

THE OMNISCIENT GOD, PSALM 139:1-6

Knowing You #1

◆Intro: It was many moons ago. I was a high school kid and it was Spring. More precisely, it was the two weeks where all energy was focused on one thing: making the tennis team. Picture sixteen tennis courts. That's how many Gar-Field HS in Woodbridge, VA had. Each court was over-filled with two or three pairs of students hitting hundred's of tennis balls back and forth forming a living canopy of green spots over the courts. Over a hundred of us came out. Twelve would stay. So on the court we stroked our best. If we had a particularly well-performed shot, we hoped the coach's eye would have caught it. If we hit the net, we cringed at the thought that he might have been looking at that moment, when we were not in our best form. We wanted him to see our passing shots. We hoped he'd miss our double-faults. And you know why? Everything hinged on what the coach knew, or thought about us.

◆I'm sure you know the feeling. The butterflies in the stomach. The anxiety of what someone else might think of you. Twenty-one Pilots have a song entitled Blurry Face, that is strikingly honest when it says, "My name is Blurry Face, and I care what you think." It's striking because most of us spend a lot of time hiding such truth that most of us actually feel. We want to be known, and we're afraid to be known.

◆Today we're beginning a series that looks at who God is. What is he like? We call his characteristics the "attributes of God." We'll start with an attribute known as omniscience. It has to do with how much God knows. God is arguably the most important "coach", the cosmic coach, if you will. Many people don't really want to think about what he knows because there is this little voice inside that suggests that if there is really a God, who really

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is over all, and knows all, and if he knows all about me, well then that may be an uncomfortable situation because I know all about me, and some of it isn't all good. But hear this: the attributes of God, things like his goodness, his holiness, his power, his sovereignty –these can be unnerving, or they can be deeply comforting depending on your relationship with him. Lets go exploring. We'll start with a definition...

◆1. Omniscience means to be “all (omni) knowing (science)”. Omniscience is the all knowing character of God. It refers to the fact that God knows everything there is to know. He never forgets. He never misremembers, such that maybe his wife, if he had one, would have to tell how the story really happened. He never learns anything. In fact he has everything to tell us and nothing to find out or learn from us. The omniscient character of God means that there is no history for God like there is for us. He knows everything in an eternal now. He does not have to look back to remember, nor does he need to project into the future in some hypothesis. All the knowledge in all the books and on all the hard disks, and all the servers, or in the internet “cloud” -all of it God knows and always has known. He knows more than the professors, Einstein and Newton are simpletons in comparison.

◆A. Lets pause a second to notice how unlike you and me God is. I mean, how much do we know? If we're a mechanic we may know how to fix brakes, but how to program the map-app in the dash is worlds beyond our pay grade. If we're a pharmacist we know which drugs do what to who and when, but we may not know how to load Netflix on the TV. You may be brilliant in your field, (or just out... standing... in your field), a expert in

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corporate sales, or investing in commodities, but you probably have someone else do your taxes, am I right? Why? There's too much to know! I have a brother named Tim who has a PHD on the widely understood topic of how swamp gases exchange in soil. His wife holds a Masters Degree in cucumber fungus. I didn't know you could study that! Sometimes when they talk I feel like a fungus! Back in the day, or so I deduce, there were general doctors. But now we go to one guy for our skin, and another doc for our heart, and someone else when the back goes out. Every time you spray your garden you're banking on the fact that some fellow in a lab somewhere knows something you don't. That an ounce of this chemical can keep away Japanese Beetles, and a drop of that one can kill an acre of vegetation. You probably don't know how or why? If you do, it's probably because that's your area of knowledge. You probably can't cook, and don't know how to run the washing machine. There's too much to know.

◆ I say all this just to accent what we mean when we acknowledge that God is all-knowing. Omniscience means that God knows what every lab-researcher is trying to find out. It means he knows CSI agent is digging for. He knows what every PHD thesis will struggle to prove –and he knew it already last year, and in 1776, and in 325, and 1000BC. Can you imagine? Doesn't that just take your breath away?

◆ **2. God's omniscience reveals his intense interest in me.** This is how the psalmist boils down this attribute of God. What does the first verse of Psalm 139 say? "God, you know me." Of all there is to know, God knows me.

◆ "You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar." Psalms 139:2, NIV.

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◆ Things as humdrum as when I get up, or when I cross my legs, God pays attention to. Jesus told us that God know even more. Check out Matthew 10:30!

◆ *“Not even a sparrow, worth only half a penny, can fall to the ground without your Father knowing it. And the very hairs on your head are all numbered. So don’t be afraid; you are more valuable to him than a whole flock of sparrows.”*
Matthew 10:29–31, NLT.

◆ Now granted: for some of us, knowing the number of hairs is not such a great feat, but for most of us it sure is! And what are “thoughts”? Surely they include your musings as you lie on the bed in early hours deciding to rise. Surely they include your deepest longings not even you fully understand. With God, you never have to look at the sideline to see if he’s watching you play. With God you never have to worry that he blinked at just the moment you did something worthwhile.

◆ “You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways.” Psalms 139:3, NIV.

◆ I love this word “discern”. The hebrew term, zarah, means to scatter, or fan out, spread out. Like a ship’s captain spreading out the maps on the table, or a card dealer inspecting the player’s full hand. God investigates and delineates like a loving parent. When you are buried in the mass of humanity walking the mall, or when you sit in endless bumper to bumper traffic, or when you are alone in a canoe on a distant lake shore, God’s gaze is present and connected. (recognize this gesture: two fingers toward another’s two eyes, then toward your own.)

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◆“Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O LORD.” Psalms 139:4, NIV.

◆Whereas you are able to lock others out of the real you by masking your thoughts or nuancing your words, or explaining things away – God knows exactly what’s behind your eyes.

◆**A.** Now on the one hand, God’s omniscience can be disconcerting. It can make your collar feel a little stifling. Perhaps you are involved in something that, while our TV shows make out to be reasonable and noble, God’s word articulates as unhealthy and off limits. At those times you may have hidden the truth from the rest of humanity, but there is no slipping by unnoticed by Heaven’s Maker. My friend, do not be anxious that he will find you out. He already has. God’s omniscience means I have no secrets. The fact that we believe we have gotten away with something without consequence in the grand scheme does not make that reality. Our lies and pretense and keeping up of the image are not pulling the wool over God’s eyes for a second. So what else does this attribute of God mean?

◆May I suggest that God’s all knowing should make my confession easier? Coming clean is not so fearful with the omniscient God. Drop the cover up. Admit the struggle, the ugly choices. Come back to God with the truth about your wrong and he will forgive and begin washing you clean!

◆*“If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” 1 John 1:8, 9, NIV.*

◆ This is one of the most astonishing and freeing truths of the scriptures: God already knows your sin, and instead of ending you, he consistently offers you the opportunity to repent, to be forgiven

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over and over, all through your life because God is in love with sinners. Although he has seen all your tapes, and knows all your time-logs, he still is intently desirous of renewing with you. People say they have a hard time thinking about their mistakes. People don't even want to call them sins. People rather call them orientations or predispositions. We do that to avoid feeling guilty or sinful, because doesn't God hate sinners? Aren't sinners going to hell? People think that God, for example, hates homosexuals. God does not hate homosexuals, (and neither should his people,) not any more than he hates greedy people. His word declares both to be sin. You see, the Bible tells us that God loves sinners.

◆ *"But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners. And since we have been made right in God's sight by the blood of Christ, he will certainly save us from God's judgment. For since we were restored to friendship with God by the death of his Son while we were still his enemies, we will certainly be delivered from eternal punishment by his life. So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God—all because of what our Lord Jesus Christ has done for us in making us friends of God." Romans 5:8-11, NLT.*

◆ That doesn't mean sin is OK. God hates sin because it ruins people whom he loves. *The proper response to our sinful wants is not coming out, but coming clean.* The coming out attitude says that there's nothing wrong with wanting to have lots more money. There's nothing wrong with stocking our homes with every trinket, and sharing very little with those in need. There's nothing wrong with wanting to be famous. There's nothing wrong with making it out with your peers as though you are a gem of humanity when in reality you've been

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acting like a rock. God's word says that yes there is something wrong with these things. Yes there is. But God does not hate us because of our sin. Listen, people do not go to hell because they are sinful (I know this sounds odd). People go to hell for refusing the forgiveness of their sin through Jesus' blood sacrificed on the cross.

◆ So while on the one hand omniscience of God can be disquieting, in reality it ought to be exhilarating. Think of it! The only thing the all-knowing God won't remember is the sin of repenting people!

◆ "I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more." Isaiah 43:25;

◆ "I will cleanse them from all the sin they have committed against me and will forgive all their sins of rebellion against me." Jeremiah 33:8, NIV.

◆ "You will again have compassion on us; you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea." Micah 7:19;

◆ "Therefore, my brothers, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you." Acts 13:38, NIV.

◆ "Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord," Acts 3:19, NIV.

◆ B. Let me tell you what he does remember.

◆ 1) Because of his omniscience, he remembers all my needs.

Because God is all-knowing, he is intensely concerned about your life. He sends the rains on purpose. He spares us from disasters with planning. In spite of all he knows about our insides, he has the compassion of a good father. He delights to bring goodness into your life. (We'll study this in more depth later in the series, but if you want to look ahead, read Psalm 145).

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◆2) Because of his omniscience, God remembers all my scars. I

think this is important because most of us carry our scars hidden deep within, out of sight of others and even ourselves. Few are courageous enough to deal with them well because of the pain.

Things like a childhood memory, abuse, a friend who turned on you, a tragic loss, a failure. You've never spoken of it to anyone but the very thought clogs your throat. God is not unaware of where you hurt, and he does want to speak into those places if you will bring them to him.

◆There was an ancient practice that when a warrior was leaving, he would buy his wife a little bottle. When the wife was missing her husband, she would catch the water of her tears in that bottle and give them to her husband when he came home as if to say, "See, I really was missing you while you were away. My heart really is attached to you."

◆*"You keep track of all my sorrows. You have collected all my tears in your bottle. You have recorded each one in your book." Psalms 56:8, NLT.*

◆This is part of what it means that God is all-knowing. It is the picture of someone who wants to know, like a father or a mother with a crying child on his lap. Their kiss on our sour does not make the sour immediately disappear, but it does so fill the soul of the child that she can go on, and bear the pain in the atmosphere of love.

◆3) Here's something else God knows: he knows all your goodnesses, your acts of kindness, and will not let them pass without response! Now sometimes, maybe oftentimes you get

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discouraged. You've reached out. You've given. You've gone without without mentioning it. You've achieved and got it done. But in all this no one seems to have noticed or appreciated you. Nobody says anything. Others just compete with you all the more. And it crushes your spirit. You don't feel like contributing, or even playing hard, or trying. Allow me to let you in on a secret: no good deed goes unrewarded by God. I can't tell you when, and I can't tell you how, but I can tell you that.

◆ "Give your gifts in secret, and your Father, who knows all secrets, will reward you." Matthew 6:4, NLT.

◆ "And if you give even a cup of cold water to one of the least of my followers, you will surely be rewarded." Matthew 10:42, NLT.

◆ *"But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."* Luke 14:13, 14, NIV.

◆ God celebrates all that is good. Be careful with this. What is really good conforms to what God says is good, not to our flippant opinion. But you can be assured that God keeps track and delights in every place that you followed his good law. Every time you stifled gossip. Every time you held back on temptation. Every time you helped someone who was unkind to you. Every time you let others go first. —all these are known by Almighty God, and they are treasure in heaven.

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◆4) God knows what is best for us. He knows what is truly good.

◆*“This is what the LORD says—your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: “I am the LORD your God, who teaches you what is best for you, who directs you in the way you should go. If only you had paid attention to my commands, your peace would have been like a river, your righteousness like the waves of the sea.” Isaiah 48:17, 18, NIV.*

◆*“Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.” Joshua 1:8, NIV.*

◆God knows what to do. He knows what works. He knows the way through. He knows the solution. What is more, he wants to share it with you! Lets pay attention! It is in our best interest to agree with God!

◆**Conclusion:** “There is certainly great cause for humility in the thought that He sees all the twisted things about me that my fellow men do not see (and I’m glad), and that he sees more corruption in me than that which I see in my self (which, in all conscience, is enough). There is, however, equally great incentive to worship and love God in the thought that, for some unfathomable reason, He wants me as His friend, and desires to be my friend, and has given His Son to die for me in order to realize this purpose.” J. I. Packer (Knowing God)

◆And you know what? Everything hinges on what the coach knows, or thinks about us. If God knows all about me and loves so lavishly anyway as to care about all my details, how could I do anything but love him back

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and say with David, “Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain.”? Psalms 139:6, NIV.