

Because God First Loved Us

Week 1: "Fearfully and Wonderfully Made"

SMALL GROUP REMINDERS

It doesn't take special training or authority to lead a small group...just willingness to help a group have a conversation together!

- *Read through the discussion questions first. This helps you have a sense of where the conversation may go.*
- *Ask a question and wait for someone to answer. Don't call on people, putting someone on the spot. Invite responses, don't demand them.*
- *Resist the pull to fill the silence! Silence is okay. Some people need it to think before they speak.*
- *If one person talks a lot, say, "what about another voice on this question?" or "does someone else have anything to add?"*
- *Wait to answer a question yourself until others have spoken first.*
- *Have fun! Enjoy the experience of exploring God's Word together!*

OPENING

Begin your conversation by asking each group member to share their name and something about it...such as: who were they named after, how did they get their nickname, what do they like/dislike about their name, where did their middle name come from, what does their name mean, etc.

SCRIPTURE

Invite a volunteer to read aloud: *Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18 (NIV)*. Ask for a different volunteer to read it aloud a second time.

¹ You have searched me, Lord, and you know me.

² You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar.

³ You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways.

⁴ Before a word is on my tongue you, Lord, know it completely.

⁵ You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me.

⁶ Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain.

¹³ For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb.

*¹⁴ I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
your works are wonderful, I know that full well.*

¹⁵ My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place,
when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.

¹⁶ Your eyes saw my unformed body;
all the days ordained for me were written in your book
before one of them came to be.

¹⁷ How precious to me are your thoughts, God! How vast is the sum of them!

¹⁸ Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand—
when I awake, I am still with you.

UNPACKING GOD'S WORD

How does it strike you that God knows your innermost thoughts? How might that be a comfort? How might that feel disturbing?

Why do you pray, considering how God already knows what you're thinking? How does God's intimate knowledge of you affect your daily life and inner life?

We know more today about the biology of conception than did the ancients. How does that impact your appreciation for the miracle of creation? How do you understand God's work in creating life?

What does verse 16b mean to you? "All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be."

What do you suppose God's thoughts are like (verses 17-18)?

How many ways can you use Psalm 139 to complete this sentence: "Because God _____, therefore we _____." What do your responses imply for our community at Mount Pleasant Lutheran Church?"

CLOSING

Invite each person to turn to the person on their right, look them in the eye, and say, "You are fearfully and wonderfully made." (If your group feels brave, invite them to trace a cross on the person's forehead when they say it!)

Offer a closing prayer like this:

Lord God, you know us better than we know ourselves. You knit together each of us in our mother's womb, and created every person's unique body, mind, and spirit. Thank you for the beautiful diversity of your creation, and for the part each one of us plays in it. Help us remember that we are yours, beloved and known, inside and out. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.