

MADE FOR SOMETHING MORE



Who are you—really?

“Identity” is a buzz word in our world—that question of what makes us who we are. The world tells us our identity is determined by a bunch of different factors, including:

- ▶ How we see ourselves,
- ▶ How we feel, and,
- ▶ What others expect us to be.

But if you’ve tried to define yourself based on those factors, you know they’re ultimately hollow; they shift around like sand, leaving us with nothing solid to hold on to.

So, we get back to the basic question: *who are we really?*

Thankfully, there is an answer: we are who God says we are! And when we come to Christ, our identity is shaped—reshaped—into the image of Christ. He brings us back to what He intended us to be in the first place.

In these six sessions, we’ll gain a deeper understanding of who we are in Christ, why we’re here in this world, and what our purpose is supposed to be. Far from how the world wants to define us, we’ll see that we were made for something more.



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Made for Something More

Session 1 ***I Am Wonderfully Made*** Psalm 139:1-6,13-18

Session 2 ***I Am a Child of the King*** Galatians 4:1-7

Session 3 ***I Am a Minister*** 2 Corinthians 3:4-12

Session 4 ***I Am a Priest*** 1 Peter 2:4-10

Session 5 ***I Am Just Passing Through*** 1 Peter 2:11-17

Session 6 ***I Am a Light*** Ephesians 5:8-14

Find additional tools and resources to support this study, all available online at BibleStudiesForLife.com/AdultExtra.



SESSION 1

I AM WONDERFULLY MADE

► ***The Point***

Every life counts—including mine.

► ***The Passage***

Psalms 139:1-6, 13-18

► ***The Bible Meets Life***

As citizens of the modern world, we love our freedom of choice. That's true whether we're choosing a restaurant, an outfit to wear, or a person to spend our life with. Nobody wants to be forced to do something. We like our freedom. But freedom has its limits.

On January 22, 1973, the Supreme Court ruled that freedom included the right to have an abortion. Many hailed this as a freedom for choice, while others criticized it as the license to take a life. The focus of this debate centers on whether or not a fetus—an unborn child—has any value.

But who assigns a person's value? Isn't it the One who created us? If you've ever made something with your own hands, you likely assigned value to that object or project. It was important and valuable to you, even if others didn't see it that way. God our Creator sees us with great value—a value others may dismiss or ignore. But every person matters. You matter. And we honor God when we value life as He does.

► ***The Setting***

Three thousand years ago, David ruled as Israel's king. He was a great psalm writer. The heading of Psalm 139 bears David's name, as do many other psalm headings. Many events in David's life—from Samuel's anointing him for kingship in his youth to failed conspiracies against him in later years—showed that God knew and valued him. We can imagine David and countless others singing Psalm 139 and marveling at God's attentiveness to them.

What does the Bible say?

Known (v. 1)—This word refers to God’s thorough and intimate understanding of us. It can also refer to our awareness of His wondrous works. (See v. 14.)

Hem me in, behind and before (v. 5)—This word refers to God’s all-encompassing presence so that we are under His full protection and care.

Knitted me together (v. 13)—This phrase pictures God at work like a weaver making cloth. However, God’s knitting work involves a newly developing human being in the womb.

Psalm 139:1-6,13-18

¹ O LORD, you have searched me and known me!

² You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar.

³ You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways.

⁴ Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O LORD, you know it altogether.

⁵ You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me.

⁶ Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it.

¹³ For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother’s womb.

¹⁴ I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well.

¹⁵ My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth.

¹⁶ Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.

¹⁷ How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them!

¹⁸ If I would count them, they are more than the sand. I awake, and I am still with you.

GET INTO THE STUDY



10 minutes

Notes



LEADER PACK: Display **Pack Item 7**, “Made for Something More,” to introduce the main theme for this study, along with the specific focus for each session.

DISCUSS: Question #1 on page 77 of the PSG: **“What is something you’ve made with your own hands?”**

ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL): Give group members an opportunity to make something with their hands by supplying

them with Play-Doh® or modeling clay. Encourage each person to create something that represents the joy of life to them.

Note: If clay or Play-Doh® would be too messy for your group or your gathering place, consider bringing pipe cleaners instead. Or, provide group members with a sheet of paper and encourage them to create something by tearing or folding it into a workable shape.

GUIDE: Direct group members to “The Bible Meets Life” on page 78 of the PSG. Introduce the inherent value of human life by reading or summarizing the text—or by encouraging group members to read on their own.

GUIDE: Call attention to “The Point” on page 78 of the PSG: **“Every life counts—including mine.”**

PRAY: Transition into the study by praying for the leaders and lawmakers of your country. Pray that God would impress their hearts with a desire to protect and preserve the value of human life in all its forms.

BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATOR

Want to know about biblical culture, people, archaeology, and history? *Biblical Illustrator* has articles that tie to each session in this study at lifeway.com/BI.

MADE FOR SOMETHING MORE



► I AM WONDERFULLY MADE

Psalm 139:1-14

► I AM A CHILD OF THE KING

Colossians 3:1-2

► I AM A MINISTER

2 Corinthians 3:4-12

► I AM A PRIEST

1 Peter 2:4-10

► I AM JUST PASSING THROUGH

1 Peter 3:17-18

► I AM A LIGHT

Ephesians 5:8-14

TIP: Use this “Notes” column to record additional discussion questions, concepts, and activities that connect the study content with your specific group.



Notes

In what ways do people tend to hide or create space between themselves and God?

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

Note: Many people feel uncomfortable (and for good reason) with questions that seem to make God's Word subjective. For example, "What does this passage mean to you?" Be assured that Question #2 is a separate approach entirely. The psalms are emotional outpourings from God's people. Therefore, it's more than acceptable to encourage your group members to share the emotions they experience when they read important passages.

RECAP: Read aloud the first paragraph on page 80 of the PSG:

Just as Jesus knew Judas was going to betray Him before that betrayal even took place (see Matt. 26:23-25), God knows about our sins before we commit them. That may sound scary, and for good reason. But it also makes the fact that God loves us so much more amazing. In fact, Jesus loves us so much that He came to save us in spite of our sin. (See John 3:16; Rom. 5:8.)

TRANSITION: God knows us intimately because He created us. As we move to verses 13-16 of this psalm, we'll learn more about the value God has imparted to us because of His creation—and because of His plans for us.

Psalm 139:1-6 Commentary

[Verse 1] Psalm 139 has a powerful message for all of us: our lives count to God. The Bible says God “chose us” in Christ for adoption. (See Eph. 1:3-4.) David was chosen. We have been chosen. God knows us so well even the hairs of our heads are numbered and counted. (See Matt. 10:30.)

Further, the high value God places on us is forever confirmed by the cross of Christ. “God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8). God knows us as One who has **searched** us. He studies His creatures closely. He has **known** us in detail, intimately and better than we know ourselves.

[Verses 2-4] God’s knowledge extends to our daily actions. He knows when we **sit down** and when we **rise up**. God knows what we’re doing. If we stand up to serve a spouse, a friend, or a stranger in need, God knows. If we stand to walk away from a task we really should be doing, God knows that also.

He also understands our thoughts. If we’re planning something that would take us far away from His commandments, He knows those plans. God is able and faithful to **search out** our **path** (travels) and our times of **lying down**. God’s knowledge of us is so thorough we will never surprise Him with a **word** we speak. He may be pleased or displeased with our words, but He will not be caught off guard by them.

[Verse 5] Neither will schemes against us ever surprise God. As a warrior, King David was a target for enemies. Rivals intensely coveted the throne on which he sat. Though he had many loyal friends and servants, he also had people who were out to get him. Ponder how profoundly thankful David must have been to say to God, [You] **hem me in, behind and before**. Hemmed in, protected behind and before, guarded from all angles, David was confident in God’s protection.

You and I don’t need to look anxiously about us as if we can find no source of help when we feel we are in danger. Indeed, we can say to God, **You lay your hand upon me**. God’s hand was on David when Samuel first anointed him. God’s hand guided and protected David in battle, in decision-making, and in times of trial. If you and I are believers in Christ, God’s hand has been on us to guide us toward personal faith. God’s hand is on all believers to guide us, protect us, and accomplish His purpose in us.

[Verse 6] God’s **knowledge** is far beyond our capacity to understand. It is expansive. God is all-knowing regarding every quarter of His great universe. Likewise, He is all knowing regarding each of us. This is a lofty thing and we cannot **attain it**. We can’t get our minds around it. When we think seriously of God’s knowing us intimately and valuing us deeply, isn’t it right to bow in awe and worship before Him?



STUDY THE BIBLE

Notes

Psalm 139:13-16

¹³ For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. ¹⁴ I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. ¹⁵ My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. ¹⁶ Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.

READ: Psalm 139:13-16 on page 80 of the PSG.

SUMMARIZE: Help group members walk through the main points from pages 80 and 82 of the PSG:

1. "You and I were made by God, in the image of God, for the purpose of glorifying God."
2. "In addition, we are 'wonderfully made.' God created every person walking the face of the earth as a unique individual, distinct and set apart."
3. "Some people believe life begins the day a child is born, but Psalm 139 paints a different picture."
4. "There's no greater value than being known and loved by God. The amazing message of the Bible is that God knew us and loved us before we were ever born!"

DISCUSS: Question #3 on page 82 of the PSG: **"Where in our culture do we see life being devalued or disrespected?"**

ALTERNATE QUESTION:

How does knowing we are fearfully and wonderfully made impact the way you see yourself and others?

DO: Direct group members to complete the activity "In the Beginning" on page 81 of the PSG. As time permits, encourage volunteers to share their results.

Read Genesis 1:26-28, which describes God's original creation of human beings. Use the space below to record your thoughts on what makes people valuable based on these verses.

Psalm 139:13-16 Commentary

[Verse 13] He **formed** us in our **inward parts**. “Inward parts” probably refers to the inner person, at the level of emotion, affection, desire and conviction. In Job 19:27, the same word in the original Hebrew is translated “heart”: “my heart faints within me.” God created us in our inward parts to feel deeply, to love deeply, to have convictions, and to make value judgments.

God also **knitted** us **together** in the **mother’s womb**. He was active in the cells, organs, and fibers of our bodies growing and maturing in the earliest stages of our human existence and development. In verse 12, we read that “the darkness is as light with you.” In verse 13, we’re reading of the dark place of the mother’s womb and hearing that God knows and sees and works out His purposes even there. God doesn’t wait until after a child’s birth to take interest in and begin His work in that child. Indeed, God said to Jeremiah, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you” (Jer. 1:5). Gabriel said of John the Baptist, “He will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb” (Luke 1:15).

[Verse 14] **Praise** to God follows very readily from knowing that we are **fearfully and wonderfully made**. Even in King David’s day people could hold a new born baby and marvel at God’s wonderful work.

We also can marvel as we hold a new born baby. Months before, the same baby was so small that we wouldn’t have been able to tell that the child’s mother was pregnant. For a time, she herself probably did not know she was pregnant. Yet God knew. From conception through birth, God presided creatively over that child’s growth and development. Holding the newborn baby in our arms, we are gazing upon a little person who will grow day by day into a mature adult. Indeed, God’s **works** are **wonderful!**

[Verses 15-16] We were **not hidden** from God even in the **secret** place of the mother’s womb. To say **I was ... intricately woven in the depths of the earth** is probably a figurative way of continuing to describe formation in the mother’s womb. In the womb, light does not shine, just as it does not in the depths of the earth. God’s **eyes saw my unformed substance**. When our bodies were as yet unformed, when we were embryos still undeveloped, before ultrasound technology could have detected our image, God saw us and knew us!

More than this, **in your book were written, every one of ... the days that were formed for me**. Did God know in advance both the joys and trials that would come to the people whose lives unfold on the pages of Scripture? Psalm 139 testifies that God knew what their days held **when as yet there was none of them**. Was He working out His purposes in their lives through both triumph and tragedy? Indeed, He was. The Bible assures us that God works in all things for the good of His people who love Him. (See Rom. 8:28.)



Notes

¹⁸ If I would count them, they are more than the sand. I awake, and I am still with you.

READ: Psalm 139:17-18 on page 82 of the PSG.

ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL): Bring a cup of sand to your gathering, along with an empty bowl that is larger than the cup. Pass both items around the group and encourage group members to make an attempt to count the number of sand grains in the cup. (They can pour the sand into the bowl and back into the cup to help their counting.)

DISCUSS: Question #4 on page 82 of the PSG: **“How does this passage support the truth that our lives count?”**

Note: This question directly addresses “The Point” from this session: “Every life counts—including mine.” Encourage group members to discuss how verses 17-18 support the truth of that claim.

RECAP: Read aloud the second-to-last paragraph on page 83 of the PSG:

God knows us. He knows everything about us and He loves us. In the same way, He wants us to know Him. God has pursued us from the beginning, and He wants us to pursue Him. That idea can be overwhelming—getting to know God, the Creator of the heavens and the earth. After all, God is totally beyond our comprehension. Yet David viewed that knowledge as “precious.” He used a word that literally means “heavy” or “costly.” David saw the thoughts of God as weighty and highly valuable.

DISCUSS: Question #5 on page 83 of the PSG: **“What actions can we take that reflect our belief in the value of all human life?”**

GUIDE: Refer once again to “The Point” for this session: **“Every life counts—including mine.”** As time permits, encourage volunteers to share any final thoughts and questions.

ALTERNATE QUESTION:

How can we help each other grow in our knowledge of God?

Psalm 139:17-18 Commentary

[Verse 17] It's a good thing God's favor toward us does not depend on our capacity to grasp fully His mind. His **thoughts** are so **vast** that they are far beyond our ability to comprehend. They are many and far reaching.

[Verse 18] If we could **count** God's thoughts of us one by one, the effort would be as hard as trying to number the grains of **sand** on a beach. Could you count one by one the grains of sand that fill a large jar? Could you count one by one all the grains of sand on a coastal beach or in a vast desert? Likewise, God's thoughts of us and plans for us are simply too many to count.

If you did set out to count God's thoughts, sleep would overtake you too soon and too often for you to finish. Maybe that is why Psalm 139 refers at this point to when **I awake**. And what do we realize when we do wake up? We realize that God has been with us even while we've slept. His thoughts have been toward us and of us. And each of us can say to Him, **I am still with you**.

Our experience of the presence of God is like our love for God. We love God because He first loved us and because He loves us now. We are with Him because He is with us.



Previous *Biblical Illustrator* articles "The Nature of the Hebrew Psalms" (Summer 1989), "Psalms: An Overview" (Summer 2017), and "Barrenness in the Ancient Near East" (Spring 2009) relate to this lesson and can be purchased, along with other articles for this quarter, at lifeway.com/biblicalillustrator. Look for *Bundles: Bible Studies for Life*.



Notes

- ▶ **Pray for life.** Pray that the eyes of our lawmakers, judges, and political leaders will be opened to the fact that every life was created by God—every life counts.
- ▶ **Memorize.** Commit Psalm 139:13-14 to memory. Let these verses take hold in your mind and heart so that they impact how you see yourself *and* how you see those around you.
- ▶ **Volunteer.** Commit an hour a week to serve at a local Christian pregnancy center, retirement home, or ministry to those with special needs. Help others see the truth in Psalm 139 that every life—including theirs—matters.

TRANSITION: Read or restate the final paragraph from page 84 of the PSG:

Freedom is a valuable principle. But human beings are precious. Every human life is wonderfully made by God in the image of God, which makes every human life remarkable.

PRAY: Conclude by praising God for the wonder of His creation, from the largest galaxy to the smallest child resting in its mother's womb. Pray that you and your group members would be inspired to uphold the value of human life at every opportunity.



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