

How precious to me are Your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! If I would count them, they are more than the sand. I awake, and I am still with You.

Because I know my value to my Creator and the lengths He was willing to go to save me because of my worth to Him, I want to know more! Why do we turn to social media, friends, magazines, sexuality, self-help books, ethnicity—all superficial things of this world—to find out whether we're really “enough”? God's thoughts about you and your life and your value are as numerous as the grains of sand on the earth. You are always on His mind, and the more you understand that, the more He will be on yours.

Oh that You would slay the wicked, O God! O men of blood, depart from me! They speak against You with malicious intent; Your enemies take Your name in vain. Do I not hate those who hate You, O LORD? And do I not loathe those who rise up against You? I hate them with complete hatred; I count them my enemies.

We are in a battle. It's a battle that goes back to the beginning of time. To say that Satan has had time to hone his craft would be an understatement. His most effective plan of attack is to twist and distort God's foundational truths, the building blocks of a healthy society. We often don't even realize that we've bought into it until we hear the truth held up next to Satan's lies. “It's just sex.” No, it's not just sex. God created me intricately; therefore I know that sex will affect me in an intricate way, for good or for evil. “It's just a choice.” No, it's not just a choice. He or she is a wholly physical, emotional, mental, spiritual, and social child of God. “It's just a piece of paper.” No, it is a microcosm, a smaller version, of who Christ is for the Church, who Christ is for me and how precious I am to Him. (See Ephesians 5:22–23.)

Satan hates God. He is God's enemy. He wants to steal, kill, and destroy the lives that are precious to God. I hate that. I will fight

against Satan, and I will fight for God's love and truth to be known by all.

Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!

Satan uses our sexuality against us. He uses it to depersonalize and devalue the way we see ourselves and others, leading us to believe that human life and the relationships contained within it are far less valuable and unique than they really are. You are God's most priceless possession. The truth is, you matter. You've always mattered. Be in Christ. Where do you find Him to receive Him and restore yourself? In church. In the hearing of the Word and the forgiveness of your sins. Be intentional about whom you allow yourself to be connected to. Are they lifelines—people like you who are trying to keep their eyes on Jesus? Or are they anchors—people who drag you into the superficial, skin-deep affirmations of the world?

Stay on top of this, brothers and sisters. It's a daily, often momentary, battle. That's why we go back and receive more Jesus whenever we can. He is our strength and our only hope.

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**I PRAISE
YOU, FOR I AM
FEARFULLY AND
WONDERFULLY MADE.**

**P S A L M
1 3 9 : 1 4**

HEATHER RUESCH

You matter.

The value of your life does not depend on what you can or cannot do. God created your life, and God has placed value on it. Psalm 139 is a prayer for God to search your heart and know you better than anyone ever could. When you need to be reminded of your true identity, worth, and place in this world, study and pray this psalm. You are God's most treasured possession. And because of that, Satan will attack you and tempt you to see your life as less valuable than it is. He takes the things that God calls valuable—human life, sexuality, marriage, and family—and he tries to diminish them. In Genesis 3, we hear Satan's famous first words: "Did God actually say . . . ?" Read here in Psalm 139 about your irrevocable value to God. You are His most treasured possession, and Jesus' death on the cross for your sins is proof of the lengths He was willing to go in order to care for you and protect you.

PSALM 139

O LORD, You have searched me and known me! You know when I sit down and when I rise up; You discern my thoughts from afar. You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways.

Whom do you know better than anyone else in the world? Probably your best friend, a cousin, or maybe one of your siblings? Think for a moment: What do you *know* about that person? You probably know a lot about his or her strengths and weaknesses, fears, insecurities, talents, goals, past experiences . . . you get the point. So, how much more does God, the Father and Creator of us all, know you?

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

God knew every single thing you would ever say or do—the good, the bad, and the ugly—and He still deemed you worthy to create!

He has plans for your life. Even when we fail, when sin gets the better of us, He invites us to come to Him with repentant hearts. He knows that a bad conscience separates us from Him. Instead of pretending that bad things don't happen, call it like it is: I am a sinner in need of a Savior, who takes my sins away, heals me, restores me, knows me inside and out, and refines my life as I receive Him more and more.

You hem me in, behind and before, and lay Your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it.

To hem something is to secure it and give it a boundary—like that seam at the bottom of your pants, the hem. The hem keeps your pants from tripping you up! The psalmist is saying that God hems us in; He goes before us and comes after us for the purpose of securing us. He lays His hand upon you, shows His incredible power and capability to care for every detail of your life.

Where shall I go from Your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from Your presence? If I ascend to heaven, You are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, You are there!

God does not leave you. Ever. When we feel alone or abandoned, it's because we're looking everywhere but to Christ to find the answers. Picture this: Jesus is jumping up and down in front of your face, waving His hands and yelling, while you're crying and despairing and looking for peace in every single other place in the world except *in Him*. We all do it. But the more we practice, the better we'll get at continually fixing our eyes on Jesus. From our mountaintop moments to the depths of Sheol—our deepest, darkest moments—God never leaves us.

If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there Your hand shall lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me.

Sometimes it feels as if we're being consumed by the heavy things in life. But we're never out of God's reach or too far for His care. God's ability to care for us—His most priceless possessions—knows no bounds! The very hands that made you are leading you and holding you close.

If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light about me be night," even the darkness is not dark to You; the night is bright as the day, for darkness is as light with You.

Even when you can't conceive a way out, when your circumstances feel like there is no hope left at all, God says, "When all you see is darkness, all I see is light." Our human emotions and conceptions cannot be trusted because we have such a limited view of the picture God sees *entirely*. In Christ, the darkness in our lives is transformed into light that is as bright as the day.

For You formed my inward parts; You knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are Your works; my soul knows it very well.

This passage so beautifully describes the crafting of each individual human life by God, the Creator of us all. With incredible care and attention to every detail, He sculpted and created you: your physical body and biological parts, your mind that thinks so wildly and intelligently, your tender heart that so easily bruises and scars, your soul that yearns for unconditional love and acceptance, and your spirit that praises and relates with God's Spirit to give you discernment and relationship with Him. God's works are wonderful, *valuable*. Your soul knows it very well. How does God care for you then, His most valuable child? Through Jesus. Jesus in your Baptism, Jesus in the words of Holy Scripture, Jesus in the forgiveness of your sins, Jesus in His body and His blood (Communion). Go to church and receive these gifts that cleanse you, refine you, and sustain you over and over, every day of your earthly life.

My frame was not hidden from You, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in Your book were written, every one them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.

God knew every single thing you would ever say or do, every sinful thought, word, and deed. He knew the pain you would go through because of sinful, fallen people. He knew you would be a sinful, fallen person yourself. This is the one distinctive thing that supersedes any race, religion, sexuality, or division among us: that we are all sinners who need a Savior. No matter how your life came about or what the circumstances of your life may be (or have been), God's eyes twinkled as He wrote your days and wove you together in your mother's womb. By Christ's death on the cross, we are saved. Our identity is found in who He says we are: blessed, chosen, adopted, accepted, redeemed, and forgiven (see Ephesians 1:3–14).