

The Sanctity of Life, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 3: Knit Together in the Womb

Psalm 139:13–16

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

Doctrinally, this lesson establishes from Scripture that the unborn child is a human being personally formed, known, and valued by God from the very beginning of its existence. Psalm 139:13–16 is among the clearest passages on God's involvement in the womb. God is the active agent: He forms the inward parts and knits the child together. David speaks of his prenatal self in the first person, as the same "me" who now praises God, and declares that God saw his unformed substance and wrote his days before one of them came to be. The teacher should help the class see that there is no point in the text where the unborn David is anything less than a person known by God.

What is at stake is the personhood and worth of the unborn, one of the most weighty and contested issues of our age. Building on the image of God (Lesson 1) and God as the Giver of life (Lesson 2), this lesson presses the specific truth that the life in the womb is not a mere potential person or a part of the mother's body, but a distinct human being already in relationship with its Creator. This conviction will become decisive when the study reaches the question of abortion in Lesson 6. Here the aim is to lay the positive biblical foundation: God knows and treasures the child in the womb.

Formationally, the lesson aims to move students to worship and to a reordered way of seeing human worth. David's response to being formed by God is not first an argument but adoration: "I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made." The class should be led to wonder at the God who made them, to a deeper security in being known and loved before they could earn anything, and to a tender regard for the smallest and most hidden human lives. Handle the lesson with pastoral sensitivity, aware that some present may carry grief connected to pregnancy, infertility, or loss.

Question 1

Student Question:

Read Psalm 139:13–14. David says, "You formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb." What does it tell us about God's involvement in the womb that He is the one doing the forming and knitting, and what does this say about the unborn child?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Begin with the striking grammar of verse 13. God is the subject of the verbs: "You formed my inward parts; you knitted me together." The making of a human life in the womb is not

described as an impersonal biological event but as the personal work of God. The image of knitting suggests intricate, intentional, loving craftsmanship, each part deliberately woven together.

Draw attention to what this says about the unborn child. The one being knitted together is already “me,” the object of God’s careful attention. God does not begin to relate to David at birth; He is intimately involved with him in the womb, forming the very person who will later sing this psalm. The text assumes a continuity of identity from the womb onward.

Help the class see the theological weight. Where God is personally at work forming a human life, that life is not nothing, and it is not merely potential. It is the handiwork of God, the object of His care, already a someone in His sight. This is the positive foundation for everything the study will later say about protecting unborn life.

Guard against reducing this to sentimentality. The point is not merely that babies are precious to us, but that the unborn child is precious to God, who is the one forming it. Our regard for unborn life rests not on our feelings but on the revealed truth that God Himself is the maker at work in the womb.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God as the personal agent who forms and knits together the child in the womb (Psalm 139:13).
- The unborn child as the handiwork of God, not an impersonal biological process.
- Continuity of personal identity from the womb onward, assumed in David’s first-person speech.
- Our regard for unborn life grounded in God’s involvement, not merely in human sentiment.

Discussion Prompts

- Why is it significant that God is the one doing the forming and knitting?
- What does David’s first-person language tell us about the unborn child’s identity?
- How does this verse move our regard for unborn life from sentiment to truth?

Question 2

Student Question:

David responds to being made by God with worship: “I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.” When you consider that you were personally crafted by God in your mother’s womb, how does that move you to wonder, and where do you struggle to believe you are “wonderfully made”?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This first self-examining question follows David from doctrine into doxology. His response to being made by God is worship: "I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made." The aim is to lead students into the same wonder, marveling that they are not accidents but the deliberate work of God.

Help the class feel the personal force of this. It is one thing to affirm that God makes human beings; it is another to say, with David, "you made me, and I am wonderfully made." Invite students to apply the truth to themselves, especially those who have rarely thought of their own existence as a wonder worth praising God for.

Be a careful pastor here, because the second half of the question names a real struggle. Many people find it hard to believe they are "wonderfully made." They carry shame about their bodies, their limitations, their histories, or wounds from being made to feel unwanted. The psalm does not flatter; it tells the truth: you are the wonderful work of a wise and loving God.

Move toward worship as the cure for both pride and self-contempt. The person who knows they are fearfully and wonderfully made neither despises themselves nor boasts in themselves; they give the praise to God who made them. Invite students to turn a struggle with their own worth into thanksgiving to their Maker this week.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Worship as the fitting response to being made by God (Psalm 139:14).
- The personal application of the truth: not only are people made by God, but I am.
- The truth of being wonderfully made as the answer to shame and self-contempt.
- Praise to the Maker as the cure for both self-contempt and pride.

Discussion Prompts

- What moves you to wonder when you consider that God formed you?
- Where do you struggle to believe you are wonderfully made, and why?
- How can a struggle with your own worth become thanksgiving to your Maker?

Question 3

Student Question:

In verse 14 David says, "Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well." How does the intricate making of a human life in the womb display the wisdom and care of God, and why does this point beyond a mere biological process to the work of a personal Creator?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Move to David's declaration, "Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well." The making of a human being is among the most wonderful of God's works. The intricacy of a

developing child, the ordered unfolding of a whole person from such small beginnings, displays a wisdom and care that staggers the mind.

Help the class see that this points beyond biology to a personal Creator. One can describe the stages of development in clinical terms, but David sees more: behind the process stands the God who designed and directs it. The wonder of the womb is not merely that complex things happen, but that a wise God is doing them.

Draw out the apologetic value gently. The ordered, purposeful making of human life is a powerful witness to the existence and character of God. David does not argue; he worships. But the believer can point to the wonder of human formation as evidence that we are the intended works of a Maker, not the products of accident.

Apply this to reverence for life. If the making of every human being is a wonderful work of God, then every human being is the result of that wonderful work. This dignifies not only the impressive and the healthy but every person whose formation God superintended, including those whose development was marked by difficulty or difference.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The making of human life as among the wonderful works of God (Psalm 139:14).
- The intricacy of human formation as a display of God's wisdom and care.
- Human life pointing beyond biological process to a personal Creator.
- Reverence owed to every human being as the result of God's wonderful work.

Discussion Prompts

- How does the making of a human life display the wisdom of God?
- Why does David respond to the wonder of the womb with worship rather than mere curiosity?
- How does seeing human formation as God's work shape our reverence for every life?

Question 4

Student Question:

Think of how the world often measures a person's value by what they can do, produce, or contribute. How does the truth that God lovingly formed you before you could do anything at all reshape the way you see your own worth and the worth of those who can contribute little or nothing?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-focused question confronts the world's habit of pricing people by output. We are trained to value the productive, the capable, the contributing, and to discount those who can

offer little. Psalm 139 cuts beneath all of it: God formed David, and loved David, before David had done a single thing.

Help the class see that the womb is the great equalizer. In the womb, no one has achieved anything, produced anything, or proven anything, and yet God is already at work in loving craftsmanship. Worth, then, cannot be a matter of contribution. It is conferred by the Maker before any contribution is possible.

Press the implication for how we regard others. If our worth does not rest on output, neither does anyone else's. The unborn, the severely disabled, the person with advanced dementia, none of whom may be able to contribute in the world's terms, are no less the treasured works of God. The same truth that secures our worth secures theirs.

Aim at a concrete change of vision. Invite students to identify one person whose value they have unconsciously tied to ability or usefulness, and to begin seeing them as God does: as a person He formed and treasures apart from anything they can give. This shift is at the heart of a culture of life.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Human worth as conferred by the Maker before any contribution is possible.
- The womb as the place where worth is plainly seen to precede achievement.
- The equal worth of those who can contribute little or nothing in the world's terms.
- A reordered vision that values persons apart from their usefulness.

Discussion Prompts

- How does being loved by God before you could do anything reshape your worth?
- Whose value have you tied to their abilities or usefulness?
- What would it look like to see that person as God's treasured work this week?

Question 5

Student Question:

Read verse 16: "Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me." What does it mean that God saw and knew David when he was still an "unformed substance," and that his days were already written before one of them came to be?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Center the class on verse 16, one of the most remarkable verses in Scripture on God's knowledge of us before birth: "Your eyes saw my unformed substance." God's seeing and knowing reach back to the earliest, least developed stage of David's existence. There was never a time when David was hidden from God, even when he was an "unformed substance."

Add the second half: “in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.” Before David had lived a single day, God already knew and had ordained the shape of his life. This speaks to God’s sovereign knowledge and purpose over the whole span of a human life, from its hidden beginning.

Draw out the implication for the unborn. If God’s eyes saw David’s unformed substance, then the earliest human life is fully visible to and known by God. The child God sees and whose days He has written is not a potential person to God; it is a person God already knows. God relates to the unborn as someone, not something.

Handle the sovereignty here with care and comfort. The truth that our days are written by God is not fatalism but assurance: our lives are held within God’s loving knowledge and purpose. This is meant to steady us, especially when life feels random or out of control, by reminding us that the God who formed us also ordains and oversees our days.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God’s knowledge of the human person from the unformed substance onward (Psalm 139:16).
- God’s sovereign ordaining of the days of a life before they are lived.
- The unborn as already seen and known by God, not merely potential to Him.
- God’s knowledge of our days as loving assurance rather than fatalism.

Discussion Prompts

- What does it mean that God saw David’s unformed substance?
- How does the writing of our days speak to God’s purpose over our lives?
- Why does God’s seeing the unformed child show that the unborn is already someone to Him?

Question 6

Student Question:

Are there people in your life, the very old, the disabled, the unborn, the dependent, whose worth you have quietly measured by their visible abilities? How does Psalm 139 call you to see them instead through the eyes of the God who formed them and wrote their days?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-examining question turns the truth of God’s seeing toward the people whose worth we are tempted to measure by visible ability: the very old, the disabled, the dependent, the unborn. The question gently exposes a bias most of us carry, that worth tracks with capacity.

Help students name this honestly without shame. It is easy to feel, even if we never say it, that a life full of visible ability is more valuable than a life of deep dependence. Psalm 139 confronts

this directly. God's knowing and treasuring of David did not wait for ability and does not depend on it.

Offer a new way of seeing. To see people as God sees them is to look past their visible capacities to the truth that God formed them and knows them. The man with advanced dementia is still the person God knit together; the child with a disability is still God's wonderful work; the unborn child is still seen by God's eyes. Their worth is intact.

Press toward concrete love. Seeing rightly should produce acting rightly: patience, presence, advocacy, tenderness. Invite each student to choose one dependent or vulnerable person and to honor them this week as someone God formed and knows, not as a problem or a lesser life.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The temptation to measure worth by visible ability rather than by God's knowing love.
- Seeing people as God sees them: as those He formed and knows, regardless of capacity.
- The intact worth of the dependent, the disabled, the aged, and the unborn.
- Right seeing issuing in concrete love toward the vulnerable.

Discussion Prompts

- Whose worth have you quietly measured by their visible abilities?
- How does Psalm 139 call you to see that person differently?
- What is one concrete way to honor a dependent person as God's work this week?

Question 7

Student Question:

Throughout this passage David speaks of God's personal, knowing relationship with him from the very beginning of his existence. How does this teach that the life in the womb is not a mere potential person but a human being already known and valued by God?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question gathers the relational thread that runs through the whole passage: God knows David personally from the beginning of his existence. The verbs are relational, formed, knitted, saw, knew, wrote. This is not God observing a process from afar but God in intimate relationship with the person He is making.

Press the key conclusion: the life in the womb is not a mere potential person but a human being already known and valued by God. The distinction matters enormously. A potential person could be treated as not-yet-mattering; a person known by God matters now. Scripture consistently speaks of the unborn as already in relationship with God, not as raw material that might someday become a person.

Reinforce this with the broader witness of Scripture, which the Digging Deeper section gathers: God knew Jeremiah before forming him in the womb, called Isaiah and Paul from the womb, and John the Baptist leaped for joy in Elizabeth's womb. The Bible's consistent way of speaking treats the unborn as persons God knows and addresses.

Be clear and compassionate. This is the doctrinal heart that will matter in Lesson 6, but here keep the focus on the positive truth and on worship. The unborn child is someone God already knows. Let that truth shape the class's reverence, and prepare them gently for the harder applications still to come.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God's personal, knowing relationship with the human person from the beginning of existence.
- The unborn as a human being already known and valued, not a mere potential person.
- The consistent biblical witness treating the unborn as persons God knows (Jeremiah 1:5; Luke 1:41–44).
- The relational character of the womb passages, against an impersonal view of prenatal life.

Discussion Prompts

- How does this passage show that the unborn child is already in relationship with God?
- What is the difference between a potential person and a person God already knows?
- How do other passages confirm that God knows and addresses the unborn?

Question 8

Student Question:

Where do you most need to receive the comfort that God has known you, intimately and lovingly, since before you were born? How might it change your sense of being seen and valued to know that there has never been a moment of your existence that was hidden from God?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self-focused question offers comfort to the heart. The same truth that establishes the worth of the unborn, that God has always known us, is a deep balm for anyone who has felt unseen, unwanted, or overlooked. There has never been a moment of our existence hidden from God.

Help students locate where they most need this. Some carry wounds of feeling unwanted from their earliest days; some feel invisible now. The psalm answers both: from the unformed substance to this very moment, God has seen and known us with love. We are not, and never have been, alone or unnoticed.

Be careful to ground the comfort in God's character, not in denial of pain. People may have genuinely been unwanted by others; the psalm does not pretend otherwise. It announces a

deeper truth: whatever others felt, God wanted, formed, and knew us. His knowing love is the bedrock beneath every human rejection.

Move toward receiving this personally. Invite students to take one area where they feel unseen and to bring it into the light of God's constant knowing. The aim is that they would rest in being fully known and fully loved by the God who has watched over them since before they were born.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God's unbroken knowledge of us from before birth as comfort to the wounded.
- The assurance of being seen and wanted by God beneath every human rejection.
- Comfort grounded in God's character rather than in denial of real pain.
- Resting in being fully known and fully loved by our Maker.

Discussion Prompts

- Where do you most need the comfort that God has always known you?
- How does God's knowing love speak to the experience of being unwanted by others?
- What would change if you truly believed no moment of your life was hidden from God?

Question 9

Student Question:

Trace how Psalm 139:13–16 grounds the personhood and worth of the unborn child. If God forms, knows, and ordains the days of the child in the womb, what follows for how we must regard unborn human life, and why does this passage stand against the idea that an unborn child is merely a part of the mother's body or a life not yet worth protecting?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the heaviest doctrinal block of the lesson, and it gathers the whole passage into a clear conviction about the unborn. Trace the line for the class: God forms the child in the womb (v. 13), the child is His wonderful work (v. 14), God sees the unformed substance and has written the child's days (v. 16). Each verse treats the unborn as a person God personally makes, knows, and ordains.

State the conclusion plainly: unborn human life is genuinely human life, already known and valued by God, and therefore to be regarded and protected as such. The unborn child is not a part of the mother's body like a limb; it is a distinct individual whom God is forming, with its own days written in His book. It is not a life not yet worth protecting; it is precisely the kind of life God treasures.

Engage the common claims respectfully but clearly. To call the unborn merely a part of the mother's body cannot be squared with a God who relates to that child as a distinct "me," sees

its substance, and ordains its individual days. To say the unborn is not yet worth protecting collides with the Scripture's uniform way of speaking of the unborn as persons God knows and even calls by name. The biblical witness places the worth of the child at the beginning, not at some later threshold.

Land this with conviction and great tenderness. The doctrine is firm: the unborn child bears the worth God gives to those He forms and knows. But be aware that some in the class may carry deep wounds connected to abortion or pregnancy loss. Hold the truth without harshness, and signal that the study will speak directly to grief and grace when it reaches Lesson 6. Here, let the conviction rest on worship of the God who knits us together, not on condemnation.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The personhood and worth of the unborn grounded in God's forming, knowing, and ordaining (Psalm 139:13–16).
- The unborn as a distinct human individual, not merely a part of the mother's body.
- The worth of the child located at the beginning of life, not at a later threshold.
- The biblical witness treating the unborn as persons God knows and even names (Jeremiah 1:5; Isaiah 49:1).
- Firm conviction held with tenderness toward those wounded in these matters.

Discussion Prompts

- How does Psalm 139 ground the personhood of the unborn child?
- How does this passage answer the claim that the unborn is merely part of the mother's body?
- Why does Scripture locate the worth of the child at its beginning rather than at a later stage?

Question 10

Student Question:

Look back over Psalm 139:13–16 as a whole. Name one specific way the truth that God formed and has always known you is reshaping how you see your own life, and one concrete way you will honor the God-given worth of unborn or vulnerable life this week.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The capstone question gathers Psalm 139:13–16 and asks for a personal response with two movements: inward and outward. Inwardly, the truth that God formed and has always known the student is meant to reshape how they see their own life, often replacing shame or a sense of being overlooked with the security of being known and loved.

Press for one specific inward change. For one student it may be a new wonder at being made; for another, release from feeling unwanted; for another, a steadier identity grounded in God's knowing love. Ask them to name it concretely rather than leaving it general.

Then turn the truth outward toward the vulnerable. The student who has grasped that God forms and knows every human life cannot remain indifferent to unborn and vulnerable lives. Invite each person to choose one concrete way to honor that life this week: a prayer, a word of support to a struggling mother, a kindness to a dependent person, a more reverent way of speaking about these issues.

Close in worship and hope. The aim of this lesson is not to win an argument but to stand with David in awe before the God who knits us together, and to let that awe make us tender toward the smallest and most hidden. Send the class home both more secure in being known by God and more reverent toward every life He forms.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Personal appropriation of being formed and always known by God.
- Security and identity grounded in God's knowing love rather than in shame.
- Reverence for unborn and vulnerable life as the outward fruit of this truth.
- Worship, not mere argument, as the proper end of the lesson.

Discussion Prompts

- What is one way the truth that God formed and knows you is reshaping your life?
- What concrete way will you honor unborn or vulnerable life this week?
- How does standing in awe of God change the way we speak about these issues?