

Dealing With Life's Hardships and Uncertainties (Part 5)

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[0 : 00] I'm going to guess that in this room there's a lot of you that have something in common with me when I was a kid. As a little child, and I'm not going to tell you how long it took me to get over it, I was afraid of the dark.

And sometimes I would wake up in the middle of the night because I thought I heard something. And we lived out in the country and we didn't have air conditioning, so in the summer, really late spring, summer, this time of year, we always slept with the windows up. And when you're sleeping with the windows up and you hear something outside, you're a little kid, you get scared. A lot of nights I can remember getting scared.

But then I would hear a sound, a familiar sound coming from the next room that I really liked. That was my dad snoring. Snoring loud. But you know, as a little kid, hearing my dad snore in the next room did not keep me awake.

[1 : 17] That helped me to sleep. Because it really did make me feel secure. It was comforting. Wasn't any booger going to get me with my dad in the next room.

In Psalm 139, David had a better source of comfort, knowing he was not just in the next room, but that he was with him everywhere he went.

David talks about the comfort he found in knowing God, knowing that he was always with him, that he knew everything about him. And as we're going to see this morning, that God made him.

Psalm 139 is one of the most comforting chapters in all the Bible. It teaches us a lot about just who God is, how he is.

What I want us to see is, as a part of this series, why we're focusing on Psalm 139. It's really written in four different sections, four different thoughts. Thoughts.

[2 : 28] We're in the third one today. It teaches us why we can and should trust God instead of worrying about life's uncertainties, life's hardships.

You know, life's that way. There's times in our lives when we just have sort of a, we're anxious because we don't know what's going to, about to take place. We're anxious about some people or situations.

And sometimes we're stressed out because we're going through a hard time personally or because of somebody we are close to, we love, who's going through that hard time.

Well, David found great comfort in all such situations in knowing who God was, how he was, how he was so involved in his life.

I want you to look at the first two things we have seen in Psalm 139. Show you what I'm talking about. We're not going to go through any of this. I just want to show you the statements. In verses 1 through 6, David tells us about God's knowledge, about how God knows everything.

[3 : 42] But as you read that, David made it personal, so we're going to make it personal. God doesn't just know everything. God knows me. That's how we need to think.

God knows me and everything about me. Then in the next section, 7 through 12, David writes about God's presence.

God is everywhere. As we looked at last week, we need to make this personal. God is with me. Always. We can always count on him.

No matter where we go. Even if we want to escape him, we cannot. God is always with me. Well, the third section, verses 13 through 18, really tells us how God knows us so well and can always be wherever we are.

Let's read it together. Psalm 139, verse 13. For you formed my inward parts. David is writing, writing a poem, writing a song about how God is so involved in his life.

[4 : 52] For you formed my inward parts. You knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

Wonderful are your works. My soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance. In your book were written every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.

How precious to me are your thoughts, O God. How vast is the sum of them. If I would count them, they are more than sand. I awake, and I am still with you.

The source of David's comfort and praise in these verses is God's power. God can do anything. And the way he makes it personal, and the way that we need to make it personal is to think this.

[6 : 02] God made me. God made you. We're going to look at what that means. The description of how God made us is comprehensive here in these verses.

God created each of us according to who he wanted us to be. God made you according to who he wanted you to be, and according to the life he had planned out for you.

Let's look at it. First, think this way. Think about this. God made us. David describes that in verses 13 and 15. Let's look at verse 13 again. For you formed my inward parts.

You knitted me together in my mother's womb. I want you to look at how Chuck Swindoll describes God's work of forming and knitting us together in his paraphrase of that verse.

Look at it. For God alone, none other, originated my vital organs. You knitted my inner being together in the womb of my mother.

[7 : 13] David is trying to tell us. God made us from the inside out. And then in verse 15, look at it. My frame was not hidden from you.

When I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Now that last phrase, don't let it throw you off, in the depths of the earth, that's a poetic description of a child being formed in secret, as he just said, in the mother's womb.

Poetic expression. He uses a lot of imagination to try to help us understand the work of God. The mother's womb is a dark, hidden, secret place.

Look again at Swindoll's paraphrase of this verse. My skeleton and bones were not hidden from you when I was made in that concealed place of protection.

When my veins and arteries were skillfully embroidered together in variegated colors like fine needlepoint. Now let's think about what we've read, verses 13 and 15 together.

[8 : 19] David is describing how God carefully, and like an artist, skillfully created each individual human being.

God created our inner parts and our outward form. This includes your physical features and your psychological makeup.

In other words, think like this. God made your basic personality. And God made you, your form, your structure, how you are, high, you know, tall, short, whatever.

God made your physical appearance to be as it is. Now, let's make some quick corrections or adjustments here.

The fact that God made us this way does not mean that we should not try to look as good as we can. For the benefit of some people, let me say that again.

[9 : 26] Just because God made us a certain way does not mean we should not try to look a little bit better in every way, to act a little bit better.

But here's the real point. You are who you are by God's design, personality, overall structure, and you can't change who you really are.

You can't change the way God made you in this kind of specific way. If you're six feet five, you cannot be five feet five.

If you are wired in such a way that, you know, you're just the kind of person who's always alert, you're sort of a type A, you know, everything matters, you can work on it, but you're never going to be just a laid-back, K, Sera, Sera kind of guy or girl.

If you ever do the Myers-Briggs type indicator, you can go online and do that. That's a great personality test, sort of figure out who you are, why you are the way you are, and that's just you.

[10 : 46] Every couple ought to do that. Understand who you are by God's design, who it is you've married. You can't change who you married.

It's not your job to change who you married. Just like it's not who you married, it's not their job to change you. God made us. Now, along this line, every person should have a healthy sense of self-worth or self-esteem for at least three reasons.

Number one, God created us in His own image. Out of all the creation, only human beings were created in God's image.

I want you to look at a verse of Scripture that I know you're familiar with. We've looked at it in days gone by. I've done studies about this. But just look at Genesis 127. So God created man in His own image.

In the image of God, He created him. Male and female, He created them. Men and women equally are created in the image of God.

[11 : 48] And for if no other reason, you ought to think, I am of worth and value as a human being in this world because I am created in the image of Almighty God.

Number two, God created us as the person we are. That's what we just read in verses 13 and 15. You are not an accident.

You are not a mistake. Every single one of us in here, we can think, we can look around and think to ourselves, I wish I was like that person.

I wish I was built like that person. I wish I had the personality of that person. I wish I could be more laid back. Or I wish I could be more assertive.

See, there's always somebody that you think, I'd like to be like them. And a lot of times they're your opposite. God has a reason for you being you.

[12 : 56] So be you. Be your best you. But be you. Number three, God sent His Son to save us in spite of all of our sins, our flaws, and our failures.

In case I don't say it at the proper time later on, I hope I do. Nobody has it all together. We all are messed up in some way.

A lot of times we want to do our way instead of God's way. Life's all about me and my glory, not God and His will and His glory.

We need to understand that we are sinful people. We've come short, far short, of God's standards, God's expectations, God's commands, God's glory.

And the penalty for sin is death. We don't deserve anything from God except death, separation from Him.

[14 : 09] We should reap what we sow. But the good news, look at Romans 5, 8. But God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, rebels, selfish, arrogant, while we were still sinners of whatever kind, Christ died for us.

God did something we did not deserve. He provided a way for us to be forgiven of our sins, made right with Him, made children of Him through the actual merits of what Jesus did, living His righteous life and dying on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins.

All of us, we should accept who we are by God's design and then seek to be the best that we can possibly be, living according to God's owner's manual.

God made us as we are and He's given us an instruction book, His Word, the Bible, to guide us in everything of importance in life in terms of what we should believe and how we should live.

How we should live in a relationship to God and how we should live in a relationship with other people, people we go to school with, work with, and especially we live with. Now, God's not only given us instructions on how He wants us to live as the person He created us, but if we're Christians, if you truly are trusting in Christ as your Savior and Lord, when that took place, when you first believed, when you were born again, God put His Spirit in you, and the Holy Spirit living in every Christian, every Christian, He will enable us to better understand God's owner's manual.

[16 : 05] He will help us to believe it. He will help us to put it into practice. Because we still have this sinful nature, we're not going to put it into practice perfectly, but He's going to help us, He's going to give us the desire and the ability to grow and actually make progress in living like God's people.

God not only made us, but I want you to look further in verse 16, God planned our life. Look at it. Your eyes saw my unformed body.

All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. That's out of the NIV translation. David's telling us, listen to what he's saying, before God formed us, he planned out our life.

God made us for a purpose. That's another way to look at it. The prophet Jeremiah understood that. Prophet Jeremiah understood that God didn't just make him, but God made him for a specific purpose, a reason.

One big one. Probably a lot of little ones, but one big one. Look at how he describes it in Jeremiah chapter one. He said, the Lord gave me this message. I knew you before I formed you in your mother's womb.

[17 : 30] Before you were born, I set you apart and appointed you as my prophet to the nations. Jeremiah is saying, before I was ever a thought in my father's mind, before my mother and father even knew one another, God knew me.

He knew that I was going to come to be at a certain place at a certain time and God planned what I was to do in terms of serving his purpose in this world.

He understood that. Here's what I want us to think. God has a plan for every person he creates. God has a plan for all of us.

He works in all the details of our life to bring it about. Now, I don't want you to get the wrong impression here. Everybody's not called to be a great prophet of God like Jeremiah.

Everybody's not called to do something that the world will sit up and take notice. But everybody has been made by God the way they are to fulfill the purpose God has for them.

[18 : 47] And that purpose includes being a certain kind of father and mother and husband and wife, child, employer, employee, student, whatever.

God has a purpose for our lives really at various stages. sometimes it takes a lot of time for us to figure some things out, doesn't it? Sometimes it takes a lot of us trial and error.

Sometimes we have to learn things the hard way. I've learned a whole lot of lessons in my life the hard way. There's been a lot of things in my life that I needed to be there but I went around this way to get there.

Can you identify? Some more than others. God, let's give you an example. God planned for the Apostle Paul as we know him today.

If you read through the book of Acts and a lot of the New Testament, it's his letters. God planned for Paul to be the world's greatest missionary. He planned for Paul to plant churches throughout the Roman world in the first century.

[20 : 09] God planned for Paul. Part of his purpose was to so, do these things, be a missionary, plant churches and later on write letters to these churches that became a large part of our New Testament.

God planned to use Paul to write Scripture. But how did Paul begin his life? A lot of you know. Most of you know. Paul didn't begin as the great believer and follower of Jesus.

Paul began, at least what we learned of him, he was a religious man, very devout, but he didn't believe anything about Jesus. He hated followers of Jesus.

He was the world's leading persecutor of Christians before he became the world's greatest preacher, establisher of churches.

How did that change come about? Well, for Paul, God had to literally knock him down one day and blind him to wake him up, to get his attention, to do what God intended to do with his life.

[21 : 21] For Paul, it was a painful lesson, but he learned the lesson and he got on board and he fulfilled God's purpose. God has a way of just working in people's lives and if we took the time, I bet there's a lot of people in this room, you could stand up and tell us about your story, about how you started out one way or you started out in a way so unlikely to be where you are today.

Let me give you another example. I know everybody here doesn't like Clemson University, everybody doesn't like football, everybody doesn't like Davos Swinney, but I'm going to guess that most people in this room, you know the story of Davos Swinney.

You know his childhood, teen years, even college years, nothing desirable, had nothing, family had nothing, took care of his own mother in his dorm or in his college place.

As a coach, he was never a defensive coordinator, never an offensive coordinator. As a coach, he was a receiver's coach.

He was down to pecking order on any college level coaching staff. And before he came to Clemson as the receiver's coach, coach, he'd quit coaching.

[22 : 50] Out of it all together. But God so worked in his life, and I'm not saying Davos was running from God or rebelling, anything like that. I'm just saying the circumstances were such.

But God worked in his life in a tremendous way to elevate him to a position where now he's one of this nation's most popular coaches.

he is one of the best paid coaches in this country. And like it or not, non-Clemson fans, he is one of the most successful coaches in this country.

Head coaches. what I want us to see is it may not be ever on the news or in the paper or anybody talk about it in a sermon illustration, but God has a plan for our lives.

And where you are now is important, but it's not where you're going to be later. Truth is, all of us are still in process.

[24 : 07] We're all still on that journey. There's a lot of young people in here. You're just getting started in your life. And there's just a lot of, it's like life is, you need to think of what we're talking about here. Life is an adventure.

You don't know what God's planned for you. If you're a Christian, you're his child. He has some good things planned for you. It may not be to be wealthy or famous. He's got a good plan for you if you'll be faithful to seek it, to follow it, to put it into practice.

A lot of people here, let's say it this way, a lot of people here are old. I see a woman back there, old as I don't know what. But if we're alive, life is not over.

And we don't know what tomorrow holds for any of us. At any age. But if God is our heavenly father, we can trust him.

That he is still at work in our lives, working out that plan, the good plan that he prepared for you.

And he made you like you are so that you will be successful at your plan that God has for you.

[25 : 21] if we'll be faithful to live life God's way and cooperate with his indwelling spirit. We don't have to sit around and worry about what God has planned for us.

We just need to live faithfully day by day and just accept it as it comes. And if we don't know something, we pray and seek his wisdom, seek his direction.

We just seek his help. These verses show us that God shapes each of us to the person he wants us to be in order to carry out the purpose that he has for our lives.

And that's why we don't have to be anxious about life. That's why we don't have to be all stressed out and worried. We have a heavenly father. Remember what Jesus said in Matthew 6?

We have a heavenly father who knows us, knows everything that we need. We can trust him to take care of us. We can trust that he's got everything under control. It does matter how we live. It does matter the choices we make.

[26 : 23] So we need to be faithful to do what we know God wants us to do. And as I said, pray about the things we don't. Seek God's wisdom. Seek his help.

But the bottom line in all this is we can and must trust God if we want to be able to deal with life's hardships and uncertainties in a healthy way. But I want you to note how David responded to all this.

verses 14 and 17 and 18. The thought of how God made him was just overwhelming. And we need to think.

The very thought about all this stuff we've been looking at. How God made us. How he's got a plan for our lives. That should cause us to praise God just as David did. Look at verse 14.

As he thought about how God made him. For you former Emerald Parks verse 13 verse 14. I praise you for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works. My soul knows it very well.

[27 : 18] Verse 17 and 18 same way. How precious to me are your thoughts of God. How vast is the sum of them. David is expressing praise and awe at God's greatness and goodness in general and specifically in his life.

like David. If we'll just sometimes just think about how God made me.

How God works in me. Works out his plan in my life through good times and bad. God's sovereign. God's in control. It'll cause us to praise him.

It'll cause us to be in awe that he could love us and bless us and do in us the kinds of things that he does. But I want us to look at one final application of what we've seen in all these verses this morning.

The fact that God made us and even planned out our lives, that is foundational. Two things. As creator, God designed human life to be sacred.

[28 : 30] As David describes himself in verse 13, he understood from the time of my conception, he was a unique individual, human being growing inside his mother's womb.

This shows us clearly that every child, every single child conceived, growing in his or her mother's womb, is a special creation of God, a human being, created in God's image of extreme worth and value and dignity.

And that life in that womb should be protected, should be honored, should be taken care of. And you know where I'm going with this. This helps us see as clearly as any other passage in Scripture, abortion is murder.

It is the taking of a human life, a human life that is just as valuable on the side of God, inside the mother's womb, as any life you can see here right now, this morning. We need to honor life from conception on.

We need to understand that that which is growing inside a woman is not just mere tissue. It is a human baby created in the image of God.

[29 : 58] God has a plan for that child. And we need to honor that life. Secondly, as creator, God determined human sex or gender to be fixed.

I want you to look one more time at Genesis 127. God created human beings like this. So God created man in His image and in the image of God He created them. Male and female He created them.

God created human beings in two ways. Everybody's either a male or they are a female. male. One or the other. And our anatomy tells us what sex or gender we are.

If you have male anatomy, you are a male. If you have female anatomy, you are a female.

[31 : 01] Our bodies do not lie to us. God made us this way. If you have a problem accepting that, if you think, you look at yourself in the mirror, you know, I am made biologically a male.

But I just feel like I should live my life as a woman. I feel like I'm a woman trapped in a male body. I want you to understand, you do not have a physical problem.

You have a psychological problem. I want you to understand that. Same thing goes true. If you are biologically a female, but you just think, I just feel like I've got to live my life as a male, you're confused.

Here's what I want you to understand. Now, if you have these kind of feelings, you need to seek true help from committed Christians who understand Scripture, who have a good understanding of what the kind of thing, the kind of issues you're dealing with, and will try to actually help you.

One thing that we're doing a study in my Sunday school class talking about male, female stuff, and Matt Chandler is the actual teacher on video, and one thing he said in our last week's study that just stood out to me that's so true, the church of Jesus Christ needs to be a safe haven for every human being with any kind of problem.

[32 : 52] And I want you to hear that. If you struggle with your sex or gender identity, if you don't know someone to try to help you, you talk to me, and I'm not going to berate you or do anything negative, say anything negative to you.

I will try to help you. The church, we will try to help you, but it is not helping you to say to you, you just be whatever you feel you ought to be.

That is a lie. That will lead to even more confusion and misery because you'll be living your life according to the opposite of the way God designed you to live.

It is not our choice as to whether we live as male or female. God designed that. God determined that when He created us, either male or female.

And if you have confusion about that, doubts about that, you need to seek help. It is a psychological problem that can be addressed, that you can be helped, but you've got to seek it.

[34 : 13] And the way to begin is saying, God is God. He is the creator. He determines these things, not me. I'm the creation. And I will submit to the authority and the things that God says as my creator.

Let's go back to the main point of these verses to conclude. God has created and shaped each of us into the person He wants us to be in order to carry out the purpose He has for our lives.

He made us. He's got a purpose for us. And the question is, are you cooperating with God about this? Are you seeking to be the person He created you to be with His help?

Are you seeking to do His will and serve the purpose He created you for? And just start where you are.

Start where you are in your home, where you work, in this church, where you are in life. Be faithful to be the person that God's called you to be there.

[35 : 19] Fulfill that purpose at this point in your life. But the only way we can do this is to truly have a right relationship with Jesus Christ. And if you don't, if you don't know Him, I want to encourage you right now, if you will admit to God that you don't know Him, that you are a sinner before Him, you're seeking to live life your way instead of His way, if you'll confess that, if you'll repent of that, turn from that, that mindset, that way of life, put your trust in Jesus Christ, that He actually paid the penalty for your sins when He died on the cross.

If you'll call upon Him to save you, forgive you, He will. In fact, God will put His Spirit in you, He'll make you new, He'll cleanse you, He'll give you a fresh start. You might think to yourself this morning, I am a Christian, there's no doubt, I know what you're talking about, but I'm not as close to Him now as I used to be, and really as I want to be.

I haven't been so concerned here lately about serving the purpose that He has for me, because I've been too busy serving my own purpose. That's a problem.

That's a rebellion. That's you trying to live as the Creator instead of God. And the way to solve that problem is to admit your sin and repent of that.

Come back to Christ in renewed commitment, faith, surrender. Tell God, I've made a mess of things living life my way.

[36 : 53] I want to come back to you and start one day at a time living life your way. Listen to the Lord and do whatever it is He tells you to do in response to His Word this morning.

Would you pray with me? Dear God, help us to see now how we need to respond in light of the fact that you've made us and you've made us for a purpose.

Help us, Father, to see how we need to respond so that we can demonstrate to you that we trust you in the details of life.

Help us, dear God, to quit being so anxious and stressed out about everything going on around about us.

Help us to truly trust that you are our Heavenly Father. You know us better than anyone because you made us. And help us to trust you that you're working out your good purpose in our lives, in the bad times as well as good.

[38 : 03] in an attitude of prayer, you just do what God tells you to do and He'll be pleased if you're obedient to Him. I'd be happy to pray with you if you would like to come forward during this time.

Just listen to the Lord and obey Him. That's the important thing. ■ of