

Search Me, O God, and Know My Heart

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[0 : 00] Take your Bibles and turn with me to the 139th Psalm.

We know this very well. I was going to say we're not going to read the whole thing. There were a few parts here I didn't want to read or was going to skip over because it didn't seem to be flow with the message.

But then as I pondered it and everything and went, how do you leave out God's word, first of all? And it's there for a reason. So we're going to read the whole thing.

It won't take too long. So if you're able, please stand for the reading of God's word. Psalm 139. And I'm reading from, I don't even know what version I have.

My wife knows. What do I have? There we are. I have the New American Standard myself. So it won't quite, I think this is ESV. It'll be a little different as I read.

[1 : 25] But, all right, here we go. Oh 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, oh 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 the 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.

[2 : 31] If I say, surely the darkness will overwhelm me and the light around me will be as 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. For you formed me, 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. Oh, 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.

[3 : 39] When I am awake, I am still with you. Now this is the part that I was going to leave out, because it just seems to be odd to be in here. He changes.

Oh, that you would slay the wicked, O God! Depart from me, therefore, men of bloodshed, for they speak against you wickedly, and your enemies take your name in vain.

Do I not hate those who hate you, O Lord? And do I not loathe those who rise up against you? I hate them with the utmost hatred, that they have become my enemies.

And he switches back. Search me, O God, and know my heart. Try me, and know my anxious thoughts, and see if there is any harmful way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

So it reads the word of God. Father, we ask that our eyes would be open, that we would have teachable hearts and minds this morning, that we would hear your word, and be able to apply it in our lives, and understand what's going on in our lives, and what's going on here.

[4 : 49] We say this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. So this message was born out of a couple of Sundays ago, when we had Communion Sunday, and Bill has said this several times, that during Communion, that we are to reflect on what Christ did for us.

And he said that he likes to also pray and ask that the Lord search his heart. And he loves that part to say, Search me, O God, and know my heart.

Show me anything that's in me that's not right. And so that Sunday, I went ahead and prayed that. And of course, that's a dangerous prayer to pray, because when you do that, things happen.

So lo and behold, as the week went on, and we'll get to that story, you know, later on in the message, but that's where this was born out of, because I had to live this revealing of my heart.

So I just want to take this apart a little bit. Got a question. Have you ever had a disconcerting feeling, where you just felt off?

[6 : 13] You're just going, something's not right. I just, I just, I'm off today. I'm off this week. It just, things just seem odd. And I'm not talking about mentally, because that happens to all of us, especially at our age.

That was a joke, folks. Okay. It even says laugh. No, it doesn't. Anyway, you feel agitated. You're restless.

You can't sit still. You're pacing. And perhaps it's your conscience that's bothering you, but you just can't shake it.

It literally haunts you while you are working, while you're eating, while you're just simply having, or while you're having a simple conversation with somebody.

It's just there while you're watching TV. And it even is there while you're sleeping, if you can even sleep, if not restlessly. This thing, this feeling of being off, is not in the back of your mind.

[7 : 20] It's at the forefront of your thoughts. And constantly, you just can't shake it. Has that ever happened to anybody, or am I alone? And it doesn't happen real often, but it does happen from time to time.

And, but, so, because it happened to me this last couple weeks, I had to examine it, and say, what is going on here? What's, what brought it on?

Did something bring it on that I, you know, not that I could put my finger on at the moment. And does this thing that's happening to me, does it even have a name? What's it called?

Well, the Bible calls this, as, as it says in verse 23, anxious thoughts. I have, I had, I was having anxious thoughts.

Again, we'll get to all this, what all this means. There could be many reasons why we have anxious thoughts. There could be external stressors that happen.

[8 : 22] It could be our job, our finances, relationships, or it could be internal, where we are worrying about the future. We're doing self-negative talk, and, or that we're dwelling on past mistakes.

So those could be some of the reasons to have anxious thoughts. If we are having anxious thoughts, you can try different methods to ease those anxious thoughts.

You can do, I love these things, you can do mindful and relaxation techniques. You can do deep breathing, meditation, muscle relaxation to calm the nervous system, and that'll help.

Yeah. Or you can do CBT, which stands for Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, which, it helps identify and challenge those negative thought patterns to change them.

Yeah, that sounds fun. Or, you could do a lifestyle adjustments, you could regularly exercise, you can eat a balanced diet, you can make sure you're getting enough sleep.

[9 : 36] Yeah, that'll keep caring those anxious thoughts. That'll do it. Or, you can seek professional help. Seek the help of a mental health professional.

Actually, that suggestion I like. Believe it or not, seek help from a mental health professional. I even believe it's in Scripture and that Scripture supports it, that advice, 100%.

Ah, I didn't used to think that, but I do now. but perhaps, that professional help that you're seeking is someone like Socrates, the famous philosopher who said, the unexamined life is not worth living.

You need to examine your life. Ah, sounds so good. or, when he said, to find yourself, you need to think for yourself.

Well, here's the most popular one. Know thyself. Socrates, yes. What a great humanistic advice he gave.

[10 : 54] Sounds good until we explore what that know thyself actually means. What is thyself?

Well, when you look up the definition of it and how people give it its meaning, it is the seat of one's inner life encompassing your emotions, your intellect, your will, and your character.

That's thyself. Now, when you take and compile various scriptures referring to the heart, you get the same definition.

It is the seat of one's inner life encompassing emotions, intellect, will, and character. So, thyself and heart are synonymous with one another.

So, knowing thyself really means to know your heart. heart, sounds good. There's only one problem and it's a major problem. Jeremiah 17 9 says, the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.

[12 : 12] Who can know it? If we read that again slowly, or if I say it again slowly, the heart or who we are, thyself, is deceitful.

How deceitful is it? It is deceitful above all things. It is the most deceitful thing that there is, our heart.

And what's our heart? It's a seed of our inner life. It encompasses our emotions, intellect, will, and character. It's us. We are deceitful to ourselves.

It is desperately wicked. That's not good. And the question, who can know it?

Well, Socrates says, know thyself. Impossible. You can't do it. So, what that mental health professional doesn't work for us.

[13 : 17] So, who should we seek? If we don't know our own heart, will the person we seek help to know it any better, let alone their own heart? There's only one who knows our heart, and of course, that is our creator, God.

Remember verse, let me turn back to it, verse 1 through 3, O Lord, you have searched me, and you know me. You know when I sit down, and when I rise up, when you understand my thoughts, from afar, you scrutinize my path, and my lying down, and are intimately acquainted with all my ways.

He knows you, right? So, we're good. Verse 13 also says, for you formed my inward parts.

He knows you, intimately. And that's safe. That's a safe place to be. We're in the most lovingest of hands. Because he knows us intimately, we can request what verse 23 is saying.

Verse 20, we're going to be bouncing around a little bit here. Search me, O God, and know my heart. We can request that because we know that God loves us.

[14 : 37] The searching of our hearts is a ministry of the Holy Spirit. We find that in Romans 8, 27. And this is not a self-analysis or taking stock or thinking happy thoughts about yourself when we're trying to know our hearts, know ourselves, and asking God to search me.

It's not because I think I've got it all together and I'm saying, hey, you know what, God, go ahead and search me. You'll find all is good, and at the very least, my heart's intentions, are good.

You'll see. You'll see. I'm okay. I may have done something over here, but my intention wasn't going to do that, so it's all my intention. That's all that matters. Search me, and if you find I'm having trouble with somebody, go fix them.

That's not the problem. It's not me. Go fix them. If you find I'm struggling in a certain area with a particular sin, just take care of it. Search me.

If you find that happening, just take care of it. We've got to be so careful because we so easily justify what's going on in our heart's thoughts, and we're being deceived.

[15 : 54] We're told that. Our heart is deceitful above all things, so it's deceiving us. We're deceiving ourselves when we're just taking counsel with ourselves.

when we're asking for God to search us, I guess when we say God searches, that we're asking, we're requesting, we're saying, I need you God to search me.

It's a prayer. Search me, oh God. We're saying, I'm willing to be laid bare. Dig into those deep places of my being. I'm not afraid because I know you love me, and you already know me.

It's asking God to search you and reveal anything deceitful, how you are lying to yourself. I don't want to be wrong about my thoughts, opinions, understanding, etc.

I want to be led in the way everlasting. I don't want to get this wrong when you're searching me and showing me things. Lord, search me.

[16 : 58] Show me those areas that are out of alignment. Show me those attitudes that I'm not even aware of. Show me those tendencies that I wouldn't even be cognizant of.

You know what? Don't pray this if you don't mean it. Don't be cavalier. You need to be willing to throw away or change anything that he shows which is detrimental to your walk.

Search me. If there's something wrong, I want it revealed so I can walk with you in the way everlasting. I want to be right with you. When you start this prayer and you say search me, you need to pause and be still for a time.

You can't just simply go about your busy life. You can because he can still work in it. But if you're able, pause and just be still for a little bit. You've already got your anxious thoughts that are going on.

Take a deep breath. Limit those distractions. Stay away from just even idle talk. Stay away from it.

[18 : 15] Be quiet for a while. Stay away from TV. Stay away from the radio. Stay away from books. Unless it's the good book. But just back away for a moment.

Let God show you these things. Lift up your anxious thoughts and let God reveal how he, this is, it seems like I'm switching gears here.

Lift up your anxious thoughts and let God reveal how he gave you a test and what grade you got. So, because it says here in verse 23, the second half, try me and know my anxious thoughts.

Try me. So, to me, what caused those anxious thoughts? It was something that you were being tried because we asked him to try us.

Try me. Go ahead and try me. Test me because the testing will show something. We'll get into that in a second again. And, let's see, back to knowing my heart.

[19 : 25] Sorry for jumping around like that. I had it out of order on my notes. Know my heart, the seat of one's, again, the seat of one's inner life, encompassing your emotions, intellect, will, and character.

And, the question is, do you really want your heart known? Is it really that wicked and deceitful? Most of us, if we're truthful, don't want to have our true heart revealed because it's ugly and scary.

So scary and ugly that we try to hide it from others and God as if that's possible. Adam and Eve hid in the garden because their heart was full of guilt and shame.

Jonah hid in a boat because his heart was full of disobedience to what God had called him to do. Elijah, after his triumph over 450 prophets at Mount Carmel, the prophets of Baal, that what he hid in a cave because Jezebel threatened to kill him.

He was hiding because his heart didn't trust God to protect him from dangers and the challenges of life. King David, he tried to hide his sinful heart of pride.

[20 : 46] After being with Bathsheba, he devised cover-up plots so others wouldn't know what he had done. He was hiding from everybody else. People of the world in the last days will hide in caves and cry to the mountains and the rocks to hide them from God's wrath.

That's in Revelation 6. Hiding, we like to hide, but you can't hide. Hide from God. So, you might as well talk with them.

Now, getting into the second part of verse 23. Try me and know my anxious thoughts. A heart full of guilt or shame, disobedience, lack of trust in God, pride, fear, etc.

can be the cause of our anxious heart. That could be the cause of it, but we don't know. we don't know why we have an anxious heart, but, let's see, why does this not make sense when I'm reading it?

So, again, the trying first happens, a test happens first, and then we develop an anxious heart because us being tested, us being tried, it reveals something.

[22 : 11] When we're being tried, when we are being squeezed or we're under pressure, our true nature, our true self emerges, and it's, so then, like I said, a lot of times, those are not pretty times, and so, we become anxious inside because we start thinking about it, and we start dwelling on it, but it's not a bad thing because God is trying to show us something.

If you've prayed this prayer, and you're saying, search me, and he says, okay, I'll search you, I'm going to show you your heart, I already know what it's like, but I'm going to let you see it, I'm going to let you see what your emotions and intellect and will and character and all that stuff is like, and it's not going to be pretty, and it's going to create anxiousness in you.

There's a reason for that anxiousness so that you will seek me and turn from your ways. all right, so there's a reason why we get anxious thoughts or an anxious heart is because we're being tried.

So then it moves on to see, verse 24, and see if there be any harmful or hurtful way in me, wicked way, some translations say.

So after the test, show me the results. What transpired? What happened? No matter how ugly or painful or uncomfortable it is, use whatever means to reveal it to me.

[23 : 54] Whatever means. Now you need to reveal it to me, but sometimes because we like to hide from it, we don't acknowledge it, so we just bury ourselves in different things to keep us busy.

We bury ourselves in our job and all these other things. use whatever means you need to reveal it to me. Use my spouse.

Let her say something to me. Use my kids. Saying, hey, dad, hey, mom, something's not right here. You said we're not going to do this, and yet you do this.

I'll do as I say, not as I do. Right? The old saying. Friends, brothers, sisters, brothers, and as we learned last week, he even uses those in authority to call out when you've done something wrong.

Romans 13, four through five, we again saw this last week, Bill was pointing this out, that the rulers or authorities are ministers of God to you for good.

[25 : 01] But if you do what is evil, be afraid, for it does not bear the sword for nothing, meaning authority doesn't come down on you for, he doesn't, they don't have the ability to punish you for nothing.

They don't have that sword for nothing. So if you've done something wrong, and it warrants whatever punishment, the hammer's coming down, the sword's coming down. Therefore, it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for the conscience sake.

So by you being caught, doing something wrong by the authorities, it also helps clear your conscience. So there's something to that too. Now comes, maybe this stuff will start to come together.

So I started with this prayer about Search My Heart on Communion Sunday. The next day at work, I'm talking to a fellow worker, he just started there not too long ago, and he was asking me what I was going to be doing on Father's Day and stuff.

And I said, well, I'm going to be giving a sermon. He goes, oh, you're going to be giving a sermon? Yeah, and do you do that often? I said, I have the privilege a couple times a year to be able to do this.

[26 : 22] And he said, what's the sermon going to be about? I said, I don't know yet, but God will show me. And so anyway, because the subject that God was brought up, we were able to talk about the things of God in various forms and stuff.

And so it was kind of neat, good talk and everything. And then a work order came in and a whole bunch of workers came in. And so we gathered them up because he's new, I'm training him and stuff.

So we take off to go into the jail and to the rest of the facility to work on these various things that need fixing. And there happened to be a work order, a couple of work orders, three of them in fact, from the same gentleman who was, shall we say, in my opinion, was nitpicking and he would say, you know, this needs to be fixed, you know, the key for this doesn't work and you go there and you stick your key in there and that works just fine.

What's wrong with that? All right, no problem. So I'm telling the guy, sometimes this happens, you know, my co-worker, Samuel is his name, I told Samuel, yeah, sometimes these workovers come in and they're no problem.

So we go on to the next one that the guy had and again, no problem. We go on to the third one and he's saying that the walk-in freezer door won't shut all the way and so because it's not closing, of course, the cold air is getting out and stuff so something's wrong, the door won't close.

[27 : 57] I go up to the door, it's closed, first of all, I go to the door, I open it, I let it go, it shuts, nice and tight, do it again, look at it, do it again, I'm looking all over the place, is there something that's sticking that I don't see, that I don't notice, that I'm taking my time to see because the guy put in a work order saying this was happening, it needs to be addressed, it needs to be fixed, you can't leave like that, it's my job, I'm told to fix it, I'm telling Samuel, we've got to do our due diligence, we've got to look around, so we spent about 20 minutes on investigating different scenarios that could possibly keep this door open, nothing, it closes just fine, and that, by the way, was what happened with the other two things that I had to address from him, and so I'm getting there, don't worry, we're getting there, I want your job, so when I get back to the shop, and I'm writing on, I'm closing out the work orders, I told Samuel,

I said, you know, this guy does this all the time, he just, he just doesn't investigate things, he just puts these work orders in, he wastes our time, we've got so many work orders to do, we don't have time to waste this, so I said, I'm going to put it in to the description of what we did, and I was very snarky about it, and I said, one more time, a wild goose chase, please check to make sure these are legitimate requests, or things that need to be done, rather than me having to spend my time on this stuff, and I hit sin, of course I did, so, and I'm all, you know, boasting and everything to Samuel, about that, and saying, see, that's how you take care of that, when you got somebody that's basically against you and stuff, and so, that's how you take care of that, about a half hour later, all of a sudden,

I get an email, personally, from this guy, says, I do not appreciate the way you answer these work orders, that is unprofessional, that there is no reason for that, and I don't do this on purpose, people tell me things that are wrong, and I simply report it, I didn't investigate it, because somebody else told me that it was the problem, it wasn't me, and I'm going, man, why did I do that, and then, I look at the email that he sent to me, and not only did he send it to me, he sent it to five other people, and it's like, oh, that's not good, this was between him and me, but now, it's going to all the big bosses, and it's like, oh, no, but he didn't send it to my boss, my direct boss, or the one above him, he actually sent it to all his bosses, so they would know what was going on, and so,

I'm going, oh, so I went home, of course, I told Sherry all about it and everything, and I said, I'm never going to do another work order from him again, you know, if one comes in, I'll leave it for everybody else to do, and my wife, because she's brave, and because she confronts things, which I absolutely appreciate, she said, you would hate being your own employee, wouldn't you, because of your attitude, don't you, because there were some more things in there that I said I wouldn't do, and so, she confronted me on it, quietly, softly, but of course, that gets me to start thinking, yeah, you're right, but I have a right to be mad and everything, so, anyway, I go into work the next day, and I go to my direct boss, and I said, because I don't want you to be blind sighted by this, this is what transpired, this is what happened, he goes, send me the email,

I sent it to him, and he and I are very good friends, and next thing I know, he's sending out an email to this guy, and says, what Mark did was absolutely wrong, he will be disciplined, and I'm just going, but Jesse, you know this happens to you too, and stuff, no, and I said, thanks for having my back, buddy, and now he sent it to his boss, the email, so the next day, his boss comes in, our top boss, and he goes, I go, did you see the email, and he goes, yes, and he says, we've talked about this before, you sending out these types of emails that you're correcting people, and it's like, well yeah, they need to be corrected, you know, they're messing up, you know, they're taking up our time, and stuff, I told you not to do it, why are you doing it, that is unprofessional, so he shoots an email to the guy too, and says, he was unprofessional, there's no excuse for it, it will not happen again, the point is, that this is where the rulers of people in authority are ministers of God to you for good, but if you do what is evil, be afraid, for they do not bear the sword for nothing, now, fortunately,

[33 : 37] I, my discipline was a stern talking to, it could have been where I was suspended for a while to, because he hadn't talked to me about it before, but I justified my mind, and in my heart, it was okay, so, again, coming full circle here for me, started off, hang on, let's back up for just a second, so when I was saying that we were going to, that I wanted to skip this part that seemed out of place, where David is talking about all these wonderful things of God and everything, and how he knows them, and formed them, and stuff, and all that stuff, and all of a sudden he goes into this part, verse 19, oh, that you would slay the wicked, oh God, depart from me, therefore, men of bloodshed, and goes on about this, I hate, I hate them, I hate them, I hate them, and it's like, what in the world is going on here?

Well, I think it's exactly what was happening to me. I prayed that the Lord would show me my heart on Monday in the beginning, I was able to share the Lord, share about things of the Lord with Samuel, till he asked me about things, and we were having a good time, and then all of a sudden, we go into the jail, and this thing, these work orders from this guy, and it's like I switched gears all of a sudden, it's like, oh, I hate this guy, I hate when he does this to us, it's just a pain and everything, oh, and I'm, so, God didn't show me this till about 11 o'clock last night, that that was me, this part about I slay the wicked, or slay the wicked and get rid of them, and I hate those all that stuff, he goes, that's you, Mark, oh, okay, now I know why it's here, why David put this in here, David had anxious thoughts about his enemies, he, that's all, that was always in the forefront of his mind, even while he's praising the Lord and stuff, he always thought about his enemies, he's, now he loved God so much, he hated the enemies that were speaking against

God, and it seems right, right, seems like the right thing to do, but we're told to love our enemies, so this did not match up with God's heart, the way David's saying this stuff, and God was just simply trying to show him his heart, his heart, do you follow what I'm saying on here, and it was a big eye opener for me when he showed me that, because I do the same thing, I think something is okay, I justify it in my own heart, my own thinking and stuff, and the Lord has to come by and show me, no, what kind of example did I set for Samuel that day, boasting about it, I taught him a lesson, no, who got a lesson high?

I did, I got humbled immensely, I was walking around the house, very somber after that, because the Lord hadn't revealed this stuff to me yet, but part of the process was, I didn't watch TV, I was just walking around restless, couldn't sleep, it was just that nagging thing, I didn't know what was happening, I didn't know it was called an anxious thought, until reading this, and I was like, oh, that's what's going on, how come there's an anxious thought, because I tried you, I gave you a trial, and guess what, here's your grade, big fat F, yep, that's right, Mark, you failed, that's alright, we'll fix that, because I love you, and if you're willing, because you asked me to show it to you, I showed it to you, what are you going to do with it, are you going to continue in that fashion, in that form, that way of thinking at work, and also being a witness to somebody who you're trying to witness to, but be a bad witness,

I guess you're being a witness of what not to do, so, anyway, I think I jumped ahead quite a bit here, I hope that that all makes sense to you, you know, the sharing of personal stories, it's difficult to know how they'll be received, because it's personal, it happened to me, it didn't happen to you, I'm just hoping that you can relate to it to some degree, I'm hoping that I'm not the only one that struggles with these types of things, so, that's why I share them, I don't do it to put the spotlight on me whatsoever, and in fact, it's to my shame that I speak of them, thank you for getting me emotional again, all right, so, he says, lead me in the way everlasting, lead me, I can't do it by myself,

[38 : 59] I know that you go before me and behind me, keep testing, revealing, and correcting, so I will ultimately lead a life of meaning and purpose into eternity, and love is the way everlasting, love will be there forever, so that is the everlasting way that he wants us to end up being, is love, because part of my walk is to include love for others, even my enemies, enemies, and I'm more able to do this, because after my heart has been revealed, I now have compassion and love, realizing that I'm no better than anyone else, so who am I to judge and complain?

I am way too often, just like the prophet Isaiah in his first five chapters, passing out judgments, woe to you, woe to you, and you, and you, and you, and you, woe to all you guys, pointing the finger at everybody, pointing out flaws, but then when I spend time with God and ask him to search me and know my heart, try me, and show me what caused my anxious thoughts, reveal them so I can repent and walk in the way everlasting, in other words, loving others, because I have seen myself, and all I can say is, woe is me, a man of unclean lips, you know, the apostle Paul also learned the same lesson, he was zealous for God, the God that he understood, the God that he thought how he operated and stuff, and so he was persecuting the Christians because

Jesus was a false prophet, he wasn't the Messiah, and so he was doing what he thought was right, but then came the road to Damascus, and Paul learned about himself, and what did that ultimately lead to, is of course, loving others, and Jesus is our perfect example, he had no anxious thoughts, of course, and why didn't he?

It's because he daily went someplace alone, early in the morning, to spend time with his father, renewing his mind, and getting instructions for the day, we know from scripture that he only spoke what the father told him to say, he only did what he saw the father doing, and he did not seek his own will, but he did the will of his father, he walked and he loved everlasting, he walked in the way everlasting of love, so I hope all that makes sense, that's it, I mean, I know, man, this is short for me, but we're done, father, father, I just thank you for revealing things of my heart, that you love me so much that you don't leave me where I'm at, and I just ask that as my brothers and sisters hopefully become brave enough to pray this same prayer of search me, oh God, and know my heart, try me, and know my anxious thoughts, and see if there's any hurtful way in me, that you would gently show them where they need to be corrected to, and continue to direct and guide me in those ways too, father,

I just thank you so much for your word, and that you love us, me, to confront me, and not leave me where I'm at, in Jesus' name, we say thanks, amen.

[43 : 18] Amen.