

Dangerous Prayers Msg 1 – Search Me  
 Sermon preached by Dr. Rick Mandl  
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Two words that we don't typically think of as going together are the words. . . Dangerous & Prayers

The reason is that the prayers we're most comfortable with are most often SAFE PRAYERS

"God bless me . . .

"God be with me . . .

"Watch over me . . .

There's nothing wrong with those prayers.

Those are all things we should pray for

But if that's as far as we go in prayer . . . .

Then I believe we're missing something.

Over these next few weeks we're going to look at some Dangerous prayers

And today's dangerous prayer is . . . "Search Me"

It's a prayer that David prayed in Psalm 139

David prayed this after his enemies and God's enemies were on the attack, and accusing David of having wrong motives.

Instead of asking God to defend him, he actually prayed a very dangerous prayer before God, when he asked God to search his heart.

Psalm 139 . . . the Psalm that contains this prayer is 24 verses long . . .

You'll look at the whole Psalm in your Life Group this week, but this morning I just want us to focus on the last two verses of this prayer. . .

Which are also our MEMORY VERSE for this week, so would you say it out loud with me . . .

***"Search me, God, and know my heart;  
 test me and know my anxious thoughts.  
 See if there is any offensive way in me,  
 and lead me in the way everlasting."***

***Psalm 139:23-24***

In order to understand this, what I want to do is break this prayer down into four sub-parts, and look at each of these, with the goal that you might make this prayer a regular part of your prayer life.

The first thing that David prays is this:

Number one, he prays. . .

1. Search My Heart

He says it very directly in verse twenty-three, "

***"Search me, God, and know my heart. . ."***

***Psalm 139:23a***

For some of you, you may look at that and go,

*"Now, why would I ask God to search my heart."*

He knows my heart.

He knows I've got a good heart.

*"You've got a good heart, and I've got a good heart, right?"*

*"We've got good hearts, right?"*

We'll sometimes say that about someone we admire. . .

We'll say, *"That person has a good heart."*

And what we mean when we say that is that person is honest, they are trustworthy, they're kind.

But the testimony of scripture is that nobody . . .

Not even the best of us has a perfectly good heart . . .

Jeremiah 17:9 says this:

***"The human heart is***

What??

Let's say it out loud

***"The human heart is the most deceitful of all things,***

And what is it?

***It is desperately wicked.***

***"Who really knows how bad it is?" Jeremiah 17:9***

All of us saw the news reports this past week of the horrendous evil that occurred on Friday in New Zealand as a white supremacist entered two mosques and killed 49 people.

For a long time we've thought that things like this only happen in the United States.

And that if just passed stricter laws we could legislate this kind of evil out of existence.

But this past week we saw it in New Zealand as 50 were killed.

And 8 years ago we saw something similar in Norway where over 70 were killed.

We'd like to believe that with tougher laws this evil wouldn't happen.

But the root problem isn't a legislative one, it's a heart problem

The human heart is deceitful, that it's desperately wicked, and that none of us know the potential, without Christ, that it has for evil and self-deception.

This is why David prays . . .

***"Search my heart, God. Show me what is in there. . . Search my heart, oh God."***

What's interesting is that back at the start of this Psalm, David begins his prayer by acknowledging that whether we ask for him to search us or not, God already knows everything about us .

Psalm 139:1-4

***1 O Lord, you have examined my heart  
and know everything about me.***

***2 You know when I sit down or stand up.***

***You know my thoughts even when I'm far away.***

***You see me when I travel***

***and when I rest at home.***

***You know everything I do."***

***You know what I am going to say***

***even before I say it, Lord."***

***Psalm 139:1-4***

David realized that God already knows everything about us

There is nothing that escapes his notice.

And that can make us uncomfortable, because we might have some things in our life that we would rather God not notice.

If we had our way we'd like to keep those things hidden.

But here's the thing . . .

It's ONE THING to know, on an intellectual level that God knows everything about us.

It's ANOTHER THING to ask him to bring those things to our attention.

And that's part of what makes this prayer . . . "Search me" . . . such a dangerous prayer.

You pray this prayer and God may show you some things in your heart that you would rather not see.

And he'll do that not to be cruel, but to bring you into deeper intimacy with Him as his Holy Spirit transforms you to be conformed to the image of Christ.

And we need that because when it comes to our hearts, we're often deceived

Pastor John Ortberg has written a book called . . . “The Me I Want To Be”  
 And in his book he says, in addition to “The Me I Want To Be” - - the person we aspire to become, we all have to acknowledge that there is also “A Me I Cannot See.”

There's a part of me that I'm blind to.

He gives the example. . .

He says “Let's say you're in a group, and there is someone there who is OBNOXIOUS, and DOMINATES THE CONVERSATION, and is ALWAYS NAME-DROPPING in order to make themselves seem more important.

This person is the kind of person that is emotionally needy, and causes everyone to cringe when they arrive because they just sort of suck the life out of the group.

Ortberg asks the question, “If you have one person like that in your group, who is the last person in the group to know?”

It's the person who has the problem.

We all struggle with this.

There Is A Me I Cannot See.

And we deceive ourselves into thinking that we're better than we actually are.

Ortberg says we suffer from the FUNDAMENTAL ATTRIBUTION ERROR.

And then he explains that. . .

“When I see bad behavior in you, I ATTRIBUTE IT to your flawed character.”

When it happens in me, I ATTRIBUTE IT to extraordinarily trying circumstances.

When you yell at your kid, you have AN ANGER PROBLEM.

When I yell at mine, it's MY KIDS' FAULT for misbehaving.

He says, when it comes to our memories . . .

Our memories are NOT SIMPLY FAULTY; they are FAULTY IN FAVOR OF OUR EGO.

People remember voting in elections they didn't vote in,

Voting for winners they did not vote for,

And giving money to charities that they never gave to.

They remember their children walking and talking at ages earlier than they did.

We are all viewing ourselves in the fun house mirror.

And that's why we need this prayer. . .

**“Search me God. . .”**

**“Search my heart. . .”**

It's a dangerous prayer, you need to understand that, but it's one that can make you so much closer to God.

There is a second thing that David essentially prays and it's . . .

## 2. Reveal My Fears

He says this in verse twenty-three,

**“Search me, God, and know my heart; test me**

And then what?

Say it out loud . . .

**and know my anxious thoughts.” Psalm 139:23**

What is it that makes you anxious?

What are your anxious thoughts.

A lot of times, we don't even acknowledge them.

We just think, *“Well, everybody worries about stuff like this.”*

What is that makes you afraid?

I'm not talking about spiders and snakes and things that go bump in the night,

What is it that internally makes you afraid?

What is that makes you anxious?

Afraid of losing your job?

Afraid of not getting married by such and such age?

Afraid of being stuck in the marriage that you're in and it not getting any better?

Afraid of the future, the unknown?

Afraid of failing?

Some people are afraid of succeeding.

Afraid of loss?

What if I lose somebody?

What if I lose something that I value so dearly?

Why is this important?

Why should we pray, "God, show me my anxious thoughts?"

I would suggest that it's because of this ...

And if you're taking notes, you can jot this down.

It's because . . . .

What we Fear the Most reveals where we Trust God the Least

Think about that.

What we fear the most reveals where we trust God the least.

If I'm scared to death that my marriage isn't going to work, well, I'm not trusting God with my marriage.

If I'm afraid that I'm not going to be able to pay the bills, I'm not trusting God to be my provider.

Whatever you fear the most reveals where you trust God the least.

*"God, reveal my fears. Test me, God, and show me where my anxious thoughts fall."*

I prayed this prayer this week.

***"Search me, God. Know my heart. Reveal my anxious thoughts,"***

And what God showed me about what I fear the most is not something I'm really proud of, but I am scared of failing.

And the truth is if I succeed, it's often because I'm driven by the fear of failing

Not being able to teach well, or as I teach I won't be connecting with the people who are listening

- that I'll be answering questions that nobody is asking.

And that fear of failure is a problem because in the church, in my role as pastor I need to be led by faith.

Without faith, it's impossible to please God

And as a pastor I have to love pleasing Him, more than I fear failing you.

So pray this prayer . . .

*"God, reveal my fears."*

And then when God does reveal those fears, do what he tells us to do in His word. . .

***"Cast those cares upon Him, because He cares for you."***

It's easier to try and cast those fears on ourselves and manage them ourself.

Realize that

***"God's perfect love casts out fear." 1 John 4:18***

And that

***God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.***

Commit those promises to memory.

And ask God to replace your fears with faith in Him.

David prays . . .

- Search my Heart
- Reveal my Fears

The third thing he prays is . . .

### 3. Uncover My Sins

This is what David prays. I love the courage it takes to pray this dangerous prayer.

He prays . . .

***"See if there is any offensive way in me . . ."*** **Psalm 139:24**

*"Show me, God, anything about my life that is inconsistent with your truth."*

*"God, show me anything that I'm doing that's displeasing to you."*

*See if there is any offensive way in me,"* because have you noticed, it's really difficult to see our sins in the mirror?

Oh, it's so easy to see everybody else's.

The problem is that we tend to accuse others, and what do we do with ourselves?

Excuse ourselves.

*"That's just the way I am."*

*It's not that big a deal.*

*It's none of your business. Judge not lest you be judged."*

It's so easy to see everybody else's sins, but not our own.

Why?

Because the heart is deceitful above all things.

So often we don't see our own sins because they're **blind spots** to us.

Blind spots are something we don't see on our own, but others around us do.

Four years ago at the Global Leadership Summit, Bill Hybels said somethings about **BLIND SPOTS** that were so good that I wanted to share them with you.

VIDEO FROM 2015 GLS "BLIND SPOTS"

What's your Blind spot?

If you have no clue, how would you go about finding out?

Three questions you can ask. . .

The first question to ask is . . .

1. What is God Telling Me About This?

David prayed, *"God, uncover my sins."*

You pray that prayer and God will begin to do it.

Sometimes he will just give you nudge. . .

You start to do something that isn't pleasing to Him, and you'll feel a sting of conviction.

That's His H.S. doing what you asked.

What is God telling you about your Blind Spot?

The next question you can ask is . . .

2. What are Others Telling Me About This?

In our last series when we were talking about criticism, I said...

- If one person calls you donkey (Ignore them)
- If two people call you a donkey (take a look in the mirror)
- If three or more people call you a donkey (buy a saddle)

If you consistently have people close to you, telling you that they are concerned about you in a given area, it might be time to listen to what they're saying.

A third question . . .

3. Where am I Most Defensive?

If someone tells you about something in your life and your knee jerk response is - - "Back off"

Chances are there's something in your life that ought to be dealt with that you're not willing to deal with.

When you have the courage to pray this prayer, *"See if there is any offensive way in me,"* let me make you a promise.

God will point some things out.

God will point some things out that you've been trying to explain away for a long time.

God will point some things out that you're trying to deny.

Do not deny the truth.

Denying the truth does not make truth false.

Submit yourself to what God is trying to show you, and then what do we do, is we have the courage when God shows us something, to bring it to light.

And to confess it.

There's different types of confession.

We confess to God for forgiveness . . .

And we confess to people for healing.

We confess to God for forgiveness.

Scripture says

***“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” 1 John 1:9***

but we, also, confess to people.

***“Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed.” James 1:16***

We confess to God for forgiveness, but we confess to people for healing.

This is a dangerous prayer. It takes courage to pray it, because when you pray it, He'll show you some things about yourself that you're not real proud of, but there's always grace.

There's always grace.

Then David, at the very end, what did he pray?

He prays, number four,

#### 4. Lead Me

When you show me what I don't like about myself, and show me what needs to be changed, now I want you to you lead me in the way I should go.

Verses 23 & 24

***“See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”***

***Psalm 139:23-24***

The first three parts of this prayer are “Search me . . .

“Examine my heart . . .

“Reveal my fears. . . .

“Uncover my sins . . .

But this last part has to do with behavior.

It's asking God to speak to you and show you what you should do about what he has revealed, and this last step is critical.

It's asking God to show you what you need to DO to deal with what He has revealed.

It's great to ask God to show you the things you need to change, as long as you do something about what he shows you.

James 1:22 says . . .

***“But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves. For if you listen to the word and don't obey, it is like looking at your face in a mirror but doing nothing to improve your appearance. . .”***

It's like you get up from the breakfast table. . .

You go brush your teeth . . .

You take a quick look in the mirror before you head off to work . .

And you notice you've got Maple Syrup on your chin.

And you think to yourself . . .

No big deal . . . I'll take care of it later.

***“But if you do what God's word says then he will bless you for it.” James 1:22-25***

Knowing God's Word is important.

But knowing without doing is tragic.

Jesus, when he taught his disciples said to them . . .

***“Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.” John 13:17***

Knowing by itself . . . Not enough.

The blessing comes from doing.

And sadly, it's all too possible to know without doing.

That video clip I showed you earlier about “Blind Spots.”

I believe that everything that speaker – Bill Hybels had to say about Blind Spots is true.

I believe that he believed what he was saying.

I also believe that he never imagined that just a few short years later, his own life would become a cautionary tale, regarding the very thing he was teaching others about.

Today Bill Hybels is out of ministry.

Just a year ago - - April of last year, he stepped down from the church he founded over 40 years ago - - resigning in the face of allegations of sexual misconduct.

Bill Hybels has not admitted to the allegations against him.

What he has admitted to, are blind spots, when it came to how he conducted himself.

Again, proving the truth of James 4:17

***“To one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin.” James 4:17***

You can be someone who stands before thousands, teaching about the danger of blind spots, and still be blind to your own blind spots.

The prayer “Search Me” is a dangerous prayer

When I pray that prayer I'm giving God permission to look deep into the depths of my deceitful heart, and to show me . . .

To test me. . .

To reveal to me any offensive way in me.

You're asking God to tell you what you most need to hear.

And He will.

He'll speak to you.

I remember, once when I said that, about God speaking to you...

Someone took me aside and asked me, “*Pastor Rick, does God speak to you?*”

I said, “Absolutely! All the time.”

One of the things he says to me most often is “Don't do that!”

The challenge for me more often than not, is not whether God is speaking.

It's whether I'm listening.

You ask God to search you and He will. . .

You ask Him to reveal what He's found and He will.

And then the challenge becomes what you're going to do with what he has shown you.

You see, in the early years, you often get the big things out of the way.

Then you walk with Jesus, and, suddenly, there are other things.

Someone once said to me (I wish I could remember who, because I'd give them credit - - but I don't so I can't)

They said, “One of the marks of growing relationship with Jesus Christ, is that you'll regard things in your life as sins, today, that you wouldn't have thought of as sins years ago.”

Why is that?

Has God changed?

No, you're becoming increasing sensitive to things in you that he wants to change and grow and that's a good thing.

When he points these things out to you he also points you to your need for Jesus Christ.

The prayer I'm encouraging you to pray this week . . .

"Search me"

When you pray this prayer, it will show you your need, and you take that need directly to Christ, and you let Christ meet that need and conform you to his image.

It's a dangerous prayer, but it's a prayer that can transform your life.

Let's close together with this prayer from Psalm 139, and here is our prayer.

LET'S PRAY

***"Search me, God, and know my heart. Test me, and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."***