ISURRENDER



study number six



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I SURRENDER



A Study of Psalm 139:23-24

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

Lesson One - Search Me

Lesson Two - Test Me

Lesson Three - See Me

Lesson Four - Lead Me

Note: Bible references are from the New International Version (NIV), unless otherwise noted.



Search Me

Search me, O God, and know my heart (Psalm 139:23a).

Fifteen years ago, I visited Mammoth Cave National Park in Kentucky. Being an adventurous person, a cave excursion was a must. On the appointed day, the tour guide gathered our group, counted heads, and our adventure was underway. He carefully led us 250 feet below the earth's surface down steep steps through narrow crevices. Pretty creepy!

When we reached the bottom of the cave, our legs shook from exertion. We found ourselves in a large, cavernous space lit by electricity. Once the tour guide ensured that we had all descended safely, he asked us to sit on some of the rocks and be still. After issuing the proper warning, he turned off the lights.

Few words adequately describe the absolute blackness that engulfed us. The thick, oppressive darkness felt as if it was pressing in on me. Even knowing I was safe and surrounded by people, I felt completely lost and alone. When our eyes adjusted to the blackness after a couple of minutes, the tour guide struck a solitary match.

The effect was astonishing. We could clearly see every person in our group and the cave walls and ceiling. That small light completely expelled the cavernous darkness.

That experience illustrated better than words where the blackness of sin would have taken mankind had Jesus not freely offered His light in the place of our darkness.

The darkness of sin is ugly, engulfing, oppressive and hopeless. Do we really want our holy God searching and finding that in us? You bet we do! Only when God shines His light into that darkness, do we have any hope of recognizing, overcoming and expelling it through His power.

Take a moment to write out Psalm 139:23-24

Now read these verses aloud. These verses are our memory verses for this study. I encourage you to write them on index cards and place them in various locations where you spend the most time.

In this first lesson, we are studying Psalm 139:23a, which states: Search me, O God, and know my heart. The Hebrew word for **search** in this verse is $h\bar{a}qar$, refers to, explore; probe; to be determined. Our God is determined about us! He determines to free us from the oppressive caves of darkness to live abundantly in the refining fire of His truth.

Psalm 26:2	
Proverbs 17:3	
Jeremiah 17:10	
Romans 8:27	
Did you notice one constant in these passages? God will	our hearts.
Whether we want to participate or not, whether we agree to it or not, to or permission to search the created . He possesses full authority to conduct painstaking investigations.	
As Christians, embracing and learning from such holy scrutiny, progrowth and maturity. As we read in Psalm 139, David embraced and faced Go tion.	, , ,
What does Psalm 139:1 tell us?	
There is an important distinction between verses 1 and 23. In verse 1	
searched him. In verse 23, David invites God to continue to do so. This man or recesses of his own heart. As we say in Texas, David wanted to fess-up .	·
	of courage determined to explore the
recesses of his own heart. As we say in Texas, David wanted to fess-up . In Biblical language, the heart is the center of the human spirit, from	of courage determined to explore the n which springs emotions, thoughts, arts.
recesses of his own heart. As we say in Texas, David wanted to fess-up . In Biblical language, the heart is the center of the human spirit, from motivations, courage and actions. We know the hope of God through our hea Read Ephesians 1:18 and 2 Corinthians 4:6. What two specific truths	of courage determined to explore the n which springs emotions, thoughts, arts.

Since God knows us because He searches our hearts, how do we come to know God? *Through His Word*. Martin Luther provides this insight:

"When [believers] hear the Word, God impresses it on their hearts. Then they are able to believe they are hearing the Father's Word when they hear Christ speaking. We should always keep Christ before our eyes. You must devote yourself to the Word of Christ and train yourself to hold on to it so that you never lose sight of Jesus."

Spending time studying God's Word is crucial.

What does Psalm 119:11 instruct us to do?
Hiding God's Word in our hearts provides a much-needed avenue to draw close to God who knows and loves us so thoroughly. In studying Scripture, interpretive insights abound when I research verses in various versions of the Bible.
In researching Psalm 139:23a, I was surprised to discover that eight versions used the exact same words. That rare occurrence clarified without question our assignment to ask God to search our hearts on a regular basis.
Once again, take a moment to write out Psalm 139:23-24

David, a diligent self searcher, was also open and willing to be searched by God. He understood the vital difference between searching himself against his own knowledge (darkness) versus being searched by God's refining fire. He acknowledged and took refuge in the fact that God's sight is infinitely clearer than his own.

May we receive and believe by faith that wonderful truth, as well.

When was the last time that you willingly asked God to search your heart? Pause here and ask God to do just that.

Closing prayer:

♣ Father, You search me and You know me – I rejoice and take refuge in that truth. There are days when Your search is very uncomfortable, but I thank You for Your divine eyesight. I pray that You continue to strike Your holy match into the dark recesses of my heart. Give me the strength and determination to search my heart this week, Father. Guide me in setting aside time to study Your Word daily and the diligence to hide it in my heart. In Jesus' name. Amen. ♣

Lesson Zwo

Test Me

Test me and know my anxious thoughts (Psalm 139:23b).

Blind panic. That's the only way to describe it.

Take a moment to write out Psalm 139:23-24:

It was finals week and I anxiously waited outside my Biology classroom to take a comprehensive, handson, semester-encompassing final. Awaiting my arrival in the classroom were only four things: a dissected cat reeking of formaldehyde (and smelling to high heaven, I might add), a microscope, one chair, and the teacher.

I had not studied well. My blind panic wasn't improving memory function either. I was scraping a C in the class and this final did not inspire any hope of improving it. In fact, failing the entire semester all together seemed a very real possibility.

I was in over my head. If my semester grade dropped below a C, I would not be able to continue marching in the band (which I loved) and I would not be allowed to travel with the band to Disneyworld on the upcoming spring trip.

In my young mind, the ramifications of failing were **epic**. I arrived at test day ill prepared. The moment of truth was at hand. Thoughts such as, "Why didn't I prepare better?" and "What was I thinking?" reverberated in my head.

Been there? King David had. Not in a school classroom, but in the classroom of life. God's test of David's faithfulness to Him had arrived. On a lazy afternoon when King David should have been on the road with the Israelite army, he stayed behind. In his idle time, he looked down from his palace rooftop and saw a beautiful woman take a bath (2 Samuel 11).

The moment of truth was at hand. David was in over his head. Only after adultery, murder and epic failure did David ask himself, "What was I thinking?"

Satan's temptation for David to fall into sin had prevailed. David would now have to face the consequences of falling into temptation.

In this lesson, we turn our attention to Psalm 139:23b, which states: *test me and know my anxious thoughts*. When we recall David's struggles and tests along with those in our own lives, it is only natural to ask, why does God test us?

Martin Luther provides this insight:

"It is important for believers to be tested by trials. Without these tests, their faith would grow cold and weak. It could eventually disappear completely. But if they are tested with hardships, believers will discover what faith is and will be strengthened in their knowledge of Christ."

Throughout Scripture, we observe God testing His children. Take some time to read about these memorable tests:

- 1) God asks Abraham to sacrifice his only son. (Genesis 22:1-24)
- 2) Moses and the Israelites wait each day for fresh manna. (Exodus 16)
- 3) Job caught in the middle of a war in the spiritual realm. (Job 1:1-22)

Did you notice an important variable? God rarely lets His children know that the test clock has started. What does that tell us? God's tests cause us to realize how much we still need to learn.

Just as in a classroom, God's examination of a believer's heart is not for the Teacher, but for the student. It brings to light the hidden agendas, thoughts and motives of our hearts. Only when God reveals to us the test results are we able to knowingly and quickly lay those results before the Lord to gain His instruction and refinement.

The King James Version records Psalm 139:23b as **try** us, rather than the NIV **test** us. The Hebrew word for **try** is translated as *bachan*, which refers to examine; scrutinize.

Think about that for a moment. The same God who spoke into being the heavens, breathed life into Adam, parted the Red Sea, and created every living creature loves us so much that He **spends time scrutinizing us individually**. That absolutely blows my mind, much like it did Paul's when he wrote to the Ephesians about grasping how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ (Ephesians 3:18).

Scripture clearly points to three reasons (among others) which will help us answer, "Why does God test us?"

1)	So that our	may be proved	(Peter 1:7).
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Proving our faith genuine is not only for God's knowledge and benefit, but our own. Many times throughout Jesus' ministry on earth, He often reminded those whom He was healing that it was accomplished according to their faith (Matthew 9:22, 28-29).

When we experience times of trial, our steadfast faith in God's promises and His ability to see us through to the other side is key.

God also tests us to keep us moving toward Him in faith. When our lives take a direction away from God, He oftentimes allows affliction to guide us back to the right path. *Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I obey your word* (Psalm 119:67). - (see also Jonah 2:2).

2) **To _____ us** (Jeremiah 9:7, Zechariah 13:9, Malachi 3:2-3).

God tests His children so that He can refine us. These tests of faith are often blessings in disguise. Remember Job? I believe we can all agree that he went through some pretty vigorous testing by God. But Job's faith, even in the midst of those trials, was proved genuine: *But he knows the way I take; when he has tested me, I will come forth as gold (*Job 23:10).

Even through the flames of God's refining fire, Job's faith held him steadfast when those he held closest had abandoned and ridiculed him. And God blessed him tremendously. Being open to learn from and even look forward to God's refining fire takes faith, determination, and prayer.

Look up and write out:

Psalm 66:10_	_
Isaiah 48:10_	
Malachi 3:3_	_
1 Peter 4:12_	

3) To know what is in ______. (Deuteronomy 8:2, 2 Chronicles 32:31)

As we studied in unit one, God searches our hearts. Embracing God's heart-searches, learning from what He brings to light, and allowing God's continued, ongoing access are vital steps to spiritual growth and maturity.

When we are undergoing God's testing, we have a tendency to feel vulnerable and get anxious. There are times when things just aren't clicking but the reason isn't clear. God tells us, *Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God* (Philippians 4:6).

But what about when we're so anxious that we don't know what to pray? We rely on God's promise in Romans 8:26: *In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.*

What provision! God has provided us with the ultimate Study Guides—the Holy Spirit and His Word, which together will get us successfully through any test.

(Once again, take a moment to write out Psalm 139:23-24
has a spe	Even though God's testing may seem prolonged at times, maintaining a strong faith and trusting that God ecific purpose in mind (whether revealed to us or not) strengthens us through the toughest times. It helps the course and bless us abundantly when all is said and done.
	Having abiding faith that God meticulously and lovingly tests us for specific reasons leaves the test's aneet where it belongs—in the divine hands of our Refiner.
Ι	Is there a specific area in your life now where you believe God is testing you?
I	How will you respond to it?

Closing prayer:

Father, thank You for loving me enough to test me. Even though I may not always understand, I have an abundant and abiding faith that they fulfill Your intentional refinement of my heart. I pray that You keep putting me in over my head so that I continue to strain toward, lean upon and rely on You for my every need. Father, I am so humbled by Your lavish love. I count it my highest privilege to serve and worship You, my Refiner. In Jesus' name. Amen. The



See Me

See if there is any offensive way in me (Psalm 139:24a).

Music has the inherent ability to communicate in powerful ways that which is lost in the spoken or written word. Throughout the generations, God's inspired melody lines, harmonies, and beautiful lyrics have moved us to great joy and even tears.

Raised in a very musical family, music is my soul's language. Dad played the stand up bass and Mom loved to sing. Between my three sisters and me, two of us play flute and two play clarinet. Music has always been an important part of my life. Serving on the worship team and in the music ministry at my home congregation feels like home. Joy!

But the orchestration that God intended for beauty and praise, our worldly culture has tarnished and blackened with offensive lyrics and lewd behavior. However, countless artists still seek to praise and honor God through music. It's the age-old battle of good vs. evil. Luke gives us this insight: "The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks" (Luke 6:45). Evil brings forth evil lyrics; good brings forth good lyrics.

Take a moment to write out Psalm 139:23-24

When God sees your heart, what lyrics does he observe?

In this lesson, we turn to Psalm 139:24a, which states: *See if there is any offensive way in me.* Written by David to the choir director, Psalm 139 was designed to be sung and felt. In this portion of Psalm 139, David earnestly asks God to shepherd His penetrating gaze into his heart to determine if any offensive ways lurk there. This is not an arbitrary or easy request to make with a sincere heart.

According to Mark 7:21-22, what comes from within us?

Martin Luther provides this insight:

"Whether a person believes it or not, no agony, pain or burden could be worse than feeling all of the evil that lies within himself. God has established matters so that people will not die by seeing the evil in their inmost self. So God is the one who hides our wickedness from us. He wants us to see it only through the eyes of faith."

God's search of David's heart was not for God's benefit. It was so David could come clean before God and get rid of any offensive ways that might stifle God's work in his life.

What kinds of thoughts, feelings or motives do you believe might stifle God's work in your life?

	everything in us, so even if we don't verbalize those thoughts, feelings or motive. What does Deuteronomy 29:29a say about our secret things?	2
What is the	he common denominator in the following verses?	
Psalm 44:2	:21	
Psalm 90:8	:8	
1 Corinthia	ians 14:25a	

Regardless of whether or not we confess our offenses or secrets to others or even ourselves, God still sees them. Our first reaction may be to reach for the nearest fig leaf, figuratively speaking. However, David sets an amazing example in this verse. He basically says to God, "I realize that You see my secret offenses, but I'm just letting You know that I **need** You to see them so that we can deal with them and move on."

David knew something that we could learn much from: it takes far more strength and personal fortitude to fall on our knees and submit to a sovereign God than to stand and fight our endless battles for significance.

Many offenses we store in our hearts grieve the heart of God.

What might some of those be?

If you tend to hold grudges, you realize just what it takes to forgive an offense. Yet God's grace awaits. His forgiveness frees. His love is lavish.

Let the words of Ephesians 4:30-32 wash over ye	you as you write them here
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Once again, take a moment to write out Psalm 139:23-24

Our worldly culture today encourages us to see only skin deep as it loudly trumpets with fanfare the importance of outward appearances.				
What does 1 Samuel 16:7 tell us about outward appearances?				
The world's trumpets do not play the melody that God wants us to hear. <i>Audiate</i> is to hear and comprehence nusic not physically present, just as to think is to hear and give meaning to words not physically present. Musicians <i>audiate</i> when they recall music they've previously heard as they anticipate what will be heard next as the piece progresses. Basically, it's the constant melody playing in their heads regardless of what others are singing alloud around them.				
To put that in context with our study, God is the steady melody line in our heads. Regardless of what the world sings loudly around us, we still hear and follow God's melody line in our hearts and lives. Regardless of what the world lures us to see, God directs our sight to the heart.				
Let's face it; a heart changed by God accomplishes much more than a new hairdo.				

When asked how he carved his famous angel statue, Michelangelo responded, "I saw the statute hidden in the marble and I carved until I set it free." That's a vivid word picture of God's work on our hearts. The difference? What is hidden in our hearts is not beautiful (Gen. 8:21; Romans 3:10-18). God lovingly carves us until we are molded and shaped into the likeness of His Son - inside and out.

God composes our songs and invites us to be in His choir. I don't know about you, but that's one chorus that causes me to stand and sing His praises from the highest mountaintop!

Closing prayer:

Father, I praise You because You sing over me songs of deliverance. Thank You for the life You give me and the hope that You breathe into my life through Your Word. I pray that You look into my heart to see if there are any offensive ways in me. Bring those to light so that through Your power, we can deal with those and move on toward a more abundant life together. Thank You for composing the orchestration of my life. You are the catalyst for eternal change and the only One in whose hands I would want the carving tools. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Lesson Four

Take a moment to write out Psalm 139:23-24

Lead Me

And lead me in the way everlasting (Psalm 139:24b).

As a child, I abhorred playing the game Simon Says. I would mentally jump ahead to anticipate what Simon would say or do next rather than pay attention to the actual words. Invariably, I ended up being one of the first players knocked out of the game for moving without Simon's permission.

I've always been on the competitive side, so losing on a consistent basis at such a simple game drove me to distraction. Simple Simon wasn't so simple to me. Consequently, learning to listen carefully to discern God's leading took a substantial amount of focus and discipline on my part.

Blaise Pascal, a 15th century French mathematician, physicist and philosopher, once said: "We only consult the ear because the heart is wanting." As God's children, our hearts long for our Father. He created in us a void that only He can fill. To that end, He gave us two ears but only one mouth so that we are able to listen twice as much as we speak.

God's vision for our lives is much more than you or I could ever imagine or visualize. If we attempt to jump ahead or anticipate what God will do, we will miss the boat entirely. Only when we listen carefully for God's guidance can we ever realize the full potential that He has planned for us.

In this final lesson, we wrap up our four-session study of Psalm 139:23-24, which states: <i>And lead me in the way everlasting</i> . Psalm 139:23-24 is one of the most needed prayers in the whole Bible.
King David, a leader of leaders with great vision, asks God through that prayer to be <i>his</i> vision and leader. As a leader and visionary, David understood a vital concept: those you lead must be able to grasp the destina-
tion.

As God's children, we strive to grasp His vision so that we may, in turn, point others toward Him. Those who do not have God's vision before them wander in circles and search in vain.

What does Proverbs 29:18 reveal for us?_____

in

Henry David Thoreau, the American naturalist, poet and philosopher, once wrote, "I would give all the
wealth of the world, and all the deeds of all the heroes, for one true vision." I believe that speaks loudly about
today's worldly culture, as well. The materialistic, live life loud, instant gratification-driven culture of today does
not grasp God's vision. The still, small voice of God cannot be heard above the din.

As I read that passage, I can sense God's peace descending upon me. When we allow God to lead us, we rest in His peace regardless of the world's deafening chaos.

The Hebrew word for **lead** in Psalm 139:24b is translated as *nachah*, meaning: to guide, govern. The word **lead** used here is the exact same Hebrew verb used in Psalm 23:2-3 and also Exodus 13:21. Record the words of Exodus 13:21 here:

Pause and imagine that incredible sight for a moment. That's the ultimate Google map. It would be mighty hard to misunderstand God's direction with such a visual guide.

Some days, don't we long for God's leading to be that unmistakably clear in our own lives? Have you sought that recently? If so, how?

David clearly understood that in order to properly discern and wholeheartedly follow God's leading, he needed an intimate relationship with God. Following a leader means listening to and focusing on what that leader has to say.

Did you realize that **silent** and **listen** use the exact same letters? In our Christian walk, silence and listening to God's gentle whispers prove essential in discerning where He is leading us.

What do the following verses instruct us to do?

Martin Luther provides this insight:

"God leads and directs His people in mysterious ways. We need to learn how God guides His people as they grow and develop. I, too, have often tried to dictate to our Lord God a certain way in which I expected Him to run things. Undoubtedly, God must have laughed at my so-called wisdom and said, 'I never needed a Peter, a Luther, or anyone else to teach, inform, rule or guide me. I am not a God who will allow himself to be taught or directed by others. Rather, I am the One who leads, rules, and teaches people."

Webster's dictionary defines lead as, to go before or with to she	now the way. In the Old Testament, we ob-
served God going before the Israelites (Exodus 13). Today, we have the	e Holy Spirit with us to continue illuminat-
ing our path.	

What does Acts 2:1-5 tell us?

Psalm 90.2

When Jesus was physically on earth, He bridged the time between God's presence among His chosen people during Old Testament times and the Holy Spirit's presence today. There has never been a time when God has abandoned His promise to be fully present to lead and guide His children in every generation.

In his prayer, King David also asks God to lead him in the way **everlasting.** It is difficult to fathom in our time-driven world the timelessness of eternity. Over and over in Scripture, we see the word **everlasting**. The Hebrew word for **everlasting** is translated as *olam*, which refers to, eternity; from of old, ancient, lasting.

Read and record these Scripture passages that aid our understanding:

Jeremiah 31:3	
Deuteronomy 33:27a	
John 6:47	
Everlasting is the same path walked by the Patriarchs, David, Paul, you, and me. It is the way of and godliness that consistently appears throughout the pages of Scripture. It is not a defined distance, but rat destination. G. Campbell Morgan once said, "Distance is only a human term." Precisely. There is but one pateverlasting life with God. Take a moment to write Jesus' words from John 14:6	ther a
One final time, take a moment to write out Psalm 139:23-24. Can you do it from memory?	

Oliver Wendell Holmes, the American author and poet, penned these immortal words: "The great thing in the world is not so much where we stand, as in what direction we are moving." As Christians, our compass points directly to God. By faith we can move toward Him with confidence. He will never lead us astray. He promises to lead you and me in the way everlasting. We cling to that promise with every fiber of our being.

No guesswork. No playing Simon Says. No games. Whew!

As this study has come to a close, what specifically did God reveal to you?

How will you apply what you have learned?

Closing prayer:

Father, in a world that runs us in circles, I am so thankful that You are my steady Compass. I pray that You focus my attention on listening to You and following Your direction and leading in my life. No games, no guesswork, just faith and trust. How very refreshing and life-sustaining Your promises are to me. I take comfort in Your timelessness. I pray that You continue to reveal Your promises to me through Your Word and keep me steadfast in the faith until I join the heavenly host in eternity. In Jesus' name. Amen. \$\P\$



Prayers

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About the Author

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An engaging speaker, author, Bible teacher and worship leader, Donna has a passion for studying and teaching God's Word. She has authored 18 Bible studies, several Bible studies published in the *Lutheran Women's Quarterly*, numerous devotions, and magazine articles. Donna's DVD-based Bible study series, *Your Strong Suit*, launched nationwide through LWML in November 2011. Her new full-length, small-group based Bible study, *The God of All Comfort*, is available from Concordia Publishing House. Her next DVD-based Bible study series for the LWML, *Overflowing Abundance*, is scheduled for release at the Pittsburgh LWML Convention.

Donna attends Salem Lutheran Church in Tomball, Texas, where she loves serving in the worship ministry. She is passionate about partnering with the Lutheran Women's Missionary League in mission work and providing new avenues for women to get into God's hydrating Word.



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