

Nurses Christian Fellowship National Nurses Month Celebration 2022

Hope in the Darkness

Week Two: Hope in God's Presence

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At some of the darkest times in my life, when I look back now, what I remember most about God's intervention was that he was present. You might be there now. Maybe it's mental health struggles, post-traumatic stress from COVID, hard family relationships, a breakup, or not landing that nursing job you were praying for. Psalm 139 often is the psalm we think of when we are looking for reassurance about ourselves and how God created us. Psalm 139 speaks greatly to that, but before we read how God created us (fearfully and WONDERFULLY), he tells us about himself, his knowledge of us, his protection over us, and his ever-present presence, for that is where our hope lies!

Background

Verses 1-6 of Psalm 139 speak of God's intimate knowledge of us and His protection over us. Some of the phrases we see in verses 1-4 describe the depth to which God knows us. "You have searched me and known me." "You know when I sit and when I rise." "You discern my thoughts from afar." "You search my path and are acquainted with me." He knows us inside and out; he knows our past and our future. Not only does he know us, he protects us as well. He "hems us in before and after," and his hand (of protection) is upon us. This is wonderful news and gives us insight to verses 7-12. Because God knows us and protects us, we can trust what he says next--that he is with us and we can trust his perspective!



Hearing the Word

Read the passage out loud 2-3 times, then read it silently. If you are in a group, have a few different voices read the passage. Listen and note what you observe during your silent reading. What sticks out to you? What repeated ideas and themes do you notice?

- ⁷ Where shall I go from your Spirit?
Or where shall I flee from your presence?
⁸ If I ascend to heaven, you are there!
If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!
⁹ If I take the wings of the morning
and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,
¹⁰ even there your hand shall lead me,

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and your right hand shall hold me.
¹¹ If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me,
and the light about me be night,"
¹² even the darkness is not dark to you;
the night is bright as the day,
for darkness is as light with you.

Psalm 139:7-12 (ESV)

Responding to the Word

- What do you observe about God's presence in verses 7-9? David uses three sets of contrasts; what might he be communicating to us through those contrasts?
- What do you think is the purpose of David's questions in verse 7?
- How does realizing that God knows and protects (verses 1-6) us assure us of his presence?
- What do you observe about the contrast between light and dark in verses 10-12? What does this teach us about God's perspective? What does that perspective say about God's ability to transform the most hopeless of situations?
- What do we observe about the role of the Spirit in Psalm 139:7?

Application

This psalm describes God's immense power and knowledge, his omniscience (all-knowing) and his omnipresence (present everywhere). The author, David, focuses on God's presence that reaches to the highest high and the lowest low, the places we would not anticipate finding God. David is telling us that no matter what we are experiencing, God is there with us. No matter what! We cannot *not* be in his presence.

God can take any dark, painful situation in our lives and turn it into light--something useful and good. What dark situation in your life needs to be brought into God's light? You can bring it to him by practicing the presence of God. Or, you can practice the presence of God on a regular basis, without needing something specific to bring to him, as a way to live in a deeper awareness of God in your life. Practicing his presence is about relationship with our God!

Practicing the Presence

Start with taking 3 breaths in and out. Use a breath prayer like "Jesus, I am here" (breathe in); "I know you are, too" (breathe out).

If you have a situation to bring to Jesus, picture yourself doing so. Picture a room where you are comfortable. Picture where you are sitting. See yourself giving the situation to Jesus.

- How does he respond?
- What does he say?

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- What is the expression on his face?

Or, you can simply picture yourself with Jesus. Together. Tell him about your day and listen. What Bible verses, songs, or pictures come to mind? Often, nothing may come to mind--being together is enough.

Close your time in prayer, thanking God for his presence through his spirit and his son, Jesus.



Jen Wojtysiak, BS, ThM, is a Wisconsin-born native and has been a field leader with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship for 18 years. She has a heart for ministry and mission in the university setting. Jen provides leadership as the Student Ministries Director of Nurses Christian Fellowship to our student work nationwide.

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