

# KNOWN

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## CHECKLIST: WHAT YOU NEED

- Pencils and pieces of paper
- Copies of the downloadable 622 service booklet
- Copies of the lesson handout
- Copy of the leader's notes
- OPTIONAL: Bibles (ESV or similar recommended)
- OPTIONAL: A white board, easel pad, or chalk board with markers/chalk
- OPTIONAL: Have notebooks on hand for teens to take home and use as prayer journals if they wish

## ICE BREAKER: PECULIAR INTRODUCTION

As the teens arrive, give them a pencil and a small piece of paper and ask them to write down one unexpected thing about themselves that they don't think anyone else in the group knows. It can be a place they've been, a favourite food, something they are good at—anything. Have them fold up the paper and give it to the leader. When everyone is assembled, open the papers one by one and have the group guess who wrote each.

FOR SMALLER GROUPS, TRY A VARIATION OF THIS ACTIVITY, WHERE EACH PERSON WRITES TWO THINGS ABOUT THEMSELVES THAT ARE TRUE AND ONE THING THAT IS FALSE, THEN THE GROUP MUST GUESS WHICH STATEMENT IS FALSE.

## 622: BEGINNING WITH PRAYER

Begin the formal part of the lesson by saying together the first part of the order of service for young people in the booklet, up to the middle of page 4.

## DISCUSSION: WHO KNOWS YOU?

As an introduction to the lesson ask the teens to discuss the following questions.

DEPENDING ON THE COMFORT LEVEL FOR SHARING IN YOUR GROUP, IT MAY BE EASIER TO HAVE THEM VOLUNTEER ANSWERS WITH ALL RESPONSES WRITTEN TOGETHER ON A BOARD.

- What are the places that make you feel most as though you are known and belong?  
Who are the people that make you feel that way?
- Have there been times when you were disappointed by people you thought understood you?  
How did that affect you?
- Do you feel known by God?  
How is that the same as / different from the way people in your life know you?

*A few things worth pointing out (if they don't otherwise arise during the discussion):*

- *You may want to set the tone by offering an example of your own. Perhaps there is a story you can share of a friendship or group that you've been part of that has offered a sense of family and belonging, as well as disappointments.*
- *Feel free to let the last question linger, as it will be explored more fully in the lesson section. (We often think about our relationship with God in a different way from how we think about the relationships we have with others, but we are known by God and belong to him in a way that is more true than it is even of our family. Moreover,*

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*while God may not always give us what we want and we may find ourselves feeling “disappointed” with him, we know that he sees and hears us – and loves us – through all of our struggles to understand who we are and to find belonging.)*

## THE LESSON: PSALM 139

The first part of the lesson begins with a few notes about the book of Psalms which can be read aloud. Then the teens are asked to read the Bible text (either silently to themselves or aloud together), followed by some additional questions for discussion. The scripture reading and follow up discussion is divided into two parts (Psalm 139: 1-16, then Psalm 139: 23-24).

The Book of Psalms in the Old Testament is a collection of poems set to musical accompaniment, which form an ancient collection of prayers/hymns. They were written by many poets at many different dates, and were in use by Israel for many centuries before the birth of Jesus. This ancient “prayer book” is quoted repeatedly in the New Testament, has been used in Christian liturgy since the earliest days of the Church, and continues to be used in Christian worship, crossing all denominational lines—and of course a large portion of the psalms are included in our Book of Common Prayer (beginning on page 331).

Refer to Psalm 139:1-16.

(THE TEXT IS PROVIDED ON THE BACK OF THE HANDOUTS AND IN THESE LEADERS’ NOTES SO THAT EVERYONE CAN MARK IT UP AND MAKE NOTES ON IT IF DESIRED. ALTERNATIVELY, YOU CAN READ OUT OF A BIBLE OR THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER).

Read through the text. Then ask the teens to respond to what they’ve just read. Here are some questions to help guide the discussion.

- What does the Psalmist say that God knows about us?
- What are some of the things in the Psalm that talk about God being actively engaged with us (not just knowing stuff)?
- Is it comforting to think that God knows us and is present and involved like that? Why? Can you think of some reasons why it might make us uncomfortable?
- How do you think the Psalmist felt while writing this? What hints are there in the text to suggest the writer’s feelings?

*A few notes and reflections for reference:*

- *God sees us at all times and knows even those invisible things about us, like our thoughts.*
- *God is actively involved in leading us, caring for us, and protecting us. He was intimately involved in “forming” or creating us as individuals.*
- *God’s presence is never beyond our reach.*
- *God’s relationship with us is that of a loving Creator who took delight in making us and in considering our future.*
- *The Psalmist’s view of God’s involvement is a comforting one, but he does talk about not being able to escape the presence of God in a way that might suggest he’d like to escape that piercing gaze at times. Yet the text shows that God is not watching for the purpose of condemning him, but out of love, making the writer feel safe enough to respond with vulnerability in the concluding verses of the passage.*

Next, look ahead in Psalm 139 to the Psalm’s concluding words, found in verses 23-24. Read them aloud together.

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To help guide the discussion:

- What is the connection between the passage that we just looked at and these concluding verses?
- When people are “found out”, how do they usually respond?
- If we take the Psalmist as a role model, how will we respond to being known by God?

*A few notes and reflections for reference:*

- *When we consider God’s loving knowledge of us, it may lead us to regret our sins, to seek God’s forgiveness, and to strive to live in a way that will please God.*
- *Sometimes people respond to being exposed with anger, lashing out against their accuser or trying to hide themselves from anyone who might see the truth. But the Psalmist doesn’t do that. The writer instead responds to God’s loving knowledge with honesty and trust.*
- *We can pray the Psalmist’s words in verses 23-24, asking for God’s help.*

DURING EACH LESSON, IF THE TEENS RAISE THEOLOGICAL OR BIBLICAL QUESTIONS THAT YOU DON’T FEEL CONFIDENT ABOUT ANSWERING, SAY SO, BUT LET THEM KNOW THAT YOU’LL FIND THE ANSWER AND RESPOND AT THE NEXT MEETING.

## PREVIEW: AT-HOME CHALLENGE

Take a brief moment to look at the at-home challenge together.

THE WEEKLY “AT-HOME CHALLENGE” IS TYPICALLY A SIMPLE ASSIGNMENT TO SPEND SOME QUIET TIME IN PRIVATE PRAYER. ENCOURAGE THE TEENS TO GET NOTEBOOKS THAT CAN BE USED AS PRAYER JOURNALS. ASSURE THEM THAT THEY WILL NOT BE REQUIRED TO SHOW THEIR JOURNAL OR THEIR PRIVATE PRAYERS TO ANYONE.

*At home, find a quiet space and spend some time praying with each of these phrases from Psalm 139. You may choose to expand on these phrases in your own words and to reflect on what these things mean in your own life. Use your prayer journal to help focus your thoughts:*

- Lord, you made me.*
- Lord, you know me.*
- Lord, you love me.*
- Lord, you are always near.*
- Lord, forgive me.*
- Lord, help me to live in a way that honours you.*

- AND/OR -

Take some time to pray through this prayer of thanksgiving, pausing to reflect after each phrase.

*O God whose ways are hidden and thy works most wonderful, who makest nothing in vain and lovest all that thou hast made: Comfort thou thy servants, whose hearts are sore smitten and oppressed; and grant that they may so love and serve thee in this life, that they may obtain the fullness of thy promises in the world to come; through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.* (FROM THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER, PAGE 575)

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## 622 (AGAIN)

Close with any prayers that might be appropriate in the context of the discussion of the day.

AT THE END OF EACH LESSON, IF YOU FIND THAT YOU STILL HAVE LOTS OF TIME REMAINING, YOU MIGHT CHOOSE TO TAKE SOME TIME TO EXPLORE THE "PRAYERS AND THANKSGIVINGS" SECTION IN THE BCP (PAGES 39-62, OR YOU CAN USE THE DOWNLOADABLE BOOKLET). AS YOUR GROUP MEMBERS COME ACROSS PRAYERS THAT THEY FIND RELEVANT, PAUSE AND PRAY THEM TOGETHER. IF YOU'RE PRESSED FOR TIME, YOU MIGHT CLOSE WITH THE THEMED PRAYER FROM THE AT-HOME CHALLENGE.

Then finish with the "Grace", the final prayer in the booklet.

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### PSALM 139:1-16: **NOTHING HIDDEN**

<sup>1</sup>O Lord, you have searched me and known me! <sup>2</sup>You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar. <sup>3</sup>You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. <sup>4</sup>Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O Lord, you know it altogether. <sup>5</sup>You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me. <sup>6</sup>Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it. <sup>7</sup>Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? <sup>8</sup>If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there! <sup>9</sup>If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, <sup>10</sup>even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me. <sup>11</sup>If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light about me be night," <sup>12</sup>even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is bright as the day, for darkness is as light with you. <sup>13</sup>For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. <sup>14</sup>I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. <sup>15</sup>My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. <sup>16</sup>Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.

### PSALM 139:23-24: **INVOCATION**

<sup>23</sup>Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! <sup>24</sup>And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!