

The background features a repeating pattern of organic, watercolor-style shapes in three colors: a deep navy blue, a warm terracotta brown, and a soft, dusty rose pink. The shapes are scattered across the white background, creating a textured and artistic feel. A white rectangular box is centered horizontally, containing the title text.

D W E L L I N G
O N G O D ' S W I S D O M

Getting Started

Overview of the Week:

The Bible is replete with teaching on wisdom. Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes are most typically categorized as Wisdom Literature, but some scholars also include Song of Solomon along with several of the psalms. Wisdom literature teaches what it means to be pleasing to God. While not all of the Psalms would fall into the category of wisdom literature, there are several wisdom psalms. Wisdom psalms are often didactic and practical; they discuss how to seek God's righteous character, which leads to more moral and spiritual living.

Some psalms often classified as wisdom psalms include Psalm 1, 14, 15, 34, 36, 37, 49, 73, 112, 127, 128, 133, and 139. However, it is rare to find a set of scholars of commentators who agree on exactly which psalms would be considered wisdom psalms, as most fall into more than one set category and focus on a variety of subject matters.

How Do I Prepare?

This week, we're going to look at several psalms that feature wisdom themes as we learn more about the importance of godly wisdom as well as how to become more wise ourselves. On days 1 and 2, we'll focus on Psalm 139 and note the omniscience and omnipresence of God. On day 3, we'll compare the wisdom of God with the foolishness of man. On day 4, we will use Psalm 34 as well as some other passages throughout the psalms to learn more about how fear of the Lord leads to wisdom. Finally, on day 5, you will have the opportunity to reflect on the studies of the week and choose one of those passages to dig into more deeply for self and communal application.

Memory Verse of the Week:

"Great is our Lord, and abundant in power; His understanding is beyond measure" (Ps 147:5, ESV). On the next page, write or "Scripture doodle" your memory verse.

Prayer of the Week:

On the next page, write out a prayer to the Lord, praising Him for His infinite knowledge and wisdom. Then, ask Him to help you as you aim to learn more about His wisdom. Ask Him to teach you to fear Him and to help you to be humble and receive His wisdom and instruction. Use Psalm 34 to guide you as you write this prayer.

Songs of the Week:

"Psalm 139 (Far Too Wonderful)," Shane and Shane; "The Perfect Wisdom of Our God," Keith and Kristyn Getty; "Be Thou My Vision," Selah; "Taste and See," Sovereign Grace; "He Will Hold Me Fast," Keith and Kristyn Getty; "Be Near," Shane and Shane
Link to playlist: <https://open.spotify.com/playlist/3BEh5j9yeffglo4EbmVrqW>

Week Three Memory Verse:

Week Three Prayer:

Day One: Omniscience and Omnipresence of God

1. Pray

Before we begin reading and examining God's Word, let's ask the Lord to lead us in the study of His Word.

2. Examine

As we begin our study on dwelling in the wisdom of God, we'll start by taking a look at just how wise God truly is. The apostle Paul refers to God as the "only wise God" in Romans 16:27, and 1 Corinthians 1:25 tells us that even the foolishness of God (which is actually an oxymoron) is wiser than men.

Today, we'll study Psalm 139 and focus on two specific attributes of God that contribute to His incredible wisdom: His omniscience and His omnipresence. Go ahead and read Psalm 139 in its entirety.

¹ O LORD, you have searched me and known me!

² You know when I sit down and when rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar.

³ You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways.

⁴ Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O LORD, you know it altogether.

⁵ You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me.

⁶ Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it.

⁷ Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence?

⁸ If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!

⁹ If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,

¹⁰ even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me.

¹¹ If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light about me be night,"

¹² even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is bright as the day, for darkness is as light with you.

¹³ For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb.

¹⁴ I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well.

¹⁵ My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth.

¹⁶ 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.

¹⁷ How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them!

¹⁸ If I would count them, they are more than the sand. I awake, and I am still with you.

¹⁹ Oh that you would slay the wicked, O God! O men of blood, depart from me!

²⁰ They speak against you with malicious intent; your enemies take your name in vain.

²¹ Do I not hate those who hate you, O LORD? And do I not loathe those who rise up against you?

²² I hate them with complete hatred; I count them my enemies.

²³ Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts!

²⁴ And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting! (ESV)

The Context:

Charles Spurgeon, in his *Treasury of David*, refers to Psalm 139 as “one of the most notable of sacred hymns” and praises its ability to uplift both the omnipresence and omniscience of God while also showing his omnipotence. He, along with the majority of biblical scholars, attributes this psalm to King David. This psalm, labeled as both a wisdom psalm as well as a hymn of praise, contains four poetic strophes. A strophe is a form of a stanza that was typically used in ancient poetry to show that a poem is written stanza by stanza rather than line by line. Typically, strophes will have a volta, or turn, at the beginning of each new section that signifies a new thought or progression of thought. Understanding the poetic make up of a psalm is important because it helps us to better break down the meaning. W. Dennis Tucker, Jr. and Jamie A. Grant, authors of *The NIV Application Commentary*, categorize the strophes as such: 1) God's Examination of the Psalmist in verses 1-6; 2) The Psalmist's Thoughts on Fleeing from God in verses 7-12; 3) God's Presence from the Beginning of Life in verses 13-18; and 4) The Threat of Enemies in verses 19-24. Note that the last two verses (23 and 24) also seem to be a different strophe but are often lumped into the fourth strophe due to the length of all the others being six verses. Looking at the content, however, it is clear that the last two verses are a prayer of supplication in reflection of the praises he's been giving in the preceding verses.

What I'd like you to notice in these 4 separate strophes is the progression of David's thoughts. He begins by focusing on God's omniscience, which leads to thoughts of God's omnipresence. Focusing on these two attributes of God leads David into a more intimate place with God, leading him to reflect on God's knowledge of the psalmist himself, which then brings about an overflow of praise. In the final strophe, David shows hatred for evil and for the enemies of God, declaring his complete loyalty to God and his desire for God to overtake his enemies. He closes the psalm with a prayer to God, entreating God to search him even more, desiring God to know him more and more, and pleading with God to lead Him in “the way everlasting” (Ps 39:24, ESV).

God's omniscience is one of His mental, incommunicable attributes, meaning it's something that only He has and that we as humans do not. For God to be omniscient, put simply, means that God knows everything. But take some time to consider what everything entails. First, this means that God knows Himself. This may seem like an odd place to begin, because, of course, you would say, God knows Himself. But when you consider the fact that God Himself is infinite, this means that His mind is capable of understanding infinity and fully knowing every aspect of it. Also, God is the only One capable of knowing Himself because only He has this ability to grasp infinite knowledge. In addition to God knowing Himself, He also knows everything that actually exists (past, present, and future) and that happens/happened (past, present, and future). To top it all off, though, God also knows everything possible. He knows all possible and potential scenarios of the past, present, and future.

Psalms 139 begins with a focus on the omniscience of God and then moves into a reflection upon the omnipresence of God. God is omnipresent, meaning that He is present in every space and has been so and will be in every time. We don't physically see God in every space because he is immaterial, without a physical body. God's dwelling with His children is something that He is passionate about, so much so that He sent His Son, Jesus, to physically dwell with us in bodily form as our Immanuel, meaning "God with us." Like David in Psalm 139, we, too, should be ever thankful that God desires to be present among us at all times. There is never a time when we will be without Him.

Now, let's take a look at how David describes God's omnipresence and omnipotence in Psalm 139. For more information on God's omniscience and omnipresence, I recommend Wayne Grudem's *Systematic Theology* book. Grudem offers a clear, easy to understand walkthrough of these doctrines.

Your Turn to Dig In

1. Look at the first strophe in Psalm 139 (verses 1-6). Make a list of what David points out that God knows about Him.
2. Look at verse 4. David says that God knows the words of David even before they are on his tongue. What does this mean about God's omniscience in regards to time?
3. Read verses 15-16. What elements of God's omniscience do you see in these verses? Note especially God's omniscience regarding the things unseen by the human eye.
4. Read verses 6, 17, and 18. David says that God's knowledge is "too wonderful" for him and is "too high" so that he cannot attain it. Why is David so taken aback and in awe of God's knowledge? What is your response to God's omniscience?

1. As mentioned earlier, David's thoughts here begin with God's omniscience and then move into thoughts about His omnipresence. Why do you think these ideas are so closely linked in David's mind?

2. Let's look at God's omnipresence more closely by studying the second strophe in verses 7-12. Make a list of elements of God's omnipresence that you see in this section of Scripture.

3. Read verses 8-9. David here gives us a word picture showing that God is everywhere, on every side. We see that he is above, in heaven. He is below in Sheol. He is in the east, where the sun rises, and He is to the west, where the sea was in relation to Israel. Is there anywhere that God is not present?

4. Read the following excerpt from an article by John Frame for The Gospel Coalition, then answer this question: Why is it significant to believers that God has chosen to be together with His people?

To Isaac, God said, "I will be with you and will bless you" (Gen 26:3) and that language often forms the basis of God's redemptive covenant. The heart of the covenant, God's redemptive promise, is that "I will be your God, and you will be my people," a precious togetherness of God with his people (Exod 6:7, 2 Cor 6:16; cf. Gen 17:7, Exod 6:7, 29:45, Lev 26:12, Jer 7:23, 11:4, 24:7, 30:22, Ezek 11:20, 14:11, 36:28, 37:27, Heb 11:16, Rev 21:3). It should not surprise us that a biblical name for Jesus is Immanuel, God with us (Isa 7:14, Matt 1:23). As the Old Testament tabernacle was a place for God to dwell with his people, so Jesus, the Son of God, "tabernacled among us" (John 1:14).

Day Two: God's Intimate Knowledge of His Children

1. Pray

Before we return to Psalm 139, take a moment to pray and ask God to continue to reveal Himself to you through the Scriptures.

2. Examine

Reread Psalm 139 before digging back into the text.

¹ O LORD, you have searched me and known me!

² You know when I sit down and when rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar.

³ You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways.

⁴ Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O LORD, you know it altogether.

⁵ You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me.

⁶ Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it.

⁷ Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence?

⁸ If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!

⁹ If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,

¹⁰ even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me.

¹¹ If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light about me be night,"

¹² even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is bright as the day, for darkness is as light with you.

¹³ For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb.

¹⁴ I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well.

¹⁵ My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth.

¹⁶ 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.

¹⁷ How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them!

¹⁸ If I would count them, they are more than the sand. I awake, and I am still with you.

¹⁹ Oh that you would slay the wicked, O God! O men of blood, depart from me!

²⁰ They speak against you with malicious intent; your enemies take your name in vain.

²¹ Do I not hate those who hate you, O LORD? And do I not loathe those who rise up against you?

²² I hate them with complete hatred; I count them my enemies.

²³ Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts!

²⁴ And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting! (ESV)

The Context:

As mentioned in yesterday's lesson, Psalm 139 is broken up into several strophes that help to indicate its purpose and meaning. In addition to the content of the strophes progressing throughout the psalm, the psalmist's use of pronouns also varies throughout the text. For example, in verses 1-6, David's focus is on God, as seen through a heavy emphasis on the pronoun "you." Half of the verses in this section begin with "You," referring to God Almighty. Intermixed within these Scriptures are many personal pronouns (I and me) as well. So, we can see that David is not focused only on God's omniscience in general but on His omniscience regarding David Himself. We see similar writing in the second strophe, which also contains a mix of "you" pronouns and "I" pronouns. However, in this section, "I" becomes even more prominent as many of the verses have "I" in the first part of the statement with "you" at the end. The following strophes continue to interweave these personal pronouns about God along with the personal pronouns about David himself.

So what does this all mean, and why did we just spend all that time discussing pronouns? Seeing this mix of personal pronouns about David with those of God shows just how intimate of a psalm this is between David and God. David is in awe of God for who He is and for His infinite knowledge of the universe, certainly. However, here, David is expressing the awe that He has due to God's complete omniscience of the psalmist himself. Here, we see the intimate connection that God has to His children. He is not a far-away being who remains disconnected yet "tuned in" to humanity. No, He is a personal God who knows each person individually and specifically. And this isn't just true of David, but it's true of each and every one of us.

In addition to this emphasis on the intimate nature of God's omniscience and omnipresence, David also uses a poetic technique known as a merism to demonstrate the thoroughness and vastness with which God knows His children. As Tucker and Grant explain, "A merism is a poetic technique that expresses a totality by mentioning two parts, typically polar opposites." We see this as David describes all the places that God searches him out and sees him. We see this in verse two: "You know when I sit down and when I rise up" and in verses 8-10 where David shows that God is up in heaven, down in Sheol, to the east in the morning, and in the west in the sea. David is emphasizing the idea of totality here. There is nowhere that God is not. David cannot possibly escape from the eyes of God!

The tone of the psalm is also key to recognize, as it is one of awe and gratitude, not one of fear and shame. While there may be times when believers may want to hide away from God or find a place where they can get away from Him, that is not what is happening in this psalm. Here, David is finding great encouragement in God's knowing Him so intimately and being with Him in every moment, in every space. We as believers should also find encouragement and gratitude from the fact that there is nowhere we can go where God is not. He will always be with us, no matter where we may go. What a beautiful blessing we have in God fully knowing us and always being with us! Praise be to God!

Your Turn to Dig In

1. Read verses 13-16. These verses describe God's knowledge of David before he was even born, showing that there is not a single second of David's life, even from conception, of which God has been unaware. They also express God's involvement in each of our lives. We weren't created on some mass production line; instead, each person was "knit together" by God, handcrafted as one of His unique creations. What does this tell us about the sanctity of human life?

2. In verse 16, David explains that every one of his days (and, therefore, every one of our days) was numbered out by God. At what point does God determine how many days on earth we will have? Compare this to Hebrews 9:27. How does knowing our days are perfectly numbered by the One who created us impact your faith and trust in the Lord?

5. Read the final strophe in the psalm, verses 19-24. There is a clear shift from reflecting upon God's omniscience, omnipresence, and infinity onto declaring hatred against the enemies of God in verses 19-22. These verses often bring a bit of confusion due to this abrupt change in tone and content. Understand that what David is doing here is aligning himself with God and showing that he is fully committed to him and has no allegiance to anyone else, especially God's enemies. He is doing so through what commentators and scholars refer to as imprecatory verses (there are some full imprecatory psalms). As you read these verses, I encourage you to refer to John Piper's notes on them and other similar passages on the Desiring God website:

<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/do-i-not-hate-those-who-hate-you-o-lord> . As you do, answer this question: what (not who) are current enemies of God? What is your attitude towards these things?

6. Read the final two verses of the psalm, verses 23 and 24. Why is David asking God to search him if he's already shown that God knows him more intimately than he knows himself? What does he want God to find within him?

Reflection and Application

Knowing that God has an intimate knowledge of us and that we can never escape His presence should bring comfort and joy to us. But it could also bring fear and shame. As believers, we should desire to be in the presence of God, not want to hide away from Him or run from Him. If we find ourselves experiencing more guilt and shame or fear when we reflect upon God's omnipresence and omniscience, we need to take the time to think of what may be the cause. Most likely, there is unrepentant sin in our lives that we are reluctant to turn away from or let go of. Remember, God is a God who offers forgiveness of sins and who is "slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love" (Ps 103:18). So if you find yourself (when you find yourself) holding onto sin, don't be afraid to turn to God in confession and repentance because He stands ready to forgive.

1. In verses 11-12, David writes that even the darkness is not dark to God and that not even utter darkness could cover David from God's sight. In the context of Psalm 139, David is thankful that even darkness cannot hide him. However, there are times when believers (think about Adam and Eve in the garden) try to hide from God. When we desire to be hidden from God, that usually means that we are walking in unrepentant sin. Reflect on your current walk with the Lord. Is there any aspect of your life that you would prefer to be hidden from God? If so, what does this tell you about that part of your life?

Day Three: Foolishness of Man

1. Pray

Thank God for His wisdom and for imparting that wisdom to His children through His Word. Ask God to continue to reveal Himself to you through the Scriptures.

2. Examine

Read Psalm 14 in its entirety before we dig in.

¹The fool says in his heart, "There is no God."
They are corrupt, they do abominable
deeds;

there is none who does good.

²The Lord looks down from heaven on the
children of man,
to see if there are any who understand,
who seek after God.

³They have all turned aside; together they
have become corrupt;
there is none who does good,
not even one.

⁴Have they no knowledge, all the evildoers
who eat up my people as they eat bread
and do not call upon the Lord?

⁵There they are in great terror,
for God is with the generation of the
righteous.

⁶You would shame the plans of the poor,
but [b] the Lord is his refuge.

⁷Oh, that salvation for Israel would come out
of Zion!

When the Lord restores the fortunes of his
people, let Jacob rejoice, let Israel be glad. (ESV)

The Context:

Not much background information is available for Psalm 14. What is certain is that David, the author, has addressed it to the chief musician. So, we know that this psalm was meant to be used in a congregational setting, making it a public psalm. This psalm has a fairly simple structure and doesn't include many poetic techniques that would impact the meaning greatly. Spurgeon points out the significance of this psalm lacking large portions of praise to God but still being a song written with public intent. He points out the importance of including songs or readings such as these so as to do as the apostle Paul exhorts believers: admonish and teach one another using psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.

This psalm begins with a description of the condition of the fool, here defined as the person who rejects God. In the original Hebrew, the phrase "there is" is actually not included in the phrase "There is no God;" instead, it originally read as, "The fool says in his heart, 'no God.'" James Montgomery Boice comments on this verse and explains that it clearly demonstrates the fool experiencing both a "practical as well as theoretical atheism. Not only does he not believe in God, he also acts on his conviction." We see the connection between the mind and action by the way David describes the fool's disavowing of God in his heart. The *Enduring Word Bible Commentary* authors explain, "The God-denying man David has in mind is not merely troubled by intellectual objections to the existence of God; in his heart he wishes God away, typically for fundamentally moral reasons." So, here is a picture of a person who denies the existence of God intellectually as well as practically, likely because of a desire to live a lifestyle that is not consistent with God's law.

In verses two and three, the psalmist goes on to explain that this fool is not an exception to be found among humanity but is instead the state of all mankind! Here, we see the concept of all people being sinful and in need of redemption. Verse three states, "There is none who does good, not even one" (ESV). In our natural state, we have no desire for God and have no righteousness on our own. After giving the state of the fool as well as the natural state of all mankind, David then begins to question how the fool cannot acknowledge the existence of God in verse four. He also points out that those who have no use of God also have no use for God's people and usually despise both God and His people.

Then, in verses five and six, the psalm shifts perspective and shows that fear is lying behind this pushing aside of the existence and knowledge of God and practice of His ways. As Paul wrote in Romans 1, all mankind is aware of the presence and existence of God. To the righteous, this should bring peace and encouragement, but to the wicked and those who oppose God, this should bring trembling fear. Verse six mentions that these individuals may look down upon or take advantage of the poor, thinking that they in their human wisdom can overtake the poor and use them for their own gain. However, David speaks the truth that God is a refuge for the poor. James 4:6 echoes this sentiment: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble" (ESV).

David closes the psalm by calling on God to bring salvation to Israel, basically to let His kingdom come and will be done here on earth as it is in heaven. David longs for the day that God's reign is clear and evident to all, where everyone lives according to God's law. He longs to see a day when the fool is shamed openly by seeing that the One, True God is not only real but is the ruler. He says that in that day Israel (God's people) should rejoice and be glad. Not only does he call on future generations who will actually see God's Kingdom coming in their own generation to be glad, but he also offers this call to believers of all generations. We should look forward to the coming deliverance of the Lord and rejoice at what is to come.

Your Turn to Dig In

1. Read Ps 14:1-2, and compare it to Romans 1:18-23. Why is it that David calls those who claim there is no God “fools”?
2. Read Romans 3:10 and Isaiah 64:6. What do these verses teach about the righteousness of mankind? How does this align with Psalm 14's view?
3. Read Ps 14:5-6. Why do you think someone who refuses the wisdom of God or denies the existence of God would be more prone to fear than those who dwell with the Almighty?

4. Read Romans 8:26-27. What does this tell us about the foolishness of man? What does it tell us about God?

5. Read James 3:13-18. Then, make two columns down below. In one, list the characteristics of godly wisdom. In the other, list the characteristics of "wisdom" that does not come from God.

Reflection and Application

The foolishness of man is clearly seen in Scripture, especially when compared to the vast wisdom of God. All too often, however, we as humans tend to lean on our own independence and turn away from God's knowledge and wisdom. This can be a result of complacency, stubbornness, or from being built up by those around us. People who are in leadership positions or are considered experts in their field will often have people come to them for wisdom and advice. And while we should certainly aim to increase in knowledge and wisdom, as we do so, we must also continue to seek the Lord's face ever more diligently so as not to become puffed up with pride.

1. What areas of your life do you feel so comfortable in that you rarely seek the wisdom of God? Finances? Relationships? Career? What is the danger in becoming self confident in areas of expertise/comfort?

2. Refer to the comparison you made between characteristics of godly and ungodly wisdom from James 3. Now, think of the advice you generally offer to people. Or, if you have a situation that comes to mind in which you recently offered someone advice, think about what that advice looked like. Does your advice fall more under the category of godly or ungodly wisdom?

3. When you need wisdom, to whom or what do you turn first? Why? Why does it make infinitely more sense to turn to God first rather than man (even the wisest of men)?

Day Four: The Fear of the Lord is the Beginning of Wisdom

1. Pray

Before we study Psalm 34, take a moment to pray and ask God to continue to reveal Himself to you through the Scriptures.

2. Examine

Read Psalm 34 in its entirety before we dig in.

¹ I will bless the Lord at all times;
his praise shall continually be in my
mouth.

² My soul makes its boast in the Lord;
let the humble hear and be glad.

³ Oh, magnify the Lord with me,
and let us exalt his name together!

⁴ I sought the Lord, and he answered me
and delivered me from all my fears.

⁵ Those who look to him are radiant,
and their faces shall never be ashamed.

⁶ This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him
and saved him out of all his troubles.

⁷ The angel of the Lord encamps
around those who fear him, and delivers
them.

⁸ Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good!
Blessed is the man who takes refuge in
him!

⁹ Oh, fear the Lord, you his saints,
for those who fear him have no lack!

¹⁰ The young lions suffer want and hunger;
but those who seek the Lord lack no good
thing.

¹¹ Come, O children, listen to me;
I will teach you the fear of the Lord.

¹² What man is there who desires life
and loves many days, that he may see
good?

¹³ Keep your tongue from evil
and your lips from speaking deceit.

¹⁴ Turn away from evil and do good;
seek peace and pursue it.

¹⁵ The eyes of the Lord are toward the
righteous and his ears toward their cry.

¹⁶ The face of the Lord is against those who do
evil, to cut off the memory of them from the
earth.

¹⁷ When the righteous cry for help, the Lord
hears and delivers them out of all their
troubles.

¹⁸ The Lord is near to the brokenhearted
and saves the crushed in spirit.

¹⁹ Many are the afflictions of the righteous,
but the Lord delivers him out of them all.

²⁰ He keeps all his bones;
not one of them is broken.

²¹ Affliction will slay the wicked,
and those who hate the righteous will be
condemned.

²² The Lord redeems the life of his servants;
none of those who take refuge in him will
be condemned. (ESV)

The Context:

Psalm 34 is another of David's psalms and is considered to be a wisdom psalm. Spurgeon divides the psalm into a few categories. First, he notes that the first 10 verses are in the style of a hymn with verses 11-22 acting as a sermon. He further divides the psalm as follows "In Ps 34:1-3, David vows to bless the Lord, and invites the praise of others; from Ps 34:4-7 he relates his experience, and in Ps 34:8-10 exhorts the godly to constancy of faith. In Ps 34:1-14, he gives direct exhortation, and follows it up by didactic teaching from Ps 34:15-22 to the close." The psalm was written by David after he fled for his life to the Philistines and found himself before the king (Abimelech). To retain his life, David pretended to be insane; this tactic worked, and David was able to escape. The full context of the psalm can be found in 1 Samuel 21:10-22:1.

Psalm 34 is one of my absolute favorite psalms, and I think this is the case for many people. One reason I love this psalm so much is that it shows David's trust and reliance upon the Lord in the midst of a terrifying experience. David models to believers what it looks like to trust in the Lord and to allow God's truth to reign in our minds rather than be overcome with fear, anxiety, and dread. The reason David is able to do this is because He believes that God's wisdom is greater than man's wisdom (or foolishness) and fears the Lord more than he fears man.

While there is much that could be said about the psalm (entire books could be written on it), I'd like to focus today's study on how it discusses the fear of the Lord. Psalm 111:10 tells us that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (ESV). For us to truly be wise, the first step we must take is to fear the Lord above all else. This fear of God does not come naturally to mankind; in fact, Psalm 34:11, along with many other passages, teaches us that we must be taught how to fear God.

So, why is learning to fear the Lord so important? First, fearing God is our purpose in life. Solomon searched all the world looking for purpose and found it in nothing other than fearing God and obeying Him. Second, fearing God is our starting place. It is where we must begin to achieve knowledge and wisdom and to be able to obey Him. Third, fearing God leads to finding the knowledge of God.

And what exactly does “fear of the Lord” mean? Derek Kidner in the *Tyndale Commentary* series on Proverbs explains that this fear is “a right relation [to God]: a worshipping submission (fear) to the God of the covenant” (59). Koptak in the *NIV Application Commentary* series explains that fear being the beginning of wisdom can point to it being both first and most important. He writes, “‘Fear of the Lord’ comes closest to describing worship and the practice of religion in the book of Proverbs. Fear is knowing what to respect, knowing how to place oneself in a learning posture” (62). So, it seems that a fear of the Lord is a respect for Him and a humbling of oneself in order to have the proper spirit with which to learn. One can only do this by being in a right relationship with God and understanding one’s position with God, accepting His authority and understanding His ways are best.

Fear of the Lord comes with many benefits, as seen in Scripture. Proverbs 2:7-8 explains that it brings the protection of God. Proverbs 2:9 states that fear of God brings an understanding of righteousness, justice, equity, and goodness. In Proverbs 2:10, we see that it creates a soul pleased with knowledge. God will change the desires of our hearts and will change our hearts so that His knowledge pleases us. When we truly fear the Lord, we will want knowledge and be pleased by it; we will no longer consider it foolish and scoff and make a mockery of it — and all this not out of duty but because this is what will now bring us pleasure!

Fear of the Lord brings about discretion and understanding that provide deliverance from evil (Proverbs 2:11-15). God will give us unique discretion and understanding to help us make decisions that are wise and that keep us from evil. He will help us discern who is wise and who is unwise so we can know how to stay out of the way of evil and off of dark paths. It also imparts deliverance from adultery and deceptive, harmful people (Proverbs 2:16-19). Rather than being easily swayed or tempted by our fleshly desires and by those who wish for us to succumb to them, we will be given understanding to know that temporary satisfaction will bring eternal consequences. We will be able to discern when someone is trying to trick us and lead us in the wrong way. We will be granted the knowledge that what we have in Christ is so much better than any temporary pleasure the world could offer.

Fear of the Lord brings us to the path of life (Proverbs 2:19-20) As opposed to those who fall into evil and who forsake wisdom, we who fear the Lord will be able to stay on the path to life — eternal life with Christ. And wisdom will help keep us on that path. And finally, when we fear the Lord, we have access to an inheritance of the land (Proverbs 2:21-22) This verse seems to parallel Matthew 5:5: “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.”

Now let’s dig in to Psalm 34 and see how David practically lives out his fear of the Lord.

Your Turn to Dig In

1. Take a look at the psalm in its entirety, and note the times fear is mentioned or implied. Make note of them in the space below. Then, circle the instances in which the fear being discussed is a fear of the Lord. What do you notice about the fruits of emotional fear and fear of the Lord?

2. Read verses 1-3. Note that David begins with praise on his lips. He is thankful for the Lord's protection and deliverance; rather than seeing his escape from King Abimelech as something that he had conjured up himself or done in his own strength, he recognizes the goodness and faithfulness of God in the situation. His first response is praise, and his second is to bring others into a spirit of praise before the Lord. Why would the people want to rejoice along with David in this situation? How does David's escape from Abimelech impact the Israelites?

3. Read 1 Samuel 21:10-22:1, and then read Psalm 34:4-7. Describe what happened to David and his response (immediate and reflective). What does David's initial emotional fear lead him to do? Outline how David moved from emotional fear of the king to a fear of the Lord.

7. Verses 12-14 are included in the stanza wherein David tells his audience he will teach them the fear of the Lord. He then gives moral instruction on restraining from evil behavior and instead seeking and pursuing peace. Compare this passage with Proverbs 2:7-22. What connections do you see between these two passages concerning the fear of the Lord?

8. There is a direct connection between the righteous and those who fear the Lord. Read verses 15-18. What benefits / fruits do you see that come along with fearing the Lord and living according to His righteousness?

9. Read the last stanza of this psalm, verses 19-22. Here, David is clear that the righteous have many afflictions. How can this be true if God also delivers the righteous from all of their troubles? How is this not a contradiction of Scripture? For more insight here, compare these Scriptures with 2 Corinthians 4:8-9 and James 1:2-4.

Reflection and Application

Resting in the fear of the Lord is something that we must learn, practice, and teach to others. It does not come naturally, nor is it something that we will retain without regularly reflecting upon God's wisdom, goodness, and power. In Psalm 34, David demonstrates his battle with emotional fear / the fear of man and the fear of the Lord. His choice to trust in the goodness and power of God even when his circumstances point in the opposite direction allows him to fear the Lord and to reap the benefits of joy and peace that accompany it. David saw himself as a man poor before the Lord, lacking in knowledge, wisdom, resources, and strength. Although he had been appointed a high ranking official in the army, had slain ten thousands of men, and had been heralded by the people for being a mighty warrior, David did not rest in his own strength or rely on his wisdom. Rather, he recognized that all he had been given was a gift from the Lord and truly understood the goodness of God.

We have similar opportunities to choose between relying on our own wisdom and relying on the wisdom of God. We can choose to fear man or to fear God. Reflect back on Psalm 139, which demonstrated God's immense wisdom and knowledge. Then, think about Psalm 14, which showed the foolishness of man, especially in comparison to the wisdom of God. I hope that you are able to see that there is never a time when trusting in the wisdom of God will lead you on the wrong path. As David writes in Psalm 34:19: "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all" (ESV). A safe and easy life is not at all what God promises to those who fear Him; however, He does promise a life that is resplendent with peace and joy despite suffering or circumstances and that ultimately leads to eternal glory. Such a life is ready and waiting for all those who walk in the fear of the Lord.

1. Recall Psalm 34:1-13. When fellow believers receive deliverance from danger or an illness or when they attain victory over sin, what is your response? Do you join them in rejoicing as if it were your own deliverance/victory? Or are you instead unaffected or even jealous?
2. Whom do you fear more: mankind or God? Why?

Day Five: Week Three Debrief & PERCH Study

This week, we have focused on dwelling in the wisdom of God. We have seen that God is omniscient, knowing all things, and omnipresent, being in all places. We have compared His wisdom to the foolishness of mankind, seeing that we cannot even hold a candle to God's knowledge, application of that knowledge, or goodness. We have also seen what it looks like to walk in the fear of the Lord in the midst of terrifying circumstances.

I hope that this study of God's wisdom has left you with a sense of awe about the Lord, meaning that you find yourself caught between wonder, amazement, fear, and a lack of full understanding. When we think upon the omniscience and omnipresence of the Lord, we shouldn't feel as though we have a full grasp or understanding of these ideas or of the Lord since He is infinite and beyond what we are capable of comprehending. At the same time, though, I hope that this lack of full comprehension does not hinder your wanting to glean as much as you possibly can from the Scriptures so as to receive the fullest understanding that is possible.

As we gather up knowledge, I pray that it does not lead us into a state of pride but rather one of humility. I encourage you to spend time seeking the Lord and asking Him to help you grow in humility as you grow in knowledge. I also pray that we not only learn this information and store it up in our minds but that, instead, we begin to practice and apply it as we live out our daily lives. As we do so, we will grow to be more like God and will help others to grow in Him, as well.

Debrief Week Two Using PERCH

Choose a passage from one of the psalms we read this week. It can be an entire psalm, or it can be a small portion of a psalm. If you chose a shorter passage, write out the passage below. If you choose a longer passage, choose key verses and keywords to write below.

1. Pray

Before moving forward, pray and ask God to speak to you through the study of His Word.

2. Examine and Reflect

Answer the questions below.

1. What does this passage teach about God?
2. What does this passage teach that we must obey?
3. How does this passage connect to the gospel?

Change: Prayerfully ask God how you can apply this passage to your life. Prayerfully consider what changes you need to make in your actions or beliefs in order to make the application of this passage to your life. Write these below.

Help: Prayerfully consider how you can help others using this passage. How can you share it with them? How can you spread the Truth of this passage to both believers and non-believers?

