

Search Me, O God

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Rick Carlson

I) Psalm 139

II) Introduction

A) *Mother-in-law's fear of the doctor*

- 1) My mother-in-law spent most of her life avoiding going to the doctor. I don't know if it was because she was too busy or was simply afraid of potential bad news. Either way, decades would pass where she would not see a doctor.
- 2) I am convinced that her fear of examination not only elevated her anxiety far beyond normal but made her go through needless physical and emotional suffering for treatable maladies.
- 3) Listen to David the Psalmist pray this Prayer of Examen. You can almost see him sitting on the examination table of the Great Physician.

B) *Read Psalm 139*

III) Psalm 139

A) *David's prayer*

- 1) The Hebrew word for "search me" means to bore into or drill deep to find the truth. So he invites God to drill deeply into our conscience to search together for anything that is out of line with God's will and purpose for his life.
- 2) David feels the pangs of sin and disobedience in his soul and knows that this divine appointment with God is the only way to get to the root of the problem.

B) *David's exam*

- 1) Psalm 139 is David's Prayer of Examen.
- 2) **1. God knows you. (1-6)**
 - (a) *God's knowledge of you is so expansive, yet so intimate that even your most mundane activities and benign thoughts are known by him. For David, this level of knowledge is not an invasion of privacy. Rather, it is comforting. It inspires trust that God will not only do a thorough examination but his findings, diagnosis, and remedies are for your best.*
 - (b) *God knows you intimately. Even though it may be scary for you to submit to the examination of God, you can trust him, because he is good.*

3) 2. God protects you on all sides. (7-10)

- (a) *God knows you are vulnerable physically, emotionally and spiritually. You may be afraid that his exam will breach your thin skin and bring up old memories, old enemies or failures.*
- (b) *In his prayer, David envisions God's protection completely encircling him. You may even see your enemies or the things that scare you the most but they cannot reach you because God himself stands between you and all threats to your mortal soul. God protects you on all sides.*

4) 3. God reveals what is good and evil. (11-12)

- (a) *Pain is the body's way of signaling that something is wrong. A person who does not feel pain is in extreme danger. God allows us to feel pain so that we might identify the source of our diseases and disfunction.*
- (b) *Like a doctor who carefully scans an xray looking for abnormalities between light and dark, God reveals the difference between right and wrong, good and evil that are within us. Without a distinction between them a diagnosis would be impossible.*

5) 4. God sees you from the inside out. (13-18)

- (a) *In the middle of his exam, David marvels at the miracle of life - its mysteries, complexities, and wonder.*
- (b) *Once again, be aware that the One doing the exam is also the creator. There is no one more qualified or careful to look deeply into your life. God's thoughts for you are uncountable.*
- (c) **You may not understand his ways but you can trust his heart.**

6) 5. God diagnosis your deepest needs. (19-22)

- (a) *Something remarkable happens in David's exam. All of the sudden he breaks into a rant about his enemies. It seems completely out of place with the beautiful poetry of Psalm 139 until we recognize that God has revealed something in David that needs to be diagnosed and healed.*
- (b) *In your Prayer of examen, be aware that attitudes, motives, thoughts and actions will surface that God intends to deal with. Things that were once hidden must be revealed for there to be a diagnosis and remedy.*

7) 6. God heals you for eternity. (23-24)

- (a) *David began his prayer of examen by saying in past tense, "You have searched me and know me." Now he ends the prayer by saying in present tense, "Search me, O God and know my heart." David welcomes God's continual exam because it is good, always good.*
- (b) *The healing of God is not just for our limited time on earth, it is for eternity which is God's way everlasting.*

c) Self-examination

- 1) Unfortunately, many of us would rather do a self examination of our conscience rather than invite God to come along with us. In his book called, Prayer, David Foster says,

- (a) *To begin with, if we are the lone examiners of our heart, a thousand justifications will arise to declare our innocence. We will “call evil good and good evil,” as Isaiah says. But since God is with us in the search, we are listening more than we are defending. Our petty rationalizations and evasions of responsibility simply will not tolerate the light of his presence. He will show us what we need to see when we need to see it.*
- 2) God will use Prayers of Examen to reveal stuff about ourselves that he wants to deal with. Like a good doctor, sometimes he will be very aggressive and impress upon us immediate actions that we need to take. Other times he will just make us aware that there’s a problem.
- (a) *Again Foster says, “If the examination is solely a self-examination, we will always end up with excessive praise or blame. But under the search light of the Great Physician we can expect only good, always.*

IV) Conclusion

A) Invitation to prayer

- 1) I invite you to pray a Prayer of Examen. We will seek the presence of God to drill into the deepest places of our hearts and minds.
- 2) The ushers are going to pass out a prayer. I encourage you to read along silently as I read for you. I hope that you will keep this card as a guide for you along the way when God prompts you to meet him for an examination.
- 3) Be intentionally vulnerable with God as we go to prayer. Partner with him to search your heart, mind and soul. Pay attention to the areas of your life that he reveals as concerns and issues that need to be dealt with. Be aware of thoughts, attitudes and emotions that come up and especially those that cause you pain. They are all part of the exam. You may not understand God’s ways but you can trust his heart.
- 4) Let’s go to prayer.

v) Prayer of Examen