

KNOWN

Fully Known. Fully Loved.

Week 6 — Psalm 139 | *Face to Face*

Psalm 139 | *1 Corinthians 13:12*

Psalm 139:1–2 *You have searched me, LORD, and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar.*

Psalm 139:11–12 *If I say, 'Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me,' even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you.*

1 Corinthians 13:12 *For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; we see in a riddle. But then we will see face to face. Now I know in part; then I will know fully, as I am fully known.*

The Road We've Walked

Five weeks. Five people. Five faces of what it looks like when the God who knows you insists on you.

Hagar — an Egyptian slave woman in the wilderness, heading the wrong direction. God found her anyway. She became the first human being in Scripture to give God a name from direct encounter. El Roi. The God who sees me.

Nathanael — a theologically precise man under a fig tree, holding objections made of real material. Jesus named him before he introduced himself. Before Philip called you. Before you arrived. I saw you.

Zacchaeus — a man who had made himself untouchable, perched above the crowd that despised him. Jesus looked up and used his name. I must stay at your house today. The crowd got the boundary wrong. He too is a son of Abraham.

The woman with the flow of blood — twelve years invisible, twelve years a danger to everyone she touched. She tried to take what she needed and disappear. Jesus stopped everything. Daughter. Your faith has healed you. Go in peace.

Mary — at the tomb before dawn, tending the dead, looking for a Jesus who was gone. A voice spoke her name in a garden. Mariam. She turned. Rabboni.

Five encounters. Five names. Five faces of the same truth.

And now here is the psalm that contains all of them.

Movement 1 — The Foundational Knowing (vv.1–6)

You have searched me and known me.

The Hebrew word for searched is *chaqar* — the word for deep investigation, mining, probing. Used for the work of excavating the darkest places of the earth. This is not casual divine observation. This is God doing serious excavation work on you. Going deep. Leaving nothing unexamined.

And the result of that complete investigation is not condemnation. It is wonder.

Psalm 139:6 *Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain.*

The God who knows everything about you — who knows when you sit and when you rise, who perceives your thoughts from afar, who is familiar with all your ways — that God produces not terror but

overwhelming wonder. The knowing and the staying are the same thing. Such knowledge is too wonderful. And he is still here.

You hem me in behind and before and lay your hand upon me. The hand, not the eye. Presence, not surveillance. You are held, not watched. The knowing is not a divine security camera. It is the hand of someone who knows everything and hasn't left.

See also: Isaiah 43:1 — I have called you by name, you are mine / Job 28:3 — chaqar used for mining deep in the earth

Movement 2 — Everywhere (vv.7–12)

Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?

The psalmist works through the full geography of possible escape. If I go up to the heavens — you are there. If I make my bed in Sheol — you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn and settle on the far side of the sea — even there your hand will guide me.

And then the darkness. If I say surely the darkness will hide me — even the darkness is not dark to you. The night shines like the day.

This is not God eliminating the darkness. The darkness remains. What changes is its power to define you or hide you.

Go further — go to Genesis 1. The formless and void, the darkness over the deep, the Spirit moving over the waters. God did not wait for favorable conditions before creating. He moved into the chaos and formed. He spoke into the darkness and made something.

That is the pattern. The darkness is not the obstacle. It is the material. It is the workshop.

You have been in the dark — grief, deconstruction, injury, the tomb before dawn. God has been forming in that dark place the whole time. You are not finished yet. The forming is still happening.

See also: Genesis 1:1–3 — tohu wabohu, Spirit moving over the darkness

For further study: Barbara Brown Taylor, Learning to Walk in the Dark — on darkness as a place of divine encounter and formation, not absence.

Movement 3 — Planned, Preserved, Purposed (vv.13–16)

For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb.

The creating word is qanah — to form with intentionality, to acquire deliberately. The one who possesses heaven and earth chose to form you specifically. Not accidentally produced — deliberately acquired.

And the womb is dark. The most formative work God does on a human life happens in a place of complete darkness. The fearfully and wonderfully made person was made in the dark. The pattern holds.

Psalm 139:14 *I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.*

Fearfully — yare — means awe-inspiring. The craftsmanship that produces reverence in the one who sees it. Not: I am fragile and need protecting. The craftsman is awesome and the work carries that mark.

Wonderfully — pala — means extraordinary, beyond ordinary. The same root as the wonders of the Exodus (Exodus 15:11). The making of you is in the category of exodus-level divine action. You are not an accident. The maker is too extraordinary for that.

Your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. The yada — the deep knowing that has run under the whole series — was there

before you were. The knowing that found Hagar and saw Nathanael and called Zacchaeus and named the woman daughter and spoke Mary's name — that knowing was in place before you were born.

See also: Exodus 15:11 — pala, wonders / Jeremiah 1:5 — before I formed you in the womb I knew you

Movement 4 — The Two Lines (vv.19–22)

Most people skip this section. The psalm doesn't let us.

The psalmist is naming evil directly — the bloodthirsty, the wicked, those who speak against God with malice. And asking God to deal with them. Read carefully: this is not personal revenge. This is covenant loyalty.

The line of Cain runs through human history — violence as the organizing principle, the city built on blood, the seventy-seven vengeance of Lamech. The way of empire and self-preservation and accumulation. The decreation path.

The line of Seth: at that time people began to call on the name of the Lord. Not a city. Not a weapon. A name called upon. The creation path.

The psalmist is placing himself explicitly on Seth's line. I am with you. I am not with what you are against. And then — immediately — the most honest move in the psalm:

Psalm 139:23–24 *Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*

Having declared covenant loyalty, the psalmist immediately acknowledges he cannot be certain his own heart is clean. The declaration is followed instantly by the invitation to examination. He does not assume his own faithfulness. He asks God to check.

See also: Genesis 4:17–26 — line of Cain and line of Seth established

Movement 5 — Surrender and Destination (vv.23–24)

The psalm opens with God's initiative — you have searched me and known me. It closes with human invitation — search me. The whole psalm is a movement from declaration to participation. From what is already true to what the psalmist is asking God to make fully real.

Lead me in the way everlasting — derekh olam. The ancient path. The road that runs through the whole story from the first garden to the new creation. The road Hagar was on without knowing it. The road Nathanael stepped onto. The road Zacchaeus descended to walk. The road the woman walked when she came forward and told the whole truth. The road Mary walked out of the garden.

The surrender is not resignation. It is orientation. Lead me onto the road that ends in full knowing.

And here is where the series arrives at its destination.

1 Corinthians 13:12 *For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; we see in a riddle. But then we will see face to face. Now I know in part; then I will know fully, as I am fully known.*

The dark mirror — partial, indirect, real but incomplete. The five encounters were real. El Roi really found Hagar. Jesus really saw Nathanael. Zacchaeus really came down. The woman really heard her name. Mary really turned at the sound of her name. All of it real. All of it partial. The full knowing is coming. The face to face is coming.

And notice the grammar. I shall know fully even as I have been fully known. The passive precedes the active. Being known comes first. Knowing fully comes as its result. The series has been showing the completed divine knowing. Paul names its destination.

See also: Exodus 33:11 — Moses face to face / John 10:14–15 — I know my sheep and my sheep know me

For further study: N.T. Wright, Paul for Everyone: 1 Corinthians — on the face to face as completion not merger. John Goldingay, Psalms (Baker Commentary) — on the chiasmic structure placing Movement 3 as the theological center.

The Road

Hagar named God in the wilderness. Nathanael surrendered his blueprint. Zacchaeus came down from the tree. The woman told the whole truth. Mary left the tomb running.

All of them found. All of them known. All of them sent.

All of them on the same road. The road that God has always been on ahead of you, and behind you, and beside you, and in the darkness you couldn't see through.

| *There is a road out of all this and you don't have to be alone. And the road ends face to face.*

The psalm says God searched you completely and the result was wonder — 'such knowledge is too wonderful for me.' Does being fully known feel more like wonder or like exposure to you right now? What might it take to move toward wonder?

Movement 2: God forms in the darkness, not after it clears. Where has God been forming you in a dark place — and what might be taking shape there that you can't yet see?

KEY WORDS

chaqar (khah-KAR)

Hebrew: search, mine, probe thoroughly. God hasn't been watching you — he has been excavating. The result of the complete investigation is wonder, not condemnation.

derekh olam (DEH-rekh oh-LAHM)

Hebrew: the way everlasting / the ancient path. Both older than memory and longer than death. The series spine sentence in Hebrew: there is a road out of all this.

yada (yah-DAH)

Hebrew: covenant knowing — full disclosure, chosen closeness. The series' Hebrew spine, here at cosmic scale. God's yada of you was complete before you were born.

tohu wabohu (TOH-hoo vah-BOH-hoo)

Hebrew: formless and void — Genesis 1:2. The chaos God moves into. The pattern: God forms in darkness not after it. Your darkness is the workshop, not the obstacle.

yare / pala

Hebrew: fearfully / wonderfully made. Yare = the craftsman is awe-inspiring. Pala = exodus-category action. Both statements about the maker, not self-congratulation.

Face to face prosopon pros prosopon

Greek: the most intimate encounter form. Moses-register — Exodus 33:11. The destination of the road. The dark mirror cleared. The full knowing that follows from being fully known.

REFLECTION & RESPONSE

1. The psalm moves from God's initiative (you have searched me) to human invitation (search me). Where are you in that movement — receiving the knowing, or learning to invite it deeper?

2. Movement 3: you were fearfully and wonderfully made — statements about the craftsman. What would it mean to receive your own making as evidence of the maker's excellence rather than your own?

3. The psalmist declares covenant loyalty and then immediately asks God to search him. Which is harder for you right now — declaring where you stand, or inviting God to check?

4. 'Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, as I am fully known.' The full knowing is coming. The face to face is coming. What does it mean to you that the road ends there — not in judgment, not in silence, but face to face?

THE SERIES ARC

WEEK	PERSON	KEY MOMENT	WHAT BEING KNOWN PRODUCES
1	Hagar	El Roi — found in the wilderness	<i>Safety. Named God. Sent back and freed.</i>
2	Nathanael	Seen before the introduction	<i>Trust. Blueprint surrendered. Called to follow.</i>
3	Zacchaeus	Called down by name	<i>Transformation. Came down. Hosted the table.</i>
4	The Woman	Insisted upon in the crowd	<i>Healing. Told the whole truth. Sent in shalom.</i>
5	Mary	Named in the garden	<i>Mission. Left the tomb running. Apostle to the apostles.</i>
6	Psalm 139	The aerial view	<i>Full knowing. Face to face. The road ends here.</i>

***There is a road out of all this and you don't have to be alone.
And the road ends face to face.***
