



# Known and Loved

January 18 • 2009

## Focus Scripture Psalm 139:1–6, 13–18

### Additional Scriptures

1 Samuel 3:1–10, (11–20)

1 Corinthians 6:12–20

John 1:43–51

God, our loving Creator, no matter how far we flee from you, you are always with us. You have known us from the beginning. You will be with us until the end. Teach us to love each other as you have loved us. Amen.

The psalm tells us that God knows us intimately, even from before our birth. God also knew Samuel, calling him to be a prophet in Israel. Jesus recognized in Nathanael a person of integrity and promise. Paul reminds the Corinthians that they are to respect each other as persons created by God. God knows and cares for each of us.

### Focus Scripture: Psalm 139:1–6, 13–18

One of the joys of being in a close relationship is knowing the other person well, and being known by her or him. In a good relationship, there is no need to pretend. The other person is aware of faults – knows when one dislikes conversation first thing in the morning or has trouble being on time for appointments. The other person knows these things and, because of the strength of the relationship, loves in spite of them.

Psalm 139 is a well-known treasure. It is a poetic meditation on God’s intimate presence with humankind. God knows us through and through – knows our actions, our thoughts, our questions. Indeed, the psalmist says, before we even say a word, God knows what we are going to say. God knows us from before our birth. Our bodies are wonderfully made by God, “knit together” in the womb. The psalm is full of images of an active God who searches, who forms and makes, who is deeply involved in human lives. Creation is an amazing mystery, and the psalmist praises God who made us and all things.

Sometimes people hear the verses about God’s “wonderful” and complete knowledge as threatening. Does the image of a God who “hems us in” speak of protection or prohibition? Does God really know everything we are going to say and do before it happens? Are our days actually numbered? If God knows all things in advance, is there any free will for human beings?

It’s all a mystery, the psalmist says. God’s thoughts are too weighty for us to grasp. What we do know is that God is good and wants what is best for us. God knows our faults and our gifts, and continues to love and care for us. This frees us to proclaim the good news of God’s goodness and loving care that protect and surround us. We praise God, though we do not understand everything about God.

This affirmation that God knows and loves each person forms the background to the other readings. In **1 Samuel 3:1–10, (11–20)**, we read the story of the boy Samuel, dedicated as a young child to serve in the temple. God knows Samuel, and calls him to prophesy – to speak God’s word. At first Samuel does not know who is calling. Eli knows Samuel and God’s ways, and helps Samuel discern the call. Samuel is able to deliver a painful message to Eli because God’s presence is with him.

In **John 1:43–51**, Jesus calls Philip and Nathanael as disciples. Even before Jesus meets Nathanael, he knows and understands him. Nathanael recognizes Jesus as the Messiah, and Jesus promises that Nathanael and all people will know and understand God’s vision for the world.

God seeks out and knows the faith community, as well as individuals. The Christians in Corinth experienced considerable conflict in their community life. Paul’s letter addresses a number of concerns. In **1 Corinthians 6:12–20**, Paul speaks with them about sexual relationships. As Psalm 139 notes, our bodies are God’s gift to be treated with reverence. As church, we are called to conduct ourselves as those known and loved by God.



Each of the texts tells of individuals and communities known and loved by God. We respond to this intimate relationship with praise. We heed God’s call, and act in ways that respect each person as one created and loved by God. How does an awareness of being known by God bring you comfort? In what ways is it disturbing? As you and your church grow in understanding all people as known and loved by God, how might your actions change?

If you have Internet access, visit [www.spiritseasons.com](http://www.spiritseasons.com) to access *Spirit Sightings* for connections between current events and the focus passage.

