



## “Conspiracy Theory: When God Is Seemingly Against Us”

### Psalm 139

Earlier this week I released a new book entitled *Conspiracy Theory*, which explores one of the best loved and most popular passages in the Bible, Psalm 139. I was recently interviewed about the book, and have shared the questions and answers below. *Conspiracy Theory* investigates how we respond when we are struggling with deep disappointments, wrestling with unanswered prayers, and finding life crumbling around us. This investigation of Psalm 139 takes us on a journey from the heights of intimacy with God to the inevitable lows of life’s challenges, especially the surprises that leave us saying, “WOW! I never saw that coming.”

#### Why did you choose the intriguing title *Conspiracy Theory*?

I chose the title because I often find myself talking with people who are going through difficult and challenging experiences. Sometimes they are wrestling with significant disappointments, ranging from not receiving an expected promotion to living through a painful, debilitating divorce. In going through those deeply personal experiences, people often feel that God is conspiring against them.

#### Why did you write about an Old Testament Psalm, and why Psalm 139?

The book of Psalms contains some of the most loved and memorized passages in all of Scripture. Over the centuries, people have immersed themselves in the joy and warm affection contained within the Psalms, yet they have also turned to the Psalms in moments of great need. The Psalms fall into the category of being both a devotional hymn book and comforting prayer book.

The other reason the Psalms are loved is that they speak into our lives. They deal with the complicated and at times emotional issues so many of us face.

The reason I chose Psalm 139 is that it focuses on what it means to come to know God as He truly

is, not as we imagine Him to be. Once you develop a deeper, richer, fuller appreciation of the wonder and thrill of daily intimacy with God, nothing else will satisfy your soul again.

#### Why illustrate the lessons contained in Psalm 139 through the lives of biblical characters?

Most of us would agree that our lives are dominated by a mild addiction to a digital existence through the constant use of smart phones and digital devices. We may even give into the belief that purpose, meaning, and significance are now determined by how connected we are to the ubiquitous convenience of a digital playground. The immense popularity of social network sites like Twitter and Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok reveal that connectedness and intimacy are priorities for all of us.

Yet we also know that the deep abiding intimacy we seek cannot be accomplished through the anonymity of social network sites. Heart-transforming intimacy is found in a deep abiding relationship with God Himself, and we see this demonstrated in the lives of biblical characters. The various biblical characters we encounter in *Conspiracy Theory* allow us to identify with real people wrestling with real issues. They go through trials we can identify with, and they grow in stages we can understand.

#### You have touched on a number of controversial subjects. Why was it important to do so?

I wanted to write *Conspiracy Theory* in a manner that is warm, humorous, compelling, insightful, and, I hope, engaging for the reader. Yet I also wanted to touch on multiple spiritual issues that come directly out of exploring Psalm 139.

Engaging with the text of the psalm, the reader will develop the ability to nurture a spiritual life characterized by transparency and vulnerability, while understanding that God’s seeming *rejection* can often be His *redirection*. Such experiences teach us how to do the natural things spiritually and the spiritual things naturally.

I also touch upon the difficult and emotionally charged issues of abortion, suicide, and war. I hope the reader will welcome the opportunity to prayerfully think through these challenging issues and the complexities involved. Sometimes in dealing with controversial issues, we produce more heat than light, yet I trust that in exploring these

issues, the reader will prayerfully think through how to respond to these issues in a 21st-century cultural context.

#### Why did you include questions at the end of each chapter?

One of the things I wanted to do was to design each chapter so that both individuals and study groups would think deeply. The questions then encourage readers to thoughtfully reflect on how to apply the principles explored to their own lives.

If each chapter is explored in a group setting, readers can learn from the experience of others who have struggled with similar issues. Many of us would agree that learning alongside others has been a great encouragement to us as we have sought to grow in our faith.

#### If there is one thing you want your readers to take away from this book, what is it?

Actually, I have three things. The first is that there are hidden depths to Psalm 139 that will help readers move to the next level in their relationship with God. Second, intentionally engaging with the biblical principles contained in *Conspiracy Theory* is not for the fainthearted; it will challenge readers deeply and personally, while causing them to prayerfully ask some fearless, searching questions. Third, my prayer is that readers will come to a life-changing appreciation of the nature and character of God and discover that when they do, He often retunes their deepest affections.

*Conspiracy Theory* is now available at The Vineyard bookstore at First Presbyterian Church. You can pick up a copy by telephoning the bookstore at 864.565.0920 or emailing [vineyard@firstpresgreenville.org](mailto:vineyard@firstpresgreenville.org). It is also available on Amazon.com and BarnesandNoble.com.

