



SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

**Loving Prayer of
Repentance**

Have you stopped to consider the times we are living in? This is a marked place in history that we will always remember, that we will recount to future generations. Life will never again be as it was. This is a space between—between what used to be normal and what, someday, will become our new normal. This is a season to pause, reflect, notice, pay attention. Where have I been? Who am I becoming? What might God be doing?

To prepare for a journey to a place I have never been before, I find it helpful to consult an expert, one who knows the way, one who can tell me what to leave behind and what to carry with me. To prepare for where God is leading you, it may be helpful to invite him to look carefully at your life and your heart, to show you what to leave behind and what to carry forward. Experience this practice for yourself, and then, if you have children, walk with them through it.

As you begin this reflective practice, offer yourself a quiet, unhurried space that is free of distractions and noise. Get comfortable, relax your body, close your eyes, and begin taking a few focused deep breaths.

The ancient songwriter and king, David, trusted God's perspective. He invited God to examine his heart—to sift through his life. He could do this because he knew God's character. He had intimately experienced that God saw him, knew him, and loved him. Sit with and ponder David's thoughts of awe and wonder in Psalm 139. Read them a few times. Let them soak in. Notice, even mark, what stands out and how you feel each time you read them.

¹ Lord, you know everything there is to know about me.

² You perceive every movement of my heart and soul,
and you understand my every thought before it even enters my mind.

³⁻⁴ You are so intimately aware of me, Lord.

You read my heart like an open book
and you know all the words I'm about to speak
before I even start a sentence!

You know every step I will take before my journey even begins.

⁵ You've gone into my future to prepare the way,
and in kindness you follow behind me
to spare me from the harm of my past.
With your hand of love upon my life,
you impart a blessing to me.

⁶ This is just too wonderful, deep, and incomprehensible!

Your understanding of me brings me wonder and strength.

⁷ Where could I go from your Spirit?

Where could I run and hide from your face?

⁸ If I go up to heaven, you're there!

If I go down to the realm of the dead, you're there too!

⁹ If I fly with wings into the shining dawn, you're there!

If I fly into the radiant sunset, you're there waiting!

¹⁰ Wherever I go, your hand will guide me;

your strength will empower me.

¹¹ It's impossible to disappear from you

or to ask the darkness to hide me,

for your presence is everywhere, bringing light into my night.

¹² There is no such thing as darkness with you.

The night, to you, is as bright as the day;

there's no difference between the two.

¹³ You formed my innermost being, shaping my delicate inside

and my intricate outside,

and wove them all together in my mother's womb.

¹⁴ I thank you, God, for making me so mysteriously complex!

Everything you do is marvelously breathtaking.

It simply amazes me to think about it!

How thoroughly you know me, Lord!

¹⁵ You even formed every bone in my body

when you created me in the secret place,

carefully, skillfully shaping me from nothing to something.

¹⁶ You saw who you created me to be before I became me!

Before I'd ever seen the light of day,

the number of days you planned for me

were already recorded in your book.

¹⁷⁻¹⁸ Every single moment you are thinking of me!

How precious and wonderful to consider

that you cherish me constantly in your every thought!

O God, your desires toward me are more

than the grains of sand on every shore!

When I awake each morning, you're still with me.

As you read this a second time, notice how you feel about God's love for you. Notice how you receive that he sees you, watches over you, knows every detail of your life, and loves you.

RE-READ PSALM 139

After reading these words, how do you feel about God's love for you? How do you receive that he sees you, watches over you, knows everything about you...and loves you?

To prepare for where God is taking you, will you invite him to look carefully at your life and your heart, to show you what to leave behind and what to carry forward? Will you trust as David did? Open your life to him with the words of invitation David offers at the end of this Psalm. Read these words as your prayer to God.

²³ God, I invite your searching gaze into my heart.
Examine me through and through;
find out everything that may be hidden within me.
Put me to the test and sift through all my anxious cares.
²⁴ See if there is any path of pain I'm walking on,
and lead me back to your glorious, everlasting ways—
the path that brings me back to you.

Psalm 139:23-24 (TPT)

In God's loving presence, ask him to review your life with you. Ponder these questions as you invite God's perspective:

- How have I lived? What have I lived for?
- What are the deep desires of my heart? What do I want to live for?
- How does this align with how I have been living? What is out of alignment?

As you begin to see your life as God does, he will reveal "the paths of pain" you are walking on—those things that are damaging your relationship with him—the sin in your life. Listen to the longing in Paul's words to the Roman Christians, "Don't you see how wonderfully kind, tolerant, and patient God is with you? Does this mean nothing to you? Can't you see that his kindness is intended to turn you from your sin? Romans 2:4 (NLT)

And, so it is with you. Receive his kindness, intended to turn you from your sin. This is called repentance: turning from the way you were going, your own way. Turning toward God and his desires for you. Confess your sins. Admit honestly and vulnerably everything and anything impeding your relationship with him, saying, "Yes, Lord, I see that this is damaging my relationship with you, I am sorry. Forgive me."

Take a moment to hold whatever your sin is out to him, uncovered and laid bare. Offer it to him. Receive his forgiveness and loving kindness. Shed all your guilt and shame. To travel lightly and nimbly as you follow Jesus into the next season, check your heart, your gut, your thoughts. Are you free? Are you still carrying anything weighty? Jesus died for all of this. Take some time right now to lay it at the foot of the cross, leaving it for God to deal with.

Read these words that remind us that when we confess our sins to God, we are completely forgiven, “But God is faithful and fair. If we confess our sins, he will forgive our sins. He will forgive every wrong thing we have done. He will make us pure.” 1 John 1:9 (NIRV)

Just as this is a pivotal moment in history, allow this to be a pivotal moment in your faith. Wholeheartedly offer this season of between to God—as a season to sit in his loving presence to contemplate, examine, confess, repent, receive forgiveness, and step freely into the vibrant, growing relationship he desires for you. May you know that God sees you, knows you, and loves you.

For families with students and children

If you have Middle School or High School students, invite them to participate in the practice with you, helping them grasp words or concepts that may be new or unclear. After the exercise, have a conversation around the questions and exercises from the practice. Set the example of awe and wonder, authenticity and vulnerability, questions you don’t understand. Help your students see that our journey with God is not one of perfection but of humble, honest relationship. Use the following as a guide but allow the Holy Spirit to lead.

How do you feel about God’s love for you?

How do you feel when you read in the Psalm that he sees you, watches over you, knows everything about you...and loves you?

What was the experience of inviting God to search your heart like?

Is there anything you would like to share that you felt God was showing you?

Is there anything you would like to share from the questions we were asked to ponder:

How have I lived? What have I lived for?

What are the deep desires of my heart? What do I want to live for?

How does this align with how I have been living? What is out of alignment?

How do Paul’s words to the Romans help you see God’s love and desires for you? “Don’t you see how wonderfully kind, tolerant, and patient God is with you? Does this mean nothing to you? Can’t you see that his kindness is intended to turn you from your sin?”

Romans 2:4 (NLT)

Are there things you feel you have been carrying that are keeping you from being free?

By confessing those things, how might it change how you go forward?

When you look back at this time—10, 20, 30 years from now—what might you want to remember? What might you want to say about these times to a younger generation?

I wonder how we might see God in it from that perspective.

If you have elementary-age children, select parts of Psalm 139 below that they will identify with. Before reading, encourage them to get their wiggles out, and then read and talk about the selected lines of this Psalm in a way they can relate to.

Have a family conversation about how God sees, knows, and loves us. And, how he wants us to always be close to him, turn to him when we make a mistake, talk to him about it, and receive his loving kindness and forgiveness. And, as a parent, you are trying to learn from and become like Jesus too.

You may wish to remember and talk about the events of your day—the happy, sad, angry, lonely, kind, silly moments—and how God sees each moment and loves each person in those moments.

You Know All About Me – King David's poetic song

¹ Lord, you have seen what is in my heart.

You know all about me.

² You know when I sit down and when I get up.

You know what I'm thinking even though you are far away.

³ You know when I go out to work and when I come back home.

You know exactly how I live.

⁴ Lord, even before I speak a word,
you know all about it.

⁵ You are all around me, behind me and in front of me.

You hold me safe in your hand.

⁶ I'm amazed at how well you know me.

It's more than I can understand.

¹³ You created the deepest parts of my being.

You put me together inside my mother's body.

¹⁴ How you made me is amazing and wonderful. I praise you for that.

What you have done is wonderful.

I know that very well.

¹⁵ None of my bones was hidden from you when you made me inside my mother's body.

That place was as dark as the deepest parts of the earth.

When you were putting me together there,

¹⁶ your eyes saw my body even before it was formed.

You planned how many days I would live.

You wrote down the number of them in your book
before I had lived through even one of them.

¹⁷ God, your thoughts about me are priceless.

No one can possibly add them all up.

Psalm 139:1-6, 13-17 NIRV