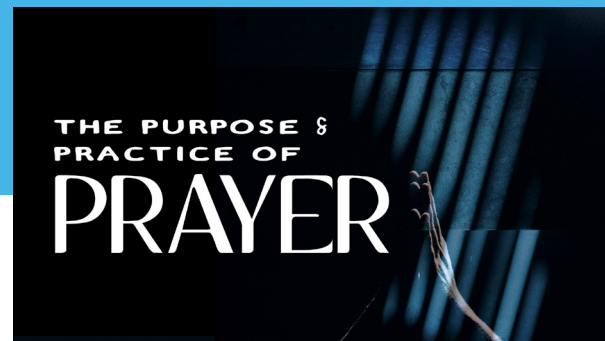


Discussion Questions

October 29, 2023



Practicing Prayer: A Prayer of Reflection Part 1 - Psalm 139

1. Share a bit of how you prefer to pray. What kind of prayer practices do you engage in?
2. Discuss your experience with the prayer practices we have covered so far. Which ones have you tried? Which were beneficial? Which did not feel helpful?
3. Read Psalm 139 out loud together: NIV translation is here

You have searched me, Lord, and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you, Lord, know it completely. You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain.

Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me," even the darkness will not be dark to you; he night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you.

For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. How precious to me are your thoughts, God! How vast is the sum of them! Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand - when I awake, I am still with you.

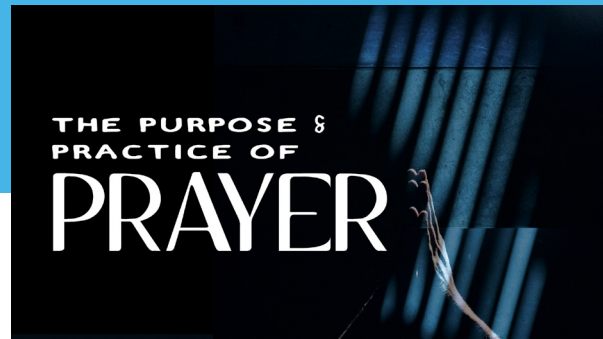
If only you, God, would slay the wicked! Away from me, you who are bloodthirsty! They speak of you with evil intent; your adversaries misuse your name. Do I not hate those who hate you, Lord, and abhor those who are in rebellion against you? I have nothing but hatred for them; I count them my enemies.

Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

4. Read verses 1-6
 - Briefly summarize this section in your own words.
 - How does the knowledge that God knows us intimately make you feel? Do you find it comforting or intimidating and why?
5. Read verses 7-12
 - Briefly summarize this section in your own words.
 - How does the awareness of God's constant presence impact your daily life and choices?
6. Read verse 23-24
 - Discuss your experience of how you have perceived approaching God with repentance or correction or to "search your heart." Do you ever have hesitations, fear, etc?
 - If appropriate to share - Can you think of a time when you struggled to accept God's love and grace because you felt unworthy? How did God lead you through that?
7. Finish by taking a few minutes to pray through this Psalm's main elements
 - Vs 1-6 - That we are fully known
 - Vs 7-12 - That God is always with us, even in the darkness
 - Vs 13-18 - That he is in control of all things and can be trusted
 - Vs 19-22 - Ask the Lord to have His heart for our "enemies"
 - Vs 23-24 - Ask Him to show us our hearts, anxiousness, or offenses

Prayer Practice

October 29, 2023



Praying through Psalm 139

Pray through the Psalm section by section. As you pray, try to keep the reality of God's goodness, kindness, gentleness and compassion at the forefront of your mind.

If short of time, really focus on the final step of vs 23-24.

Pray out verses 1-6, linger where led

You have searched me, Lord, and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you, Lord, know it completely. You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain.

- **Thank the Lord that you are FULLY known**
- **Praise Him that He loves us even knowing every one of our faults.**

Pray out verses 7-12, linger where led

Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me," even the darkness will not be dark to you; he night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you.

- **Thank Him that He is present in all circumstances**
- **Acknowledge the areas you try to keep dark and praise Him, that He sees it like Light.**

Pray out verses 13-18, linger where led

For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. How precious to me are your thoughts, God! How vast is the sum of them! Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand - when I awake, I am still with you.

- **Pray out a prayer of thanks that He is in control & sovereign.**
- **Confess where you struggle to trust Him.**

Pray out verses 19-22, linger where led

If only you, God, would slay the wicked! Away from me, you who are bloodthirsty! They speak of you with evil intent; your adversaries misuse your name. Do I not hate those who hate you, Lord, and abhor those who are in rebellion against you? I have nothing but hatred for them; I count them my enemies.

- **Ask the Lord to help you to see the people around you with his eyes.**
- **Picture those who are your “enemies,” or those who you are in conflict with and ask the Lord for His heart for them.**

Pray out verses 22,23, linger where led

Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

- **Focus your heart upon God’s loving kindness and joy over you.**
- **Ask God to show you where there is a lack of trust or anxiousness and where you are living in ways contrary to His heart for you.**
- **If you feel condemnation or shame, take that back to God and ask Him to help you see His love for you in the midst of your brokenness and his desire to see you walk in freedom.**
- **Repent where needed and thank God for his tender, gracious love.**

10.29.23 Practicing Prayer: A Prayer of Reflection Part 1 - Psalm 139

Psalm 139

You have searched me, Lord, and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you, Lord, know it completely. You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain.

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For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. How precious to me are your thoughts, God! How vast is the sum of them! Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand - when I awake, I am still with you.

"Lord Count all their prayers as sin "

"May they die quickly"

"May their children be fatherless "

"May their wife be a widow"

"May their children wander around and beg "

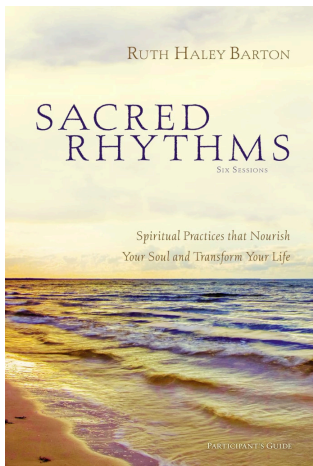
"May the bank seize everything they own "

"May no one ever show them kindness "

"May no one remember they ever existed"

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Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.



There is a paradox, of course, in the truth that I am inviting God to search me and know me when in fact he already has searched me and known me... the real issue in self-examination is not that I am inviting God to know me (since he already does) but that I am inviting God to help me know me. This is clearly the bigger challenge anyway, since we all have such finely tuned tactics for protecting ourselves from knowing what we don't want to know. Like a small child who "hides" by covering her eyes, thinking that if she can't see you, you can't see her, we think that if we don't acknowledge what is true about us, maybe God won't notice it either!

2 Samuel 24:14 (NLT)

"I'm in a desperate situation!" David replied to Gad. "But let us fall into the hands of the Lord, for his mercy is great. Do not let me fall into human hands."

Love

By George Herbert (early 1600's)

LOVE bade me welcome; yet my soul drew back,
 Guilty of dust and sin.
But quick-eyed Love, observing me grow slack
 From my first entrance in,
Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning
 If I lack'd anything.
'A guest,' I answer'd, 'worthy to be here:'
 Love said, 'You shall be he.'
'I, the unkind, ungrateful? Ah, my dear,
 I cannot look on Thee.'
Love took my hand and smiling did reply,
 'Who made the eyes but I?'
'Truth, Lord; but I have marr'd them: let my shame
 Go where it doth deserve.'
'And know you not,' says Love, 'Who bore the blame?'
 'My dear, then I will serve.'
'You must sit down,' says Love, 'and taste my meat.'
 So I did sit and eat.

You have searched me, Lord, and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you, Lord, know it completely. You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain.

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