

Part 1: The Why

Psalm 139:1

For me, the Psalms address the heart. The psalmists were inspired to write about so many emotions—joy and anguish, hope and anxiety, thanksgiving and whining, expressions of confidence in God and requests for retributions against enemies. It seems that the psalmists were comfortable talking to God about anything and everything.

That was not true for me, though.

Until my late 30s or early 40s, I “censored” my prayers with God. I didn’t feel free to tell Him when I was angry or disappointed with Him. I often felt anxiety or fear of failure. Sometimes I prayed about that; sometimes I just worked away afraid. My husband was usually the only one who knew. Oh yes, and God too, of course. He knows everything and is everywhere. My head knew that, but not my heart.

Until...

Until one time I was reading Psalm 139:1, and the Holy Spirit drew the attention of my heart to the ideas of the Psalm.

O Lord, you have examined my heart and know everything about me. (NLT)

The Psalm continues:

You know when I sit down or stand up. You know my thoughts even when I’m far away.
You see me when I travel and when I rest at home. You know everything I do. (vv2,3)

I had read that Psalm before—a number of times. My mind understood the words. God is everywhere. There is nowhere I can go at anytime where He is not already there. I knew that, but until this reading I didn’t celebrate the truth or “promise” of that. The Holy Spirit helped me understand the wonder and significance of God’s presence to me personally. If God is everywhere, I am never alone. If some of the places are scary, I don’t need to be scared because God is already there—along with His rod and staff and angel armies. Thunderstorms? God is there. Project deadlines? God is there. Interviews? God is there. Doctor’s office? God is there too.

God made me. He loves me. He has made plans for me. Verse 16 confirms last three ideas.

You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed.

Ever since the Holy Spirit placed that **comfort** in my **heart**, I feel free to talk with God about anything and everything. Because He already knows anyway, I might as well talk about whatever is on my mind and in my heart. He already knows! If I tell Him again anyway; then I open **my mind and my heart** to **His answers**.

I remember one time when I had been working for over a year on a new Sunday School curriculum for young children. The first day I became the early childhood editor was the first day I learned the curriculum was weeks behind schedule. There were 13 curriculum items, and 11 of those were brand new. That meant that every 13 weeks the three people on the early childhood staff had to start from scratch to create 11 **new** items and to recycle 2 others. I was an inexperienced editor. The curriculum was new. I was thankful for the opportunity and also overwhelmed by the volume. The head of the department understood the challenge of being so far behind in a new position. He approved finding some freelance help, and he was even able to get overtime approved for the assistant editor. As I remember it, for almost two years, I arrived by 7:00 a.m., and often didn't leave until after 7:00 p.m. I was running on fumes.

One evening, I asked the assistant how she was holding up. "I'm fine," she said. "I'm putting all my overtime pay in a savings account. When I have enough, I'll stop working here and put myself through nursing school." Years later, I saw her in her nursing uniform.

One day, my supervisor called me into his office and told me there could be no more overtime.

I was devastated. We were barely keeping up. How would we manage?

That night I was on my knees. Just crying at first. Then praying. "I don't know how to do this, God. I don't think I can. Maybe other editors are able to, but I really don't think I can. I want young children to love coming to church. I want them to love, trust, and obey You. But I'm really tired, and I don't know whether to go or stay."

As soon as I prayed, "I don't know whether to go or stay," I thought, "I'll be with you if you go. I'll be with you if you stay." That was God's answer to my honest, emotional prayer.

I stayed for five more years. The deadlines were still flying by. The work was still meaningful to me. After seven years of editing, God opened another door of ministry for me. I was thankful, and went through it.

Because I was learning to take every need and every joy to God, I was also learning that God responds to honest, emotional prayers. He has already written every moment of my life in His book, and that happened before I took my first breath. Nothing in my life surprises Him. Nothing in my life dismays Him—except, maybe, when I *don't* come to Him for help. He even knows ahead of time, though, when that will happen too. Dismayed? No. Disappointed? Yes.

I'm not a Calvinist. So, I believe God knows what I will choose. That's what He writes in His book of life. Since the Holy Spirit revealed ***that*** truth in my ***heart***, I feel free to take every part of my life to God. Usually, it goes something like this:

I love You God, and I trust You. I want what You want in my life. I know You already know what that will be. Please, help me to think about this situation the way You do. I want my life to reflect your plans and your ways. Thank You for your help in the past. Please help me to wait for your help now. (You know that I can be a little impatient; sometimes, anxious.) In Jesus' name. Amen."

I am very thankful to believe Psalm 139:16 in my heart as well as in my mind. (8 minutes)

Part 2: The What If

Part 3: The How To