

THE FIRST 15

Wednesday, August 21, 2024

Please be in continued prayer for our team currently in Tanzania serving alongside Zoe Ministry. Today we pray for the leaders and mentors of Zoe Rwanda. To learn more, visit our website at fcm.org/ZOE, or for the prayer guide go to fcm.org/ZOE-Tanzania.

Today is Wednesday, August 21 and we are exploring how God's goodness and mercy follow us.

OPENING PRAYER

Blessed Lord God, thank You for loving me. I come to this quiet place and seek Your presence. I calm my scattered thoughts, release my worries and slow my breath. I focus on the goodness and mercy You promise. The goodness and mercy that follow me. Great Shepherd of my soul, open the ears of my heart to hear the message You have for me today. Amen.

SCRIPTURE

You have searched me, LORD, and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you, LORD, know it completely. You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain. For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. 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. Psalm 139:1-6, 13-15

REFLECTION

God's goodness and mercy follow me all the days of my life. What an enormous statement. Look at the size of it! God's goodness and mercy follow you every day. Think of the day that lies ahead. Think of the week that lies ahead. Think of the year that lies ahead. What do you see? Whatever it is, God will be at your side. God will walk you through. God will take your hand. God will lead you and God will follow you. David envisions a God who follows us. The original Hebrew word has more power to it than the English word "follow" conveys. The original word is more like pursues. God pursues us, chases us, tracks us down and wins us over. God is a God who follows. The Good Shepherd leads us, but he also follows us. He goes before us and behind us. As Psalm 139 says, He "hems us in" behind and before.

Human hands have been weaving, knitting and sewing for thousands of years. Psalm 139 uses images of weaving, knitting and sewing to illustrate God's involvement in our lives and presence with us. You "hem" me in, behind and before. You "knit" me together in my mother's womb. I am intricately "woven" together in the depths of the earth. Like the person who holds a blank piece of fabric lovingly in their hands anticipating the creative process to make something beautiful, so God holds the fabric of our lives in His loving hands – along with us. God invites us to be the co-

creators of life together. Our lives begin as blank fabric. God has a pattern, a beautiful design, a plan in mind for us, and we sew our lives along with God. When we participate with God, our lives begin to emerge, and the image develops over time.

The Lord is present with you wherever you are, you cannot escape or be removed from His presence. From the beginning of life, even from the point of conception, God has been with you. He knit you together, He wove you into being. Even now His love is surrounding you, leading you and following you. God is the encompassing reality of life, "hemming you in" behind and before. Following you with goodness and mercy all the days of your life.

Ask: How have I experienced God hemming me in behind and before? How might He go before me into my day and how might He follow me?

Pause and Pray

CLOSING PRAYER

Blessed Lord, You are my loving Creator and You know me better than anyone else, even better than I know myself. Help me to live into the beautiful plan and design You have for my life. Day by day. Give me a vision of Your love for me. Grant me grace to redo some of the dropped stitches, repair some of the frazzled threads and reframe the errors of my ways. Bring Your goodness and mercy into my life, hemming me in behind and before. Amen.