



DISCUSSION MATERIALS

Read Psalm 139

This Psalm is divided into four key sections, you could reflect on each section one by one, or break into smaller groups who could reflect on one section and share back with the group.

1. God knows us completely (V1-6)

In these first six verses the psalmist pairs various words describing 'to know' with Yahweh. What are the things we see God knows about us? How do we feel about God knowing each one of these? How might we respond to this?

How does the Psalmist compare his knowledge with God's knowledge in V6? Do we compare our knowledge to God's in a similar way? How should this effect our relationship with God and our times of prayer?

2. There is nowhere we can hide from God (V7-12)

The psalmist moves from 'you' statements about Yahweh to 'I' statements. Verses 7-10 makes it clear that there is nowhere we can go to hide from God. How is it both an encouragement and a challenge that there is nowhere we can hide from God? How does it relate to the topic of humility?

Verses 11-12 highlight that even the darkness cannot hide us from God. We know God created light in the midst of darkness (Gen 1). How do these verses encourage us to view the darkness in our own lives? How might we approach our darkness before God?

3. God is present throughout history (v13-18)

How does this section demonstrate God's presence through the psalmist's life? Share with your group a time where you clearly knew of God's presence with you, how did that moment impact your faith moving forward?

How does this section demonstrate God's power? How does knowing God's presence throughout time and his power influence the way we pray?

4. We need to humbly submit to God (v19-24)

In this section we see the psalmist standing against those who are doing evil in Yahweh's name (v19-22). How does what the Psalmist express here align with Luke 14:26? How do we hold Jesus' command to love our enemies with the sentiment expressed in these two passages?

The Psalmist declares that he stands with God (v18) and demonstrates that with his stand against those doing evil (v19-22). Why does he then seek for God to search him? How can we learn from this attitude? How should this shape the way we pray?

The final verses (23-24) can be used as a way for us to reflect on our life before God. Spend some time reflecting and praying through these questions. You can do so in small groups, on your own, or during a time of fasting and prayer.

Are we willing to humble ourselves and ask God to search and know our heart?

Are we willing to humble ourselves and ask God to test us and know our concerns?

Are we willing to humble ourselves and ask God to see if there is any offensive ways in us?

Are we willing to humbly follow and allow God to lead us in his way?

Spend some time praying for one another in your groups.



SIMPLE GUIDE TO FASTING

Biblical Fasting

Biblical fasting is about abstaining from food to draw near to God. Jesus fasting in the desert to acknowledge his dependence on God in Luke 4. He expected his disciples to fast (Matt 6:16), but he did not command it.

Dallas Willard suggests that "Fasting confirms our utter dependence upon God by finding in Him a source of sustenance beyond food."

Fasting is not a hunger strike to demand God answers our prayers or needs. It is about humbling ourselves before God and opening ourselves to his will.

There are various types of fasts. Here are just a few examples:

1. **Partial Fasts** (e.g. Daniel 10:3) - abstaining from 'delicacies' like meat and wine for an extended period (usually weeks).
2. **Complete Fasts** - Where you only consume water or juice for an extended period. Sometimes multiple days.
3. **Daylight Fasts** - Where you fast during daylight hours from all food and water. Most will arise early, eat breakfast and a coffee in the dark, then fast until the sun sets. This fast can be maintained for multiple days.

For any fasting beyond one day, you should consult a medical professional and adjust your food intake for a week beforehand in preparation. You also need to break extended fasts carefully, gradually reintroducing more solid food. This should be done carefully.

If you are new to fasting, begin with a single day fast:

1. Try and take the day away from your usual routines.
2. Take it as a time to pray and sit with God. Journal your thoughts and what God has been showing you.
3. As you feel hungry, use this as a reminder to seek God, and to humble yourself before him, trusting him for the fulfilment of your needs.
4. If you feel unwell at any point, stop and consult a medical professional.