

Introduction

How would you act differently if you really lived by the knowledge that no matter what you do, no matter where you go, no matter what you think, God is there? Would it change anything for or about you? But David points out that it's much more than just a God Who sits up in heaven looking down and observing everything. He is not a passive God because He also created you for an individual, specific purpose; He's intensely desirous that His creation fulfill the purpose for which it was created. One of the key differences between "part-time" believers who struggle in their walk from "mature" believers who exhibit a consistent walk in Him, is living according to the knowledge of His constant presence.

Read verses 1-6

Q: How thoroughly does God know us? What are the 6 conditions of our personal life listed in v.1-3?

1. "...when I sit down..." (v.2)
2. "...when I rise up..." (v.2)
3. "...my thought..." (v.2)
4. "...my path..." (v.3)
5. "...my lying down..." (v.3)
6. "...all my ways..." (v.3)

Everything we do—within ourselves or without—and everywhere we go—regardless of whether it's "of" the Lord or not—is completely known by God whether we acknowledge Him or not.

Q: In v.1-3, what is God specifically doing in relation to us?

1. "You have searched me and known me." (v.1)
2. "You know..." (v.2)
3. "You understand" (v.2)
4. "You scrutinize" (v.3)
5. "...intimately acquainted..." (v.3)

God takes much more than a casual interest in us; He is present for every second of our life whether we're aware of Him in our thoughts and activities or not. He is much more than a casual observer.

¹O LORD, You have searched me
and known me.
²You know when I sit down and
when I rise up;
You understand my thought
from afar.
³You scrutinize my path and my
lying down,
And are intimately acquainted
with all my ways.
⁴Even before there is a word on
my tongue,
Behold, O LORD, You know it all.
⁵You have enclosed me behind
and before,
And laid Your hand upon me.
⁶Such knowledge is too
wonderful for me;
It is too high, I cannot attain to
it.

Q: How well does God know us according to v.4?

A: He has searched, known, understood, scrutinized and become so “intimately acquainted” with us that He knows what we are about to say and do even before we say or do it. It’s not His being able to predict the future, but being able to predict our behavior.

Q: What is the contrast of v.5 in God’s actions versus our own actions listed in v.1-3?

A: In v.1-3, the pronouns “I” and “my” are repeatedly used to give the impression that we are acting completely independently and on our own; but v.5 reveals that whether we consciously acknowledge it or not, God’s hand is always with us, seeking to guide us in the right direction. We are **never** alone.

Q: Why is this knowledge of God’s constant presence difficult to grasp?

A: Because we know how imperfect are the comings, goings, and thoughts of our life; and even so, He is **STILL** with us.

Application: God takes much more than a casual **interest** in us; He is present for every **second** of our life whether we’re aware of Him in our thoughts and activities or not. He is much more than a casual **observer**.

Read verses 7-12

Application: There is nowhere we can go where God is not **present**.

- Do you think there are places you can go where God is not present?
- Do you sometimes **ACT** like God is not present at a particular place or in a particular situation? Why? How would conscious acknowledgment of His presence change **YOUR** attitude and/or behavior in those places?
- Do you personally—or do you know someone---that treats going to church once a week like that is the only time God is present in their life? Does that change the fact that He’s still there? How should it change us/them?

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,
behold, You are there.
⁹If I take the wings of the dawn,
If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea,
¹⁰Even there Your hand will lead me,
And Your right hand will lay hold of me.
¹¹If I say, “Surely the darkness will overwhelm me,
And the light around me will be night,”
¹²Even the darkness is not dark to You,
And the night is as bright as the day.
Darkness and light are alike to You.

¹³For You formed my inward parts;
You wove me in my mother's womb.
¹⁴I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
Wonderful are Your works,
And my soul knows it very well.
¹⁵My frame was not hidden from You,
When I was made in secret,
And skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth;
¹⁶Your eyes have seen my unformed substance;
And in Your book were all written
The days that were ordained for me,
When as yet there was not one of them.

¹⁷How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God!
How vast is the sum of them!
¹⁸If I should count them, they would outnumber the sand.
When I awake, I am still with You.

Read verses 13-16

Q: What is the fact brought to our attention in v.13 that we often seem to forget?

A: God is not just merely “interested” in us, He created us. The implication of the use of the words “formed” and “wove” is that He not only had plans for us at the time of creating us, but has been involved One-on-one with us from the very beginning—even before we knew what the “beginning” really was. (In the womb.)

Q: How should our awareness and acknowledgment of the miracle of our own creation at God's hand (v.14-15) translate to how we live the life He has given us?

A: If we see how wonderfully and perfectly His physical creation has turned out, how much more must be the spiritual creation He desires to provide.

Q: So are we here simply by chance? Why would the Creator still be so interested in each of His creations?

A: According to v.16, even before we were born He had a plan for our life. His keen interest in our comings and goings and even our thoughts are connected to whether or not we're complying with what He specifically created for us from the beginning.

Application: Just as an **inventor** follows the progress of his work to make sure it performs as **designed**, and that it lives up to the original intentions it was **designed** for, so God is involved with us—whether we **acknowledge** it or not, regardless of **where** we go or **what** we do.

Read verses 17-18

Q: Looking at these verses within the context of what has been taught to this point, what might cause US to be so interested in HIS thoughts?

A: If we realize that He is with our every movement and thought—even from before we were born—we would probably become very concerned/interested as to what **HE** thinks and intends for us.

Application: If we fully understood God's **interest** in us, we would become much more concerned about the nature of that **interest**.

¹⁹O that You would slay the wicked, O God;
Depart from me, therefore, men of bloodshed.
²⁰For they speak against You wickedly,
And Your enemies take Your name in vain.
²¹Do I not hate those who hate You, O LORD?
And do I not loathe those who rise up against You?
²²I hate them with the utmost hatred;
They have become my enemies.

²³Search me, O God, and know my heart;
Try me and know my anxious thoughts;
²⁴And see if there be any hurtful way in me,
And lead me in the everlasting way.

Read verses 19-22

Q: Is David merely concerned about injustice or personal persecution?

A: Taken as a whole, David is expressing his desire to be rid of all the wrong influences that detract from God. He does not want to spend any time or thought or develop any kind of relationship with anyone or anything that leads away from God.

Application: We should not want to spend any **time** or **thought** to develop any kind of relationship with **anyone** or **anything** which leads away from **God**.

- In what David describes in the opening verses of this Psalm as our sitting and standing and coming and going, are we striving to be in places that build upon our relationship with God or that attempt to hide Him from us?
- If we really believed that God is with us every second of the day, how might that change our choices of where we spend our time and thoughts? Would it be **towards** God or **away**?
- Would we want to continue in the company of all the people and influences we currently embrace?

Read verses 23-24

Q: What is David's final appeal to God to ensure that he is living as God intends?

1. **"know my heart"** (v.23) That is, evaluate the degree of tolerance or resistance to allowing sin to take root. The heart is most often associated with the biblical definition of "pure"—unpolluted by sin.
2. **"know my anxious thoughts"** (v.23) That is, evaluate the way in which the conscience works to cling to things obedient to His commandments and rejecting things that lead to disobedience.
3. **"see if there be any hurtful way in me"** (v.24) We are too close to ourselves to be able to judge fairly if we are in proper compliance with His ways; we need for Him to identify whatever is leading away from Him rather than towards. We need to listen to the Creator, not the created.
4. **"lead me in the everlasting way"** (v.24) Not according to my will and desire, but Yours. The end result needs to be my seeking to be on His path, not my own.

Application: *The appeal to God to live as He intends:*

- a. "...know my **heart**..."
- b. "...know my anxious **thoughts**..."
- c. "...see if there be any **hurtful** way in me..."
- d. "...lead me in the **everlasting** way".

Overall Application

- Is there anything that deep in your heart-of-hearts you think God might not understand about you? Do you question why He made you the way He did? How do your answers reveal the quality of your faith and walk in Christ?
- Is there any place you go or any activity you regularly engage in that you might think gives you a "break" from God, that He isn't really a part of? Is it a difficult issue of faith or based in some way on sin? What should you do?
- How often do you reaffirm for yourself that God has been interested in you even before you were born, and therefore is intensely interested in the outcome of your life? How should this shape your behavior and decisions?
- How often do you specifically pray for God to identify areas of weakness and then provide **His** ways of addressing them?