Yes, it’s true. These are hard times for America. Our economy is deeply wounded. The stock market is on a rollercoaster. Some folks have lost their retirement. Others have lost their jobs. In addition, our country is in a life and death struggle with Muslim extremists who are bent on our destruction.

All this is enough to plunge the most stout-hearted person into the grip of fear. Even the very spiritual among us would have to admit being “deeply concerned.” These stresses can take their toll on marriage relationships. They can tear us apart if we let them. But if we handle them wisely, they can, instead, press us closer together. That’s why we must seek the truths of God’s Word for comfort and courage to face the hard times with peace and strength…together.

We are learning that together we can face the hard realities of any situation successfully if we do these two things:

FIRST - Remember the Truth. We can’t simply reminisce about the truth. We have to set our minds on it…determine to believe it…anchor our lives in it. There are three truths in Psalm 139 that are essential to a life worth living:

Truth #1 - God loves us…really loves us! The Psalmist says to God – You both precede and follow me. You place your hand of blessing on my head. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too great for me to know

(Psalm 139:5-6 NLT). David is saying, “God, You hem me in. You love me inescapably and thoroughly. You surround me with Your love.” David can’t comprehend God’s love because it’s way “too great for [him] to know.” Isn’t that true for us, as well? But even if we can’t understand it, we must believe it – otherwise, we are saying His Word is not true.

Anchor your life in the Truth.

The most remarkable verses in Psalm 139 are 13 through 16 – You created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb…Your works are wonderful…Your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book... (NIV). David is saying, “You made the place that holds my inmost feelings.” Isn’t that amazing? Not only does God know our inmost feelings, He actually made the place inside us that holds them. Look at the care He took in making us! None of us is an assembly line product. Each of us is knitted by God. Now if God took so much care and lavished so much skill in making us, then we must be very close to His heart and our welfare of utmost importance to Him. That, dear friends, is LOVE!

Truth #2 – God knows us intimately. God reminds us over and over again in Psalm 139 that He knows us inside out. He knows what we’re thinking (v. 2) and He knows what we’ll say before we say it (v. 4). He knows exactly where we are at all times (v. 3). In fact, the Psalmist declares; I can never get away from your presence! (v. 7 NLT). Even when we feel distant from God, He is still close to us. The psalmist declares that wherever he goes - even there your hand will guide me, and your strength will support me (v. 10 NLT). God knows where we are and He IS where we are…guiding us and supporting us. We may not feel His presence, but that doesn’t change the facts. Our feelings often lie to us, so doesn’t it make sense to trust what God says rather than our feelings?

A friend recently told us about the struggle he went through after his wife died. He felt so alone and forsaken. But he believed God’s Word, so he chose to believe God was with him. Every morning, he declared out loud (like the Psalmist so long ago), “God, I know You love me and You are with me!” And God kept His Word, supporting and guiding him. He eventually led him to a godly woman in his church, and now his feelings match the truth. He is not alone – he has God and a loving wife. Because God knows us intimately, He knows what we need and is right there with us to guide and support us.

Truth #3 – God knows what He’s doing in us. In verse 3, David acknowledges, You chart the path ahead of me and tell me where to stop and rest (NLT). Aren’t you glad God’s got
it all under control? We don’t have to wonder or worry. He’s already charted the path for us, and will tell us where to stop and rest. Our job is to listen and obey. We, together as a couple, need to keep our ears open to God and our hearts ready to follow Him.

Maybe you’ve lost your livelihood or your retirement savings and you don’t know where to turn. Things are looking dark and hopeless. We know your discouragement. We’ve lost a lot of our meager retirement and our ministry is in serious financial straights. So look with us at verse 12: ...but even in darkness I cannot hide from you. To you the night shines as bright as day. It only looks dark to you – to us. It’s not dark to God. He can still see the path He has charted for us as plain as day. It would be pretty foolish of us to try to find our own way in the dark, wouldn’t it? This is where the listening and obeying comes in.

And we can be assured we are listening to and obeying a God Who loves us completely. In fact, he loves us so much that He thinks about us all the time…each of us. We are always on His mind. How precious are your thoughts about me, O God! They are innumerable! I can’t even count them; they outnumber the grains of sand! (vv. 17-18 NLT) Come on now, even if you tried your hardest, you couldn’t think about yourself that much! So we have to conclude that we can absolutely trust what God is doing in us, because we absolutely know He loves us and knows us better than we know ourselves.

SECOND - Face the Truth! Once you are committed to Remembering the Truth – anchoring your life in it – the next step is Facing the Truth. Someone we greatly admire recently passed on some good advice to us, and we’d like to pass it on to you: When things aren’t going like you think they should, it is most probably due to one of two reasons...

**It is not dark to God.**

1. **The devil is holding up God’s blessings.** This could happen in one of two ways. It could be like the situation in Daniel 10:12-13, where the evil one is using others and/or circumstances to stand in the way of God blessing you. Or it could be Satan is tricking us into believing his deception, and we, like fools, are falling into his trap of sin. If it’s the former, then our weapon against him is prayer, especially praying for those who are being used by the devil to oppose God’s purposes. But if it is the latter, then our weapon against him is repentance.

When our friend offered this advice, we thought it over. After some soul searching, we were ready to Face the Truth. We had fallen (once again) for Satan’s lie and disobeyed God’s Word in Romans 13:8: Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law (NASB). Last fall, our ministry faced a significant cash shortage. As a result, all of our staff – including us – took substantial cuts in salary. On top of this, we faced some situations (like health problems) which taxed our personal finances even more. But instead of trusting God to supply for us, we took the easy way – debt.

We know better. If we had stopped to Remember the Truth - God loves us, knows us intimately, and knows what He’s doing in us - then we could have waited on Him for His answer. We had to repent, because one of the reasons things were not going as we thought they should was our falling into satan’s trap of debt. And if we ever fall for that one again, you have our permission to slap us upside the head!

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God may be re-directing you, even though you don’t have a clue as to what or where it could be, be open to Him and ready to be re-directed.

If things are not going the way we think they should, how on earth do we determine whether the reason is the devil holding up God’s blessings or God re-directing us? Psalm 139’s final two verses show us how to discover the answer:

First, we must open ourselves to God’s examination, both our hearts and our thinking processes, just like David does in verse 23: Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts. The word here for “thoughts” means “anxious thoughts.” When things aren’t going the way we think they should, our thoughts become anxious, don’t they? Be honest with God - lay them all out there. You can’t hide your “inmost feelings” from your creator. Remember, He created the place inside where you keep them (v. 13).

Then, David humbles himself before God and pleads, Point out anything in me that offends you (v. 24a NLT). If we are harboring wrong thoughts like “God must not love me,” “He doesn’t know or care how I’m hurting,” or “Why isn’t He doing what I want Him to do?” – Then we are offending God! This kind of thinking is offensive to God because it’s based on lies and denies Who God really is! Are you willing to let God point out anything in YOU that offends HIM?

And finally, like David, we must hand over the reigns to the only One Who knows the path ahead - and lead me along the path of everlasting life (v. 24b). The only way we can walk the path of everlasting life is to let the everlasting God lead us every step of the way.

After all we’ve discovered in Psalm 139 about the way God loves us, intimately knows us, and knows what He Himself is up to in our lives…humbly opening ourselves to Him and following His leading makes perfect sense.