enough children in the class to play this game simply place the pieces of paper on the ground instead of getting the children to hold them up.

Separator: Before the lesson tape or glue a number of sheets of paper together to form one long strip. Write out the memory verse as one long word without any gaps between letters.

The children can tear the paper or draw a thick line to separate the words and work out the memory verse e.g.

“JesussaidIamthelighthoftheworld” would become “Jesus / said / I / am / the / light / of / the / world”. If you have a large group you could make two of these strips of paper and get the children to race in teams to complete the memory verse.

Human Scrabble: Assign a word of the memory verse to each child. If there are more words than children in your group assign more than one word to some of the children. Make sure they know their words. Get them to arrange themselves in order. Start at one end and get them to say their word(s) out loud.

After each round, get the last child to move to the first position and take ownership of the first child's word who then gets the second child's word, and so on. Repeat as time (and enthusiasm) allows.

Popping Words: Divide the memory verse up into words or short phrases and write these on strips of paper. Place each paper strip into a balloon and inflate the balloon. Divide the group into teams and have one set of different coloured balloons for each team. The children take turns to collect and pop a balloon from the other side of the room. They bring the strip of paper back to the group to arrange in the correct order. The first team to correctly assemble the verse and recite it out loud wins.

Using This Resource

This programme is designed to be adaptable. It can be used for a mixed 3-11s group or more age-specific groups.

[Text in blue is generally applicable to younger children \(3-7 years\); green text is aimed at older children \(7-11 years\);](#) and black text is applicable to all age groups, at the leader's discretion.

Leaders are encouraged to engage with the study material in a devotional manner, seeking to apply God's word to their own lives before attempting to teach others. We trust that you will be blessed as you do that. We also hope that once you have done that, your application of God's word to the children you teach will be more deliberate and relevant.

Craft Symbols

We make use of the following symbols for the craft activities:



Apply glue here



Cut along this solid line



Cut out this shaded area



Fold outwards along this dashed line



Fold inwards along this dashed line



Staple here

Using Toilet Rolls and Egg Boxes

Some of the craft ideas in this resource suggest the use of either cardboard toilet roll tubes or egg boxes. If you use either of these they should be cleansed by placing them in a microwave on full power for ten seconds. This reduces the risk of disease from toilet rolls and traces of salmonella from egg boxes.

Suggested Session Outline



Review

Review the previous lesson using the questions provided as well as any of the visual aids that were used for the previous lesson. This is helpful for children who may have missed that session.



Introductory Idea

Introduces this week's lesson.

Pose the questions at the end of the Introductory Idea. This gives children something to look out for in the lesson and helps their concentration. These get answered later in the session.



Teaching Plan

The core of the session.

The action of the Bible text is told as a story for younger children and explained. Or the Bible text is taught as a simple Bible study for older children.



Game Idea

Not essential.

Reinforces the lesson aim in a fun way and provides a way of displacing energy!

Review the questions posed in the Introductory Idea.



Discuss and Apply

Not to be missed!

This is where the children can be quizzed on the content and meaning of the Bible story. Questions and discussion are needed to apply this Bible story to the children's everyday lives. They should do most of the talking.



Prayer Idea

Use the prayer idea or just encourage each child to pray about an aspect of the lesson.



Activity

An opportunity to reinforce the lesson. **For younger children, Activity A or B will be suitable. For older children, Activity C or D can be used to facilitate the Teaching or the Discuss and Apply section – some children prefer a lively discussion to completing written answers.**



Memory Verse

A fun way of remembering the key verse for the series.