# PSALM 139 STUDY

# *For individual use*

# **Read the whole psalm aloud, then take one minute for silent reflection on it.**

**Re-read verses 1-6**

1. David uses several images of God’s intimate knowledge of him. Which image strikes you the most?
2. What point is David making in verse 6? How would you put it in your own words?

**Re-read verses 7-12**

1. What is David confident that God will do for him?
2. David lists a bunch of far-off places that are not too far away for God to be with him, guide him and protect him. Make up your own verse based on the same formula:  
    “Even if I go to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, you \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_”

**Re-read verses 13-18**

1. Verse 13 begins with “for”, which suggests it gives the reason for something said earlier. How do verses 13-16 support what David has said previously?

**Re-read verses 19-22**

1. At first glance it seems like David is suddenly having a rant about his enemies. But look closely: who exactly is it that David hates?
2. How can these impassioned verses be related to the rest of the psalm?

**Some comments on vv19-22:**  *A general principle regarding the psalms is that they are not just a relic from the past for us to observe. They are given for God’s people to sing and pray for ourselves. As Christians, our singing of the psalms is led by King Jesus, on whose lips they are ultimately true. But verses like these ones present a difficulty. They seem to conflict with Jesus’ teaching about loving our enemies. We’re therefore tempted to chop them out, or write them off as ‘just how David was feeling that day’. But we shouldn’t. The Jesus who taught “love your enemies” (Matt 5:44) was also full of strong language against those who misrepresented God’s laws and oppressed God’s people (“Woe to you… You snakes! You brood of vipers!” Matt 23:13-36). When Paul echoes Jesus’ teaching and says “bless those who persecute you” (Rom 12:14) it’s only a few verses after he has urged his readers to “hate what is evil” (Rom 12:9). So hatred of evil and practical love of enemies need to be held together. We don’t throw these “difficult verses” out but we do read them together with the rest of the Bible.*

**Re-read verses 23-24.**

1. How do these verses soften the impact of verses 19-22?

**Consider the psalm as a whole**

1. How does your own prayer life compare with the prayer of this psalm? What kinds of prayer could you add to your prayer life?

**Spend some time praying the ideas of this psalm in your own words:**

* *Praise for God’s intimate knowledge of us (vv1-6)*
* *Thanks for God’s attention and care for us in all circumstances (vv7-16)*
* *Longing for God to be honoured and his ways followed by all (vv19-22)*
* *Asking for God to reveal to us sins that we need to repent of (vv23-24)*