

4. I don't know what to feel.

Psalm 139:23-24

Search me, O 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.

If you can identify with a sense of confusion, don't worry, you're not the only one. Many of us are struggling not only to know what we feel exactly, but how to put those confused feelings into words.

There will be many people, especially those with direct contact with recent events, who will have experienced full blown shock, in the fullest medical-psychological sense of the word. But many others have symptoms of it too: numbness, disorientation, denial, hopelessness and an inability to make decisions.

One reason it's so hard to know what to feel is a lack of facts. Indeed, the vital information needed to make any sense of what happened was lost in the woods near Boot.

Time is not yet in our favour either. I don't just mean that the events are so recent. The passing of time doesn't necessarily clarify confusion. It's only through time spent talking and listening that our feelings begin to unravel. But talking and listening takes time.

Psalm 139 tells us exactly how well God's knows us. He knew you in the womb, he knows you round the clock, he knows you at home and on holiday, he knows you when you're up and down. He knows you not with the curious interest of a scientist looking down a microscope at a specimen, but with the love of a father for a child.

As a little boy I used to find it strange when my mum said that she knew me better than I knew myself. "How could she" I used to wonder, "When she's her and not me?"

As a parent myself, I know exactly what she meant. We know our little children's strengths, weaknesses, limits and potential far better than they do. One of a parent's most important tasks is to help children know themselves as they really are. At the same time we assure them that we love them unconditionally as they are.

God is at work in the same way in all who follow Jesus. We are his children. He knows us better than we know ourselves. Over time he can help us to know ourselves accurately, assuring us that he loves us in all our inner confusion.

In the midst of confusion there's no better prayer than the one at the end of Psalm 139. Invite God to untangle the riddle of your emotions. Why not walk into today with the chorus of Cliff Richard's version of Psalm 139 in your mind. Listen to it on YouTube if you want to:

You know me better than I know myself,
Better than I know myself,
Time after time you've shown it to be true
That no one loves me like you.