

# A Meditation on Psalm 139

Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten in God's sight. But even the hairs of your head are all counted. Do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows.

—Luke 12:6–7

**There is a theory that states that the further we push back into an understanding of our past, the more sense will be made of our present.**

Our whole life narrative has given shape to the frustrations and joys and disappointments of the present. So, wise living behooves us to consider the moments of foreshadowing, the moments of formation found earlier in the story—moments of neglect and kindness, memories of rejection and forgiveness, images of demand and acceptance. This theory goes on to suggest that, even though we may ignore our past, our past will not ignore us. Rather, while we stay on the surface of our lives, the undercurrents of our stories—those deeper themes forged early in our narratives—will relentlessly work themselves out on the surface of our lives. Consequently, if we want to make greater sense and meaning out of our lives, then we should pay attention to the whole of our lives.

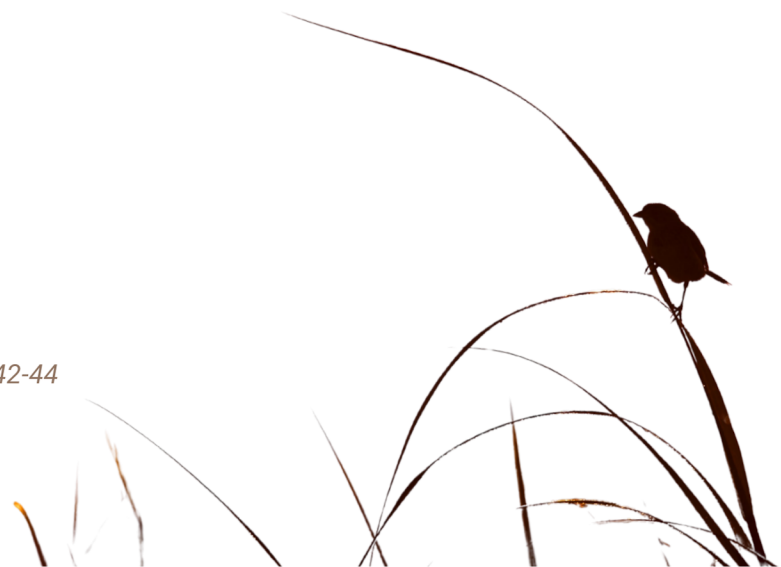
There is much to be said in favor of this theory. Much of our past can help make sense of our present.

***Pause here and read through Psalm 139.***

As we meditate on Psalm 139 though, we must wonder whether we go far enough back in “our past” to make sense of our present. Prior to anyone loving us or neglecting us or forgetting us or adoring us or yelling at us in our childhood, God *thought of us* and *gave shape to us* and *laid his hand on us*, according to the psalmist. Perhaps in all this depth psychology we need to go deeper still.

**Deeper still God’s Spirit is there.**

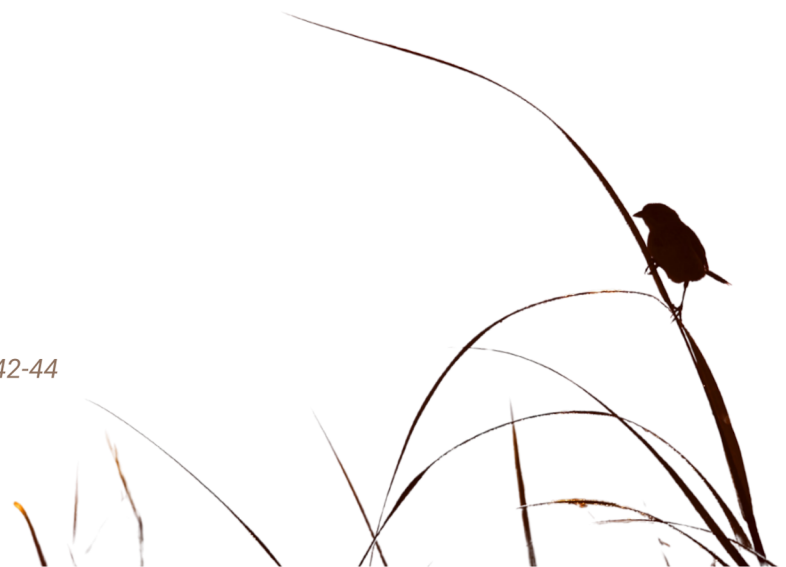
**Deeper still God’s Spirit was there.**



**In Psalm 139, David's conversation with God captures a Person who is beyond anyone or anything he can imagine.** He is confronted with a Person who is all-knowing (vv. 1–6), who is all-present (vv. 7–12), and who is the source of his personhood (vv.13–18). This Person's knowledge and presence are neither impersonal nor mechanical. David addresses God personally and God addresses him personally. God's thoughts of David are not general thoughts. They are particular thoughts, unique to David, and he is astonished by it. David cries out, *"Such knowledge is too wonderful for me/ it is so high that I cannot attain it"* (v. 6). And again, *"How weighty to me are your thoughts, O God!/ How vast is the sum of them!/ I try to count them—they are more than the sand;/ I come to the end—I am still with you"* (vv. 17–18).

Do we recognize that this is the sort of Person with whom we are acquainted? Or, at the very least, that this Person is thoroughly acquainted with us? **We have been shaped and formed by a Person who knows us and loves us, infinitely and particularly;** his knowledge and love in our lives patiently and relentlessly confront the themes in our stories (the way we imagine the world to be), and thereby, we begin to see and be in the world differently.

One sometimes wonders whether growing up in Christ is simply a matter of letting this knowledge sink in. God knew us first. God loved us first. We make sense of our lives only in response to him. Here is where our prayers begin and end: in response. We respond to a personal God who knows us realistically, particularly, and lovingly.



There is no need to pretend or posture. There is no need to always put our best foot forward. We are only fooling ourselves in such cases.

**Thankfully God relates to us as he is, not as we perceive him to be.** And such relating confronts all our false perceptions of him as a Person, as well as our misperceptions of us as persons.

David's response in the psalm (vv. 23–24) was to open himself up to such a knowing and loving Person.

Search me, O God, and know my heart;  
test me and know my thoughts.  
See if there is any wicked way in me,  
and lead me in the everlasting way.

**Ultimately, our own stories, our own lives—those things which we hold onto most tightly—must be entrusted to the One who has known us and loved us before anyone adored us or forgot us or celebrated us or mistreated us or missed us.** What an awesome and wonderful thought! Thank you, Lord.

*Search us, O God ... deeper still ... and lead us....*

### **Writing A Prayer**

- As you continue to reflect on Psalm 139, spend some time considering what this reflection has stirred in your mind and heart.
- Allow Psalm 139 to guide your thoughts. Convert your thoughts and feelings into a written prayer.

