



## **Stories on the Way: Lesson Plans for Small Sunday Schools**

### **Psalm 139 (verse 1-18)**

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with sponsorship from  
The Anglican Diocese of Montreal and  
St. Barnabas Anglican Church, St. Lambert, Quebec

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## **Psalm 139:1-18**

O Lord, you have searched inside my heart. You know me completely.  
You know when I sit down to rest and when I get up;

You see my thoughts even from heaven.  
You see where I go and when I lie down; you know everything I do.

You know my words before I speak them.  
You are always with me – behind me and in front of me, you lay your hand upon me.

I cannot understand how this wonderful thing can be true!  
Is there anyplace I can go where your spirit will not be? Is there any place you cannot see?

If I go all the way up into the sky, you are there.  
If I dig a hole to the centre of the earth, you are there.

If I follow the sun and settle far across the sea,  
even there your hand will lead me and protect me.

If I hide in the dark, waiting until the day has become the night,  
you will see me because the night is as bright as the day for you.

For it was you who made me; you put me together in my mother's womb.  
I praise you, for I am wonderfully made. I know how wonderful your works are.

My body was not hidden from you while I was being made in secret.  
You saw me before I was shaped;  
you saw the days in which I would live before they were formed.

Your thoughts are greater than I can imagine, O God. There are so many of them!  
I try to count them but you have more thoughts than there are grains of sand.  
When I come to the end – you are still with me.

## **You Know Me (Psalm 139 Lesson 1)**

Paraphrasing the psalm was very difficult and I am not at all confident that I succeeded. You may want to have a look at some of the other versions out there, such as The Message (which you can find on [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com)). You may also want to use whatever translation is commonly used in your church, although you may find yourself needing to explain much of the figurative language. I would be interested in hearing what you decided to do and how it worked out.

Things to know about this lesson:

- You need to have hearts cut out of red construction paper for the Regrouping (although you would probably have time to make them while the students worked on their activity).
- If your mural paper is not big enough to trace whole bodies, just trace students from the waist or chest up.

### **Materials**

- mural paper in pieces large enough to trace students' bodies (or at least from the waist up)
- pencils
- crayons/markers/pencil crayons
- hearts cut out of red construction paper
- glue

### **Open with prayer.**

### **Introduce the Story**

Today's story is actually a poem. What do you know about poems? (they rhyme, they have rhythm, they're pretty...)

Do you know any poems?

This poem is called a psalm and it comes from the Book of Psalms in the Bible. The psalms are very very old songs and poems that the Israelites used to use when they talked about or prayed to God. The psalms are still used by Jewish people and by Christians today.

Different languages make poetry in different ways. The psalms were written in the Hebrew language and we translated them into English. That means that they don't sound quite like the poems you might be familiar with. They don't rhyme and the rhythm is a little different. But they are still beautiful and full of interesting ideas and

images. Listen to the psalm and tell me which image or idea you notice.

## **Read the Story (see page 1)**

### **Discussion**

Which idea or image did you notice the most? (let the students share their thoughts briefly)

I would like to talk about the idea that God knows us completely – God knows what's in our hearts.

Who do you think knows you best?

Who do you know really well?

God knows us even better than that! What do you think that means? (God knows our secrets; God knows how we feel about things; what we're scared of; what we hope for)

The person who wrote the psalm says that God knows us because God made us. He also says that God's works are wonderful – that means that we are wonderful! How does that make you feel?

### **Introduce the Activity**

We are going to make self-portraits. Does anyone know what a self-portrait is? (a drawing you make of yourself)

These portraits are a celebration of how wonderfully made we are – a thank you to God for loving us so much and knowing us so well.

### **Self-Portraits**

Distribute mural paper and pencils. Pair students off and help them trace one another.

Distribute crayons/markers/pencil crayons. Invite students to colour their tracings to look like themselves.

### **Regrouping**

Admire everyone's self-portrait.

But one thing is missing. These are supposed to be portraits of the people God knows completely – we need to show our hearts.

Distribute paper hearts and invite students to glue them onto their self-portraits.

### **Closing Prayer**

Dear God, you know us completely. Help us to live like the wonderful and beloved people you made us to be. Amen.

## **You Are There (Psalm 139 Lesson 2)**

The scavenger hunt activity in this lesson is intended to be played outside but could also be used indoors if weather or facilities require it. The best part about it is that it does NOT require you to go hide anything in advance NOR does it require kids to collect little piles of stuff. All it requires is a little imagination. Have fun!

### **Materials**

- List of scavenger hunt items (see page 6)
- paper and pencils (optional)

### **Open with prayer.**

### **Introduce the Story**

Recap what a psalm is:

Today's story is a poem called a psalm and it comes from the Book of Psalms in the Bible. The psalms are very very old songs and poems that the Israelites used to use when they talked about or prayed to God. The psalms are still used by Jewish people and by Christians today.

Different languages make poetry in different ways. The psalms were written in the Hebrew language and we translated them into English. That means that they don't sound quite like the poems you might be familiar with. They don't rhyme and the rhythm is a little different. But they are still beautiful and full of interesting ideas and images.

Today, I want you to notice the different places the writer describes.

### **Read the Story (see page 1)**

### **Discussion**

What are some of the places the writer describes? (in the heavens, in the earth, across the sea, in the dark)

What is the same about all those places? (God is there)

What point do you think the writer is trying to make? (God is everywhere)

What does the writer say God is doing for us in all those places? (protecting us, being with us)

How does that make you feel?

## **Introduce the Activity**

We're going to go outside today and have a special kind of scavenger hunt. Instead of looking for things, we're going to look for places. And we already know who we will find in all those places don't we?...God!

## **Scavenger Hunt**

Depending on the size and age distribution of your class, you can break into groups, work together, or do the hunting individually. You can distribute copies of the place list to those who can read or you can simply call out places as the hunt progresses.

Students can either write down the places they identify or people can name them aloud as it goes along. It's not enough to just think of places, though. Students have to actually find examples.

## **Regrouping**

Gather everyone into a circle.

Which place was the hardest to find? Why?

Which one did you like finding the most? Why?

Let's take a moment to look around and think about the fact that God is here with us, right now. (Silence)

## **Closing Prayer**

Dear God, thank you for your presence. Help us to always be aware that you are near and we are not alone. Amen.

## **God is There Scavenger Hunt**

### **Place List**

- Lowest place
- Driest place
- Brightest place
- Noisiest place
- Smelliest place
- Most narrow place
- Best place for a dog
- Most fun place
- Safest place
- Silliest place
- Highest place
- Wettest place
- Darkest place
- Quietest place
- Cleanest place
- Most open place
- Best place for a cat
- Most boring place
- Most dangerous place
- Best place for thinking

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