

Psalm 139:1-12, 23-24 O.T. 545 (NRSV)

¹O LORD, you have searched me and known me. ²You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away. ³You search out my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. ⁴Even before a word is on my tongue, O LORD, you know it completely. ⁵You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me. ⁶Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is so high that I cannot attain it.

⁷Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence? ⁸If I ascend to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there. ⁹If I take the wings of the morning and settle at the farthest limits of the sea, ¹⁰even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me fast. ¹¹If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light around me become night," ¹²even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is as bright as the day, for darkness is as light to you. ...

²³Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts. ²⁴See if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

Psalm 139:1-11; 23-24 N.T. Page 545**“Known”**

Opening Prayer: Please pray with me. O God, you know us so much better than we know ourselves. Open our hearts and minds to know what you would have us to know so we can be who you want us to be. In Christ’s Name, **Amen.**

Introduction: Who knows you best? Who knows your likes and dislikes? Who knows your hopes and fears? Who can complete your sentences for you? Who knows even your secrets? **Is it** your mom or your dad? **Your** spouse? **Or maybe your** life-long best friend? Think of the person who knows you best.

Now, with that person in mind—the person who knows you best—I **want you to think of something** about yourself that person doesn’t know. I realize this might take a moment or two, but I’m sure you can come up with something.

Let me give you an example, **Donna and I’ve** been married for going on 40 years now and we knew each other for about a year before we got married. There isn’t anyone who knows more about me than Donna. And yet Donna doesn’t know the name of the street I lived on when I was three-years old. **It was Iris Drive.** And Donna doesn’t know my first phone number. **It was GI6-5686.** Of course, those are things from years before we met, but there’re things since we met that Donna doesn’t know either. For example, **Donna knows** that I have some U.S patents, but she doesn’t know anything about any of them, other than that they have something to do with my work in processing coal. Now it’s not important that she know, I signed the rights to those patents away years ago, but it’s something about me she doesn’t know. **And of course,** there’re things about her I don’t know either. The point is, **even** the person who knows us best, **doesn’t** know everything. We can be known, and known well, **but we’re still** not known fully.

PAUSE

Move I.

We all want to be known, up to a point. God created us as social beings. We need our parents, and our families, and our friends in order to have a full and meaningful life. **When two people meet** for the very first time there immediately begins an exchange of information. One will say, “*Hi, I’m Jim, what’s your name?*” Where do you live? What do you do? How old are you? Where are you from? What’s your family’s names? Do we have any mutual friends? Do we have any common interest? And the longer you know someone, and the more comfortable you become with them, **the more likely you are to share** things that are more personal about yourself. Things that you don’t want to broadcast to the world, but that you feel are important for the other person to know if they’re really going to know and understand you.

Let me give you another personal example, this is something I have mentioned to all of you before, but it’s not the kind of thing I would put on my resume. **When I was a teenager**, I felt very awkward and insecure. I hated school and I had very few friends. Life seemed mostly pointless and **there were times I was suicidal**. The only person I ever told about my dark thoughts **was my mother**. She never said much, mostly she just listened. There was no judgment, just the sincere interest and concern that only a mother could have. You see, I knew no matter what, she was my mother, and always would be.

Today I know more teenagers than I did back when I was in school. I watch teenage friendships play out pretty much every day. Teens are bored and passionate, open minded and opinionated, loyal and fickle all seemingly at the same time. But the one thing I see is that every teen, even the most awkward and shy, **crave having a real friend**. A friend they can pour out their soul to without fear of betrayal. **A friend who is a friend though thick or thin**.

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Today more than ever young people find expression for their hopes and their fears with music. **That's why you always see teens sharing the earbuds** on their iPhones and talking while listening to music together.

Tiffany Alvord is an Internet artist who has been posting covers of popular songs on YouTube since she was 15. Today she has over 3 million subscribers to her YouTube channel **and she performs at venues around the world**. **But back when** she was first starting out, she posted a video she made just for fun fooling around with her best friend Emily singing ***Umbrella by Rihanna***. It's a song that talks about what it is to have a friend through thick and thin. When the sun shines, we'll shine together and when the rain comes, we'll share an umbrella.

{Play "*Tiffany Alvord Umbrella Clip.mp4*" [0:34]}

But of course, you're not a teenager forever. Today Tiffany is 27 and few years after they made that video together Tiffany was in her friend Emily's wedding. Sure, they'll still be friends forever, but they don't see each other every day like they did back in high school. **We all do have a real need to be known**.

Back in the 1980's, the world-renowned social psychologist William Swann put forth his **self-verification theory**. Swann asserts that people want to be known and understood by others according to their firmly held beliefs and feelings about themselves—who they are. **What that means** is that we want others to know us as the person we believe we are. We want to be known, but only up to a point. **The things we've done don't that fit our self-image**, the dark thoughts that race through our minds in the middle of the night, those things we aren't comfortable sharing with anyone, even our best friend. **We will share an umbrella**, but we hold back giving anyone total access to everything that's running around inside our head. **Yes, we all really do want to be known, up to a point.**

End I.

Move II.

But God knows everything about us. “For it was God who formed our inward parts; God knit us together in our mothers’ wombs. We praise God, for we are fearfully and wonderfully made.” (Psalm 139:13-14a, NRSV). The relationship each of us have with God is unlike any of the other relationships we have in our lives. **God knows** our thoughts before we think them. **God knows** our actions before we do them. **God knows** our secrets before we even know them. That’s a level, a depth, a fullness of knowing that surpasses that of any mortal man.

Our Bible lesson today is Psalm 139. This is a beautiful poem that focus on the intimacy with which God knows our souls—our very being. **This one** of 75 of the 150 Psalms ascribed to King David. The Psalm’s superscription reads: **“For the director of music. Of David. A Psalm.”** Now you need to understand that this does not necessarily mean that King David wrote this Psalm, but it does mean that the Psalm is about David. In fact, the Hebrew words that the translators render as “Of David” they could just as accurately rendered as being **“About David.”**

In Psalm 139 we see King David contending with God to know his heart and see his faithfulness. Of course, **on one hand** we know that God has called David a man after his own heart (1 Samuel 13:14). But we also know that David was far from perfect. **He was a warrior king** with blood on his hands who God saw as unfit to build the temple. **David was a man** who slept with one of his soldier’s wife. That soldier was Uriah and Uriah’s wife was Bathsheba. **David had Uriah** put on the front lines of the battle so he would be killed and **then he took Bathsheba** as his wife so no one would be the wiser when her baby was born. But someone was the wiser. And that someone was God. God knew David fully. **God even sent Nathan** to confront David with his sin. **“You can be sure your sin will find you out”** (Numbers 32:23). Nevertheless, God established David’s throne forever, **and it’s God’s only Son, Jesus, who occupies that throne today.**

We know what it is to be known by family and friends, but we can hardly grasp what it is **to be known by God**. **God knows your heart**, **God knows** your mind. **God knows** your deep dark secrets. **God knows** even your secret sins. And yet, there is no judgment, just the sincere interest and concern that only God can have. **Psalm 139 concludes** with David challenging God: “**Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts. See if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.**” (Psalm 139:23-24, NRSV). To be known by God, is to be changed by God. God takes your anxious thoughts, your unrighteous actions, and God refines them with fire and molds them and remakes them after God’s own will. **God takes your heart** and remakes it after God’s own heart. That’s the outcome not just being know, but of being **fully known** by God.

Timothy Keller is the founding pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in Manhattan and a bestselling author. **In a book** Keller publish in 2011, Keller explores what it means not just be known, but to be “fully known.” Keller writes:

To be loved but not known is comforting but superficial. To be known and not loved is our greatest fear. But to be fully known and truly loved is, well, a lot like being loved by God. It is what we need more than anything. It liberates us from pretense, humbles us out of our self-righteousness, and fortifies us for any difficulty life can throw at us.

Others know only what we let them know. They know what we tell them. **But God knows** our hearts, **God** reads our minds, **God** probes our souls. Others only know the parts we show them. **But knows absolutely everything about us—and I mean everything!**

End II.

Move III.

And knowing God knows, changes everything. David knew he was known by God, and God made his own son the final descendant to David's throne. It's humbling to realize that in spite of your shortcomings, faults, and even outright sins, God can still use your life, if you'll let him. Knowing you are known by God, is the beginning of experiencing **that overwhelming reality** that you are loved by God. The knowing and being known make all of the difference.

Fast forward a thousand years, and the Bible gives us another story of a person who was also overwhelmed when she realized she was known by God too. Long about 27 A.D. **in the Samaritan no-man's land** between **Judea** to the south and the **Galilee** to the north, Jesus walked into the town of **Sychar** and sat down by an ancient well in the heat of the day. **There was a woman** there, Orthodox tradition says **her name was Photina**, meaning light. Today everyone knows her simply as the woman at the well. Jesus asked her to draw some water from the well so he can drink, and then offers to give her living water—water she can drink and never be thirsty again. Jumping at the opportunity to not have to keep drawing water from the well day after day, Photina says, **“Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water”** (John 4:15). **Jesus then** tells her things about herself no one knew. He told her that she had had five husbands and that the man she was currently with wasn't her husband. Photina then spoke of how her ancestors believed that the Messiah would come and explain everything. Jesus then said: **“I who speak to you and he”** (John 4:26b, NIV). Immediately her heart was opened, and she believed. She knows she is known by God, and that changed everything. **She left** to tell her friends that she had met the Messiah at the old well and that he told her everything she ever did. **And on that day many Samaritans believed**. According to John's Gospel, the first disciple **was a woman**, not a man, and the first converts were Samaritans, not Jews.

Can you see how being known by God changed everything? It's just so overwhelming, to be fully known. **In the words** of twentieth-century theologian Paul Tillich, you need to “*accept that you're accepted.*” **David** was accepted. **Peter**, James, and John were accepted. **Photina** was accepted. And you can be accepted too. But first have to accept that you are known—**fully known**. You know you are known and that changes everything.

The story of the woman at the well has inspired countless songs and poems over the years as people began to appreciate the significance of knowing that they are known by God. **In 2006 Chris Kinsley** wrote a spoken word poem called “*A Woman of No Distinction*” and *Student Life* taped a dramatic reading of Kinsley's poem by a young woman named Erin Moon. Let's listen:

{Play: “*Waman at the Well—Erin Moon.mp4*” [2:15]}

To be known is to be loved and to be loved is to be known. We want to be known, not just for who we really are, (sinners) but for who we are becoming in Christ Jesus, our Lord (God's sons and daughters). Like the woman at the well, we are sinners to whom Jesus is offering living water. **We are known by God—fully known. And knowing God knows, truly changes absolutely everything.**

End III.

Conclusion: Who's the person who knows you best? And yet, even the person who knows you best, doesn't know everything. We can be known, and known well, but still not be known fully. **Yes, we all really do want to be known, up to a point.** We want others to know us as the person we believe we are. But the things we've done that don't fit our self-image we're not comfortable sharing with anyone, including our best friend. **But God knows absolutely everything about us.** God knows our thoughts before we think them. God knows our actions before we do them. God even knows our secrets before we know them. **And knowing God knows, truly changes everything.** To be known is to be loved and to be loved is to be known. All thanks be to God, we are **"Known!"**

Closing Prayer: Let's pray. O God, you know our secrets, you know our sins, and that's changing everything. We are fully known, and we are truly loved by You!
Amen!

10:30 Closing Hymn: "Precious Lord, Take My Hand" Red Hymnal No. 474
All Three Verses

Sending Forth: Are you afraid if someone really knew you, they'd reject you? Then realize that you are known, fully known by God, and that that changes absolutely everything. Go forth knowing you are fully known, and knowing you are truly loved by God. **And all of God's people said...Amen!**