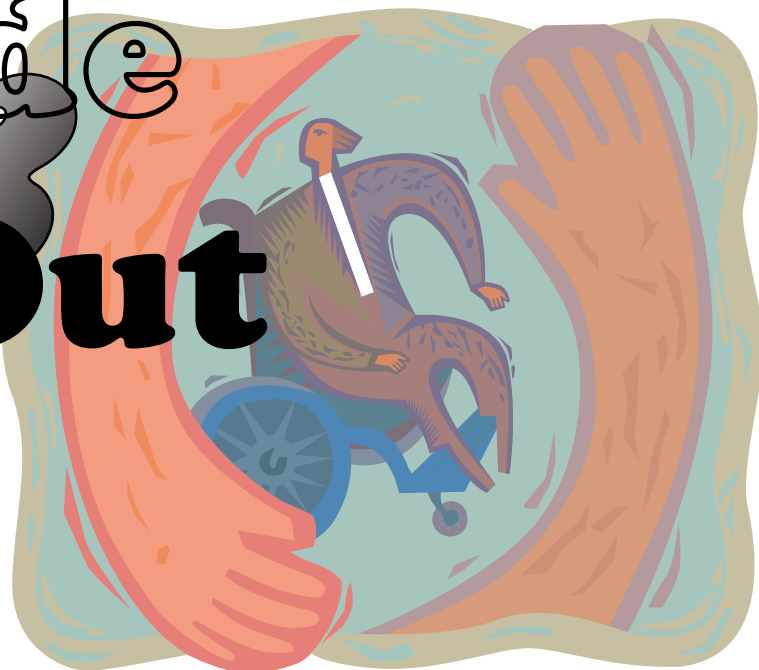


# Inside & Out



O LORD, You have searched me and known *me*.  
You know when I sit down and when I rise up;  
You understand my thought from afar.  
You scrutinize my path and my lying down,  
And are intimately acquainted with all my ways.  
Even before there is a word on my tongue,  
Behold, O LORD, You know it all.  
You have enclosed me behind and before,  
And laid Your hand upon me.  
*Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;  
It is too high, I cannot attain to it.*

Where can I go from Your Spirit?  
Or where can I flee from Your presence?  
If I ascend to heaven, You are there;  
If I make my bed in Sheol, behold,  
You are there.  
If I take the wings of the dawn,  
If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea,  
Even there Your hand will lead me,  
And Your right hand will lay hold of me.  
If I say, "Surely the darkness will overwhelm me,  
And the light around me will be night,"  
Even the darkness is not dark to You,  
And the night is as bright as the day.  
Darkness and light are alike to You.

*continued...*

## last in this series

**t**HE HABIT OF YOUTH (at least, that is, the youth of my generation) dictated that when presented with a body of water larger than a bucket or backyard swimming pool, one would immediately begin collecting any small, smooth stones lying in the vicinity. Each stone would, in turn, be grasped by its edges between thumb and forefinger, then spun out on a low trajectory across the surface of the water—the object being to see how many times one could skip the stone, glanced off the surface, before it would run out of momentum and sink.

As with most such youthful occupations, competition made the process more interesting, and two young boys could while away a fair portion of a hot summer afternoon skipping stones across the surface of a lake. The prize? Well, the champ didn't win much of anything; the prestige was fleeting, quickly forgotten even before the next activity. But it was something to do.

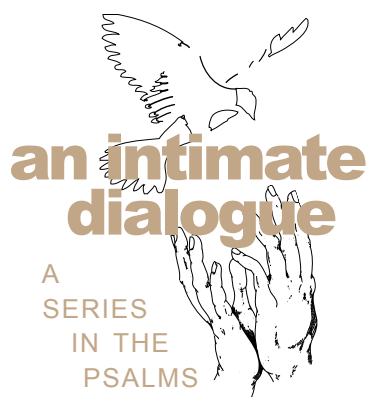
This is the picture of the relationship most Christians choose to have with

God. Made uncomfortable by anything deeper, they skip lightly across the surface of Deity, glancing off here and there, picking up little snippets of knowledge, keeping whatever is pleasant, but throwing away the rest.

As a result, we don't know our God very well. We stumble through our days laboring under well-meaning but ill-conceived notions about Him, clinging to hazy images picked up originally in the Sunday School of decades past, or from the bilge spouted by well-meaning but ignorant guests being interviewed outside the latest celebrity funeral. When something pleasant happens, we pronounce our God to be good and loving. But when something unpleasant transpires, we're left bewildered: How could a loving God have let this happen?

## intimacy

If what illustrates our relationship with God is skipping stones across the surface of a pond, then what illustrates *His* relationship with us is a huge boulder



cannon-balling straight down through the surface, deeper, ever deeper, until it snuggles with all its weight into the soft mud and sand of the bottom.

David's Psalm 139 describes the intimacy with which the Lord God knows each one of those who call on His name. It describes a level of knowledge impossible for humans—defying the limits of matter, time, and space. It is at once supernaturally invasive, and warmly reassuring. It is familial. It is personal.

It is holy.

*O Lord, You have examined me inside and out. You know when I am at rest, as well as when I am up and about. More than that, You know my very thoughts. Your knowledge of me is so complete, so intimate, that You sift through my steps—and are well aware of what transpires in my bed. O yes, Lord, You are intimately familiar with all my ways. Even before I speak a word, You know the word that will follow after it! You have hedged me about, and have girded me with Your power. Ah, Lord God, this is all too much for me. I am too low, too small to grasp it.*

## Lord of all

What is truly remarkable, from the perspective of flesh, is that the God who is so personal as to know our every action, our every thought, our every word, is the same God who spans all time and distance.

*Even if I wanted to, where could I go to get away from Your Spirit, Your face? For You are everywhere, Lord! If I could reach the farthest star, I would find You there. If I lay down in the deepest bowels of hell, Lord, I would find You there. If I rise into the wings of the morning sun, or dwell on a solitary island far beyond the horizon—no matter where I go Your strong hand will carry me and sustain me.*

The God who positioned every star in space, and who set the orbits of every planet and moon, is the same God who

carefully molded the embryo, and fashioned the bones and flesh that comprise each human body.

*You made me, Lord, even the hidden parts deep within. You knitted me together even before I saw the light of day. So I will give thanks to You, because no one but You could have fashioned something so mysteriously wonderful as the human body. In fact, all Your works are wonderful—I know that now. Just as Adam came from the soil, so I have come from a secret place—the mysterious womb of my mother. Even there, my forming bones were not hidden from You. You saw me when I was but an embryo, and before even that—before I was anything on this earth, You had recorded all the days I would have.*

## within and without

Man can know God. He can have a relationship with Him. But mere flesh cannot comprehend God's immensity. It can only bow down in submissive worship before Him, and give Him leave to work His will—within and without.

*I cannot understand Your thoughts, for they are too profound—and too many—but they are precious to me. I cannot comprehend their number—more than the grains of the sand of the sea. Given that, I am amazed that every morning when I awaken, I am still Yours.*

*I belong to You, God. Penetrate to the very core of my being and look into my heart. Test everything there; examine my disturbing thoughts and motives. Look in every closet and cupboard to see if any wickedness—any lingering idols—still reside. Then take my hand and lead me down Your eternal path.*

For You formed my inward parts;  
You wove me in my mother's womb.  
I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully  
and wonderfully made;  
Wonderful are Your works,  
And my soul knows it very well.  
My frame was not hidden from You,  
When I was made in secret,  
And skillfully wrought in the depths of the  
earth;  
Your eyes have seen my unformed  
substance;  
And in Your book were all written  
The days that were ordained for me,  
When as yet there was not one of them.

How precious also are Your thoughts to me,  
O God!  
How vast is the sum of them!  
If I should count them, they would  
outnumber the sand.  
When I awake, I am still with You.

Search me, O God, and know my heart;  
Try me and know my anxious thoughts;  
And see if there be any hurtful way in me,  
And lead me in the everlasting way.

*Psalm 139:1-18,23-24*