



Opening Ourselves to God

Psalm 139:1-6 & 23-24

Kia ora whanau, it's good to see you and be with you today - many of us are back from our holidays and I have to say you're looking mighty fine. I hope you loved hanging out with loved ones and eating far too much delicious food.

There's one thing that brings me a lot of joy when I get back home from the beach and that's my feet - they have jandal marks from my tan. Seeing it gives me a lot of joy and reminds me of those two weeks relaxing at the beach when all I needed was flip-flops. I hope you had great joy on your break too.

We're in Week 3 of our **Summer Slowdown** series. In week one Aidan reminded us that our *doing for God* has to flow from our being with God. I love that saying, "How do you pour from an empty cup?" Last week, Grant spoke from Matthew 6, "Do not worry" inviting us to worry 10% less and trust our Father 10% more.

Today we're focusing on what changes in our relationship with God when we're still. Think of it like a snow globe; when it's shaken, everything is swirling and chaotic. But when it's had time to be still, the pieces settle, and you can see clearly. Slowing down allows us to find that clarity and peace.

We find in solitude and silence the incredible character of God, the God who knows everything about us, is with us, is for us - and invites us even closer. Our theme today is: **“Opening Ourselves to God.”**

If you're anything like me, the question isn't *if* we should do that, but *how* we should do that. How do we stay open to God once the noise quiets? **How do we trust Him enough to let Him search our hearts?** We're going to start discovering this with an amazing psalm of David. We know from Samuel 13:14 that David was **“a man after God's own heart”** who wrote prayers and songs to God to express his awe and worship. This is one of his most well-known psalms because it expresses so well the wonder we feel when we actually stop and think about the mind-blowing nature of who God is.

Psalm 139: 1-6 & 23 -24, **“*1O Lord, you have searched me and you know me. 2You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. 3You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. 4Before a word is on my tongue you, Lord, know it completely. 5You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me. 6Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain. ... 23Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. 24See if there is any offensive way in me and lead me in the way everlasting.*”**

This beautiful psalm reminds me of when I was 18 and I had an incredible “Aha” moment with God. You know one of those moments that makes a difference. I was on a camp with some friends lying down in a field and we'd just spent the night worshipping. We were looking up at the stars which were shining so brightly outside of the city. I was just awestruck by the enormity of the universe spread out across the night sky. Suddenly I realised that I was just one tiny speck in a massive cosmos I couldn't comprehend. There are all these immense galaxies and I'm on a tiny planet called earth, speeding through the universe. You *know it* in the back of your mind, but this is the moment you're *struck by it!* Then you're hit by the next thought. The God who created the universe, who put all this into play and is so omnipotent that he is outside of time and space

... knows me loves me. What have I done to deserve this? In Psalm 139 David is having one of those staggering moments too.

When we dig into it, Psalm 139 says, ***“¹O Lord, you have searched me and you know me.”***

“You have searched me.”

The Hebrew word “searched” here means to “*dig to discover the roots, the source, the foundations of my life*”. God has gone into the deepest part of me and knows all of me.

“... and you know me.”

The Hebrew word “know” here is “yada”, which is used to refer to the most intimate, personal knowledge possible between two persons, like a husband and a wife. God examines us to the very depths and knows us better than we know ourselves. He knows our motivations deep within our hearts that we ourselves don’t even know are there. And what brings David to the place where he writes this psalm of praise is the fact that God loves and accepts him. This intimate knowledge implies a profound acceptance; God knows all our shortcomings and sins, yet still loves us deeply, offering grace rather than condemnation.

David goes on to marvel at the omniscience, all knowingness of God, his stunning character and deep understanding of every aspect of a person's life, thoughts, and actions, ***“²You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. ³You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. ⁴Before a word is on my tongue you, Lord, know it completely.”***

The picture here is that God knows us intimately, from the deepest part of our soul to the hairs on our head. He also always knows us, no matter what we are doing. He sees the actions everyone else sees, and the ones they don't see. He knows the thoughts that cross our mind, and the thoughts we choose to dwell on. He pays special attention to the path we are choosing *and* the way that we walk it. Regarding God's total knowledge of us, David is painting a picture of

a very personal God - one who pays attention to the individual details of every person He created.

“⁵You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me. ⁶Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain.”

When it says, ***“You hem me in behind and before”*** my mental image is of a parent tucking their child into bed. It’s such a loving personal act to keep you warm and safe. Here is God’s omnipresence, constantly before us and behind us. Giving us the comfort and assurance that He is *always* with us.

When David is describing that God lays His hands on us, it is so much more than a protective hand. Laying hands on someone in the Bible is a signal of blessing, of filling them with the Holy Spirit, of strengthening and of healing. It's a very intimate gesture - God laying His hand specifically on us because we are so precious to Him. The *knowledge* that God, the creator of the universe, would do this for us it *too wonderful* for David to understand. It’s so hard to get your head around, it’s mind blowing. That the all-knowing, all-seeing, all-powerful God of the universe cares for me. This is impossible to understand except because of love.

The Apostle John wrote in 1 John 3:1, ***“See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!”***

In Psalm 139, the love of God is expressed through His **intimate knowledge** of every one of us, His **unavoidable presence with us** and His countless **precious thoughts** towards each of us. God knows all human shortcomings, brokenness and sins, yet still loves us deeply, offering grace rather than condemnation, forgiveness rather than guilt.

How do you respond to God when you are so awareness of his omniscience?

David's first response as he thinks about the breadth and depth of his awesome God is one of *wonder and worship*. That's what lies at the heart of David's Psalm 139.

David's second response is verses 23 & 24 which are incredibly challenging. His reaction to this incredible love is to consciously choose to surrender his innermost being to the scrutiny of God ... ***"²³Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.
²⁴See if there is any offensive way in me and lead me in the way everlasting."***

David is acknowledging the loving acts of God and he's pursuing a deeper level of friendship with God. He's asking for help to remove every barrier within him for COMMUNION because communion or friendship with God is based on openness and vulnerability.

I want to be transformed from my sin, not because I want to earn my salvation but out of a desire to walk with and be more like the Jesus I love. The reason God wants to show me if there is any offensive way in me is so that God can, ***"Lead me in the way everlasting"*** - God's way.

How do I open myself to God and allow Him to show me my barriers?

The gift of consciously opening ourselves up to God is best done with making space like we have over the last two weeks to slow down our outer and inner lives. We need to regularly sit quietly with God long enough to experience his soul-settling presence. And in that space, we can intentionally offer ourselves in surrender.

Mother Teresa said *"We need to find God, and he cannot be found in the noise and restlessness. God is the friend of silence."*

What strikes me about Psalm 139 is that before David ever reaches the point of surrender - asking God to search him and lead him - he first spends time reflecting on who God is. He pauses to ponder the unfathomable character of God. David had to create space to meditate on God's greatness before he could write this psalm and take the next step of opening himself fully.

Are you slowing down enough to make space for God to search?

That's what we've been talking about over the last two weeks. Slowing down our doing and then slowing down the inner chaos and worry that crowds him out. **“Slow down enough to trust God with your whole heart - because the God who searches you already loves you.”**

To be honest, for me, the hardest part isn't just slowing down - it's trusting God enough to let Him in. Sometimes my prayers are so nice, but they aren't honest. I pretend to God and myself and don't bring my inner struggles forward. The writers of the psalms said incredible things like, **“The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want”**, **“Praise God in His mighty heavens”**, but they also said, **“I am such a mess”** and **“I am so angry. I hate those guys. Could you smash them God?”** When we're real with God in our honesty we can begin to allow Him to deal with what's in our heart. My shame and my fear try to stop me but in stillness I can see what is there and give it to God.

Like David, I need to remind myself that when God searches me, it's not to condemn me but because He loves me unconditionally. Jesus coming to live amongst us and die for us is the embodied proof that God searches my inner being to save, not to condemn. John 3:17 makes this so clear, **“¹⁷For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.”** God already knows every part of me - the good, the bad, the ugly and hidden. Yet God you still choose to love me lavishly. That truth changes everything. His deep knowledge of my flaws isn't something to fear or hide from; it's the foundation of my security and comfort. It's what makes a real, personal relationship with Him possible. When I surrender to His testing and shaping with raw openness and vulnerability, He doesn't break me, though He may discipline me, He crafts me into something fruitful and beautiful. That's what I want: to trust Him enough to open every part of my life.

Proverbs 3:11–12 says, **“My child, do not despise the Lord's discipline, and do not resent his rebuke, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, as a father the child he delights in.”**

I can only go deeper with God, I can only get closer to Him, the more real I am with Him and myself. Don't let shame win. Don't let your excuses and justifications stop you from dealing with parts of your life where God wants to shine his light into and bring his conviction and healing.

One helpful way of creating space to allow God's searching is the **Examen**. It's a spiritual practice from the founder of the Jesuits, Ignatius of Loyola. Looking back to look forward you review the last 24 hours which allows you to **develop a sense of gratitude and awareness** of God's hand on your life to see his good gifts and moments of joy, and it **trains you to discern** what draws me away from God.

There is a Māori whakataukī or proverb, "*Ka mua ka muri*," meaning, *looking back into the past to inform our future*. As you look back you see how God is with you and worship. As you look back you see how the Holy Spirit is searching (*yada*) your root foundations and showing you where you need to repent, turn from your sin and allow Him to heal you.

THE EXAMEN 3 X 3

Step	Focus	Questions to Reflect On
1. Gratitude	3 areas where I see God's footprints and am thankful for His blessing	<i>What am I most grateful for today? Where did I experience His joy and goodness?</i>
2. Review	3 honest reflections on the day's events	<i>Where did I feel close to God? Where did I struggle or fall short? Why?</i>
3. Renewal	3 ways of looking forward with hope and intention for the day	<i>What grace do I need for tomorrow? How will I go with you, Jesus into my day?</i>

It only takes about 10 - 15 minutes, and you can do it at the end of the day or in the morning as part of your quiet time. I'm finding it *helpful* and *really challenging*. **Gratitude** has helped me to look for God at work when in the past I was often oblivious.

The challenging part is the **Review** - "*See if there is any offensive way in me.*" You know there is! What I'm also discovering is patterns and attitudes in me, and now when I feel them happening, I can say, "*No I'm not going there*" ... *sometimes!*

When I look at the **Renewal** it invites me to allow his light and wisdom into situations coming up. Maybe I'm anxious about them; maybe I need wisdom for that situation, but it gives me the space to invite God in. I am honestly grateful for the Examen.

This week I want to invite you to a few ways this week to slow and be open to God:

- Set aside 10 minutes and do the Examen at least once.
- Instead of reaching for your phone, take a deep breath and ask God, "*Lord please search me and lead me in the way everlasting*" and see how you sense God responding.
- When you know God putting his hand on something in your life that is a barrier, ask for forgiveness, look at the "*why*" you are doing that. Be real with God and yourself.

Let's pray together:

Father, through your Son, you have given us your Holy Spirit, to know us, and to dwell within us, that we may be with you. Help us to open up, and to enjoy the full freedom of living unhidden and unashamed in you, that our relationship with you may be more than something shallow, but this deeper invitation to beholding your love.

Amen.



These questions are intended to help you think more about this message. We hope they might enable conversation, encouraging you to wrestle with how God might be challenging us to apply what we have heard/read.

Reflection from Sunday 11th January 2026:

Last week Grant spoke to our summer series, **Summer Slowdown**. Using Jesus' words in Matthew 6, "*Therefore I tell you, do not worry*" he challenged us to worry 10% less and trust God 10% more. How did you find that 20% swing worked out in your life over the last week?

Arising from this week:

1. What are some moments in your life when you have been in awe at the character and nature and love of God? How did you respond?
2. What would it look like if we became a people unhurried and unhidden before God?
3. Do you find it natural to open up to God and ask him to search your heart like Psalm 139: 23 - 24 or in spiritual practice of "The Examen" Why or why not?
4. Reflecting on your prayer life at the moment, how open do you feel you're being with God. Are you hiding? Why do we hide? God is all knowing, why do we pretend with God?
5. What are some ways that you have learnt in your life to deal with barriers to God?

If you'd like to chat with someone about your spiritual journey or anything else going on in your life, please contact us at care@windsorpark.org.nz; **we're better together and no perfect people are allowed.**



Below are some further resources that may take the message further and deeper and enable you to explore other viewpoints on the same theme. We also encourage you to engage with the preacher if there are further questions you have or if you'd like clarification on anything. Email info@windsorpark.org.nz and we'll direct your query to the appropriate person.

1. *Practicing the Way* have a four session video series on slowing down to be open to God with **“Solitude and Silence”**
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gZshdJUigWs&list=PL6zls_4DoKlwmEAighMzCWI5YdzYC1ryk
2. **The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry** is a book by John Mark Comer that we've mentioned many times since it was published three years ago. We still strongly endorse this book to you, which is available in a variety of formats – Google is your friend to find different ways to access it!