

I PRAISE YOU BECAUSE I AM *fearfully & wonderfully made*

CHANGING  HEARTS

Opening Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, thank You for creating us and calling us Your own. Thank You for giving us opportunities to study Your Word. Help us see others through Your eyes and love others through Your heart. Your Son Jesus showed us how to use our gifts and talents to serve others and praise You. Help us recognize these gifts in ourselves and use them to Your glory. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Read Psalm 139 (Pay particular attention to verses 13-16.)

- What does God reveal about Himself in this psalm?
- What does God reveal about His power? His character? His love?
- What does Psalm 139 teach us about human life, especially compared to the rest of creation?
- What does the phrase "fearfully and wonderfully made" say about you?
- What evidence would you use to support your answer?

Upholding Christianity's teachings about God and creation is becoming more difficult with the passing of each generation. Evolutionary theories and their pseudo-science are taught as fact, diminishing the value and purpose of each human life.

- Have you ever found yourself in a discussion about creation? What happened?
- Do you have Bible verses or other facts you turn to when supporting creation?

Today's reproductive sciences leave no doubt that, as the psalmist tells us, life begins at conception. In spite of this evidence, the life of an unborn child can be terminated with abandon. This practice reaches alarming percentages if the child is thought to have Down syndrome. Statistics show the termination rate: Denmark 98%, United Kingdom 90%, United States 85%, France 77%, and Iceland claims to have "eradicated it!" (cruxnow.com-Rome conference fears Down syndrome may be in final generation, October 21, 2017)

Reread Psalm 139:13-16

- Think about the evidence you cited earlier that supported "fearfully and wonderfully made." Did you rely on descriptions of how the human body works? For example, the intricacies of the eye and vision, or the circulatory system, or the operations of the human brain?
- Yes, these are all certainly wonderful! But what if these wonders are not present in a person? Are they not also fearfully and wonderfully made by our Creator?

There are no qualifiers or exclusions in this psalm. Every human conceived can claim this truth; every human conceived is valuable. No one should be considered disposable.

Before we move to our next Bible passage, discuss the situation below. Perhaps some of you have real-world experience with this scenario.

- How would you respond after hearing a friend/neighbor/relative's child was born with a disability?¹

Read Ecclesiastes 3:8-15

- What does this passage add to the psalm we read earlier?
- Today, success and meaning are largely attributed to personal abilities and hard work; would Solomon agree or disagree?
- What is God's gift to humanity?
- What limitation(s) are implied in this passage?

Psalm 139 tells us God was the force and architect of our personal creation. He actively knit us together. God knows exactly where we are and what we are saying and doing at any time in our lives; He is our guide and protector. Yet God is more than the Giver of Life; He also gives purpose.

- What do you see as your God-given purpose?

As human beings, each of us is limited. None of us is able to understand everything about God. In fact, we can only fathom those things God has revealed to us in nature, His Word, and in His Son, Jesus. However, our limitations go well beyond spiritual understanding. We all possess different physical, intellectual, and emotional traits; each of us is gifted in our unique way. Abilities are God's gift to us! They are a benefit to us and to others, and are certainly not intended to be used to gauge the value of life.

- What abilities have you been given that can help advance God's Kingdom?
- Are there abilities of others, maybe even in this room, that are different from yours but have been given to them to help advance God's Kingdom?

If technology is available, consider watching the following videos found on YouTube:

- Wonderfully Made// HerStory: Lizzie Velasquez (6:11)
- Psalm 139 Reflectors Reading (2:06)

¹Bethesda Lutheran Communities offers a publication entitled "Welcoming a Child with Disabilities into Your Family" that is an excellent resource. Available at cph.org