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# **I Know Thee by Name**

**# 1127-B**

**Series: Making the Spiritual Switch**

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INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

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# I Know Thee By Name

*Jesus is the sweetest name we know. And as we come into Your presence, Father, we call that precious name and humbly invoke the power, the authority and the nature of that incredible name, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus. And as we do, Father, may our hearts bow in adoration and praise at that incredible gift called grace, that gives us the privilege to call that name, to invoke that power and to stand upon His reputation rather than ours. What a privilege; what an awesome privilege.*

*Settle our hearts this morning, Father. We've come, many of us, from distracting situations and we need our hearts to be in tune with You and focused upon no one but You and nothing but Your will. And so, we would ask, Father, that You would give us blinders that we might see nothing but the person of Jesus Christ and hear nothing but the Word of God this morning. We recognize our inadequacies both to teach and to learn, but praise God, You have taken and delighted in making, something out of nothing. And You have taken even the weakness of this world and turned it into strength. So, we confess that weakness and we ask, Father, that amazing grace would be ours this morning.*

*Teach us about that wonderful name.*

*Amen.*

Try if you will, to picture the scene with me once again. It's a playground filled with noisy children. Some eighty-five of them, if you will. And try to picture seven swings rising and falling in unison. Children giggling and screaming. Little voices chattering away as they stand in line to come down the slides or swing from the monkey bars, or balance on the teeter-totters, or crawl through a maze of colored tires. From a distance, they all look alike. They all have padded hoods and winter jackets and some are a little taller. Some are a little noisier, but basically, the average passerby would just see a crowd of eighty-five children on a playground.

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And then it happens. Just slightly louder than the noise of the crowd, a woman's voice can be heard. "Mary, Mary, come here." Eighty-four children continue to play. But over in the corner unnoticed by everyone else, one head bobs up; one body bolts from the swing she is on, and runs as fast as she can into the arms of her waiting mother. Now, how did her mother find her in the midst of all those children? A mother has no problem with that. She knows her own. And how did Mary recognize her mother's voice in all that confusion? She had no problem with that. She knew her mother's voice. Eighty-four other mothers could have called "Mary," and probably gotten no response. But she knew her mother's voice, and her mother, of course, knew her name. So, they had the basis for instant communication.

Incidentally, it was no accident that she was called Mary. There may be eleven other Marys in that class, we don't know, but it was still no accident. God in eternity past, before the foundation of the world, determined to call that child Mary. Her parents gave her the name; God had delegated that to them, and God placed that in their hearts at the appropriate time, but it was God who named her. He is in the name business. Did you know that? Names mean a lot to God, and names say a lot about God.

Now, I know all of you that know me, know that I am bad with names. I can talk to you today; shake hands and ask you questions so that I'll be sure to remember the next time I see you. And I'll run into you tomorrow morning and go blank. I can't remember names. I'm so glad God is not that way. God knows my name. He has millions of names to keep up with, but He'll never forget even one. And that is what this lesson is about. It's about names. We're winding down. Next week will be the end of our study on "Making the Spiritual Switch," and this is the next to last lesson in that series and the next to last lesson on John, chapter 10. We're looking at the sheep and the Shepherd and trying to make the "spiritual switch." And this is about a Shepherd, the Scripture says, who knows His sheep so well, that He has given each one of them a name, and when He calls them, He calls them by name. Maybe because they have a need, maybe because He is searching for them and they are lost. But He calls them by their name. We may be sheep, but we have a Shepherd who does not see us just as part of a flock; He sees us as individual sheep, each one with a name. And each one for whom the Good Shepherd died.

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### I- WHAT'S IN A NAME?

You remember we were dealing with John 10, and I'll take you to verses 3 and 4, this morning, and there we begin.

...and the sheep hear his [the Shepherd's] voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.

And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.

(John 10:3,4)

It is a well-known fact, apparently, that the Jewish shepherds used to name their sheep. Sometimes they would name them because they had some distinguishing mark such as "white face" or "black foot." Or, maybe they were named for some distinguishing characteristic, like "swifty," "slow-poke," or "shy one." Some were named because of who they belonged to. But virtually all of them had names. And we read that, not only did they have names, but dumb though they were, they learned to respond when that name was called, because that name set them apart from the other sheep.

In the same way, the Good Shepherd knows His sheep. And we, the sheep, know the Shepherd's voice. So unique is each of us to Him that he calls each of us by our own name. That's how important names are to God. Have you ever thought about how important names are to God? Have you ever thought about Genesis 5, verse 1?

This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him;

Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created.

(Genesis 5:1,2)

From the beginning of time, names were important to God because they are a means of identification.

And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field: (Genesis 2:20a)

So, God named Adam, and Adam named each kind of animal, a least, and as soon as God gave woman to man, He gave him the responsibility of naming her.

And Adam called his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all living. (Genesis 3:20)

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So, here was the first case recorded in Scripture of a name being given with an explanation of why it was given. Adam called his wife Eve because she was the mother of all living. The name means life-giving or life spring. You say, “How did Adam know that? We don’t know. God named Eve. But He placed that name in Adam’s heart so that though Adam thought it was his idea, it was God who set her apart, and He gave her a name that was peculiar to her; a name that would prove to be a prophetic description of the nature and purpose of her stay on earth. So much of Scripture focuses on the giving of names; names by which God calls His sheep.

We have been looking at some of those passages and overlaying them against a backdrop of the world we live in, and we’ve been asking you to make the “spiritual switch,” and this morning, we’re going to look at the plan and the purpose in the giving of names. What’s in a name? What’s in a name, indeed.

### Identification

The first reason God gave names to His sheep and the first thing that names represent is identification. I’m not going to dwell on this, but boy, is it a perfect opportunity. This is why you wear *nametags*, got it? We’ll get back to that after the class. It identifies you. It sets you apart and gives someone something by which to call you. As someone said at the end of the first class, “Would you rather walk in here and have a number, and say, ‘Hello, 15. Glad to meet you 22?’” I don’t think so. In life, that’s what is happening. When you call, they don’t ask you your name anymore, they basically say, “No, I don’t need your name. What’s your account number?” “What’s your identification number?” “What’s your social security number?” Names set you apart. God calls you by your name. If I were to come out with that roving microphone nobody will ever respond to, and ask you the question, “Do you like your name?” history indicates that probably close to half of you would say, “No, I don’t like my name.” But that’s immaterial. God gave you that name for a number of reasons, and the first of those reasons is, so that you might be known as an individual. Dozens of soldiers will line up for duty and isn’t it amazing—have you ever been out there and seen this—they all look alike. They’ve got the same uniform, the same haircut, stand the same, and walk the same, but the first thing the sergeant does is have roll call. Why? To identify who is present. He calls them by name.

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There is a second form of identification; it is “group identification.” A group of little kids will form a club, and they will be the Tigers. And they build a little treehouse or something, and they are identified as Tigers, and nobody else can get in. You have to know the key password and nobody else knows it.

Maybe it’s in school and you are a member of the Glee Club or the Pep Squad or something like that, and that name identifies you and to whom you belong; it singles you out. It’s why women change their last names when they marry. They are identifying with another. They do that by taking on a new name.

Jehovah, even Himself, decided He needed a name. Did you know that? The scenario went something like this—well, it went exactly like this.

And God said unto Moses, “I AM that I AM”, [literally, “I’d like to introduce Myself, Moses. My name is I AM”] and He said; Thus shall thou say unto the children of Israel, “I AM hath sent me unto you.” [That’s My name. You can identify Me that way.]

And God said moreover unto Moses, “Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, the Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob hath sent me unto you; this is my name forever, [it will never change] and this is my memorial unto all generations.”

(Exodus 3:14-15)

[Don’t you ever forget it.]

God gave Himself a name, and He introduced Himself by that name for a lot of reasons. The first reason was identification. He gave Himself a name; then He could identify His nature through that name, and ultimately identify with His people by giving them His name. Names are God’s plan for identification. We don’t take them lightly.

In Acts 2:38 and many other places, we read about baptizing in the name of the Lord Jesus. When you are baptized in the name you are identifying with Him, through baptism.

### Authority

The second reason God used names is to demonstrate authority. Think about it. Somebody knocks on your door and they say, “Open up in the name of the law.” What do you do? You better open up. Why? Because the name of the law gives them

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authority. Pastor Smith has spiritual authority. Mayor Jones has political authority. General Johnson has military authority. Those words, pastor, mayor, general in front of their names, give them authority to exercise power in that particular realm. It's what Jesus meant in John 5:43. He said, "I AM come in my Father's name. I have come in my Father's authority." That's why He said in Matthew 18, about "receiving a child in My name." In the same chapter, we read of "two or three shall be gathered together in My name." In chapter 24, we read: "Many shall come in My name..." They all speak of the authority granted by God to those who have the right to use that name. And all of these passages talk about that principle. In John 14:13, that incredible passage we read, "Whatever ye ask in My name..." When you approach the Father in the authority of the Son, He hears you. A name speaks of authority.

### Character

So, a name represents identification; it tells who you are. A name represents authority; it empowers you in a given area. Thirdly, a name—and this is the one we often overlook—represents character. Your name, believe it or not, says something about who you are. And that's what David was asking you to think about. Your name tells you who you are from God's perspective. It represents character. We read about a conversation that took place, wherein God, Himself, gave His name as an explanation of His character as an example to us.

And the Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. [He introduced Himself. He said, "I'd like to meet you. This is My name."]

And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.

Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin...

And Moses made haste and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped. (Exodus 34:5-8)

Why? Because God said,

"I AM proclaiming My name and My name is grace, mercy, patience, goodness, truth. That's Who I AM; therefore, that's My name.



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And she shall bring forth a son, [Why was this so important? You'll see why.] and thou shalt call his name JESUS [Why?] for he shall save his people from their sins.

Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying,

Behold a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.

Then, Joseph being raised from sleep did [exactly] as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife:

And knew her not till she brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS. (Matthew 1:21-25)

Why? Because of who He was and because of what He would do. His mission, His ministry, and His character were all wrapped up in that beautiful name. "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, sweetest name I know; fills my every longing, keeps me singing as I go." What's so sweet? Is it that name? You many know somebody named Jesus who robbed a bank. No, beloved, it isn't the name. It's that the name represents who He is, sweetest name I know, because the nature of God is His sweetness. You'll see many times in Scripture where names were changed. The reason the names were changed is because God had moved into a person's life and change their character, and so, He changed their name as a demonstration of that change of character.

### Reputation

Finally, there is one more thing. Names also represent reputation. That is why somebody might say, "I don't want my good name defiled. I can't enter into a business relationship or any kind of friendship with that person. It will defile my reputation, my good name," if you will. Reputation rides on a name. God's reputation is no different.

Moreover thou shalt not lie carnally with thy neighbor's wife, to defile thyself with her.

...neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I AM the LORD. (Leviticus 18:20-21b)

Certain things we do as Christians "profane" the name. We bring dishonor to the name. We destroy the reputation of the name. It's an incredible responsibility. Most of you here, or many

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of you here are parents. And you are very aware that your children begin life either blessed or cursed depending on the reputation behind your name. A famous criminal's son named after his father, has a reputation to overcome. A celebrity named after his or her famous parent, has a reputation to fulfill. In either case, they begin life marked, because they begin life "named." The reputation of who you are named after makes a big difference in how people view you as we shall see in a moment.

### II- WHO KNOWS MY NAME?

So, that's what a person's name represents—identity, authority, character, and reputation. We belong to a God who with all those things in mind, picked out in eternity past, a name for each of us. And He knows us by that name and because He knows us, He can call us by that name. Scripture says that the Shepherd's voice can always be heard by the sheep who belong to Him. And he calls us by name and He leads us out. He calls us when we are lost in sin. Do you remember the first thing God did when Adam sinned?

And Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden.

And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him,  
Where art thou? (Genesis 3:8-9)

"Where are you, Adam?" There was no doubt who God was calling. And you may be an unbeliever listening today. Maybe you are active in a church, or maybe you're not. Maybe you have never given your heart to Christ, but you know in your heart, God is calling you. You may have been fighting His call. I just want to remind you that God is not just issuing a general call to all mankind, though He is doing that; He is calling you by name. What He wants to do is lead you out of darkness into light; out of lostness into the grandeur of a life that is infused with grace.

If you never knew it before, I want you to know it this morning. If you have never trusted Christ, then the Creator God, *who is, and was, and ever shall be*, is calling you this morning, and He is calling you by name. And you are answering Him this morning. And you say, "Well, I'm not saying anything." That's an answer. You are saying, "No." A sheep who hears the Shepherd call and pretends He doesn't hear will be the loser when one day he drifts to the edge of the cliff of life, and falls to his eternal death below. God died for you by name. God lives to intercede for you by name.

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And God is calling you, even today, by name.

We read in the book of Exodus that God has an incredible way of knowing us by name.

Thou hast said I know thee by name, and thou hast also found grace in my sight, now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way, that I may know thee... [that I may experientially have that power, that experience.]  
(Exodus 33:12)

And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the LORD which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel. [I AM the God of Israel, but I call you by your own name.]

For Jacob, thy servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me...  
(Isaiah 45:3-4)

Isn't that neat? God calls us by name! Perhaps, the most incredible passage in all of Scripture in this regard—and if you've never memorized this passage, please do:

But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, "Fear not; for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine. [Now, with that in mind, when, not if, when.]

When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.

For I AM the Lord, thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Savior." [That's My name, and I have called thee by name. You're mine.]  
(Isaiah 43:1-3)

Some of you in this room and some of you listening on tape or listening on the radio right now, may be going through rivers that seem to be swelling to overflowing, and you may really be struggling. God is saying to you, this morning, "Fear not, I have redeemed thee. I have called thee by thy name. Thou art mine. Therefore, when you walk through the waters, don't worry. They may come up to here, but they will not overflow you. And when you walk through the fire, you will not be burned. Neither will the flame kindle upon you." What a promise. God says, "I AM is with you, and I'm calling you by name. Susan, I AM with you. Bill, I AM with you. Mary, I understand. I AM there for you. I know you

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by your name. You are mine.”

And in the same way, when God calls you to a ministry, or to a place geographically, or to a mate or to a church, or to a vocation, there are general callings, but God also calls you specifically. He has a ministry for you. He has a person for you. He calls you by name. You are His. And until you know He is calling, wait. But once you know He has personally made it clear that He is calling you, go! He didn't call you because He had no one else to go. He called you because He designed in eternity past a plan for your life and where He sends you is a part of that plan. He can raise up stones to do that work. But don't overlook that call, whatever it might be. He has called you personally by name. The Shepherd has reached out, and all the sheep may look the same to you and to me, but not to the Shepherd.

### III- WHAT IS MY NAME?

So, the sheep hear the Shepherd's voice and He calls them by name. If you get nothing more from this passage than that, I think it could be a blessing to your life, but I don't think that's the main lesson in this passage. I think there is something deeper, much deeper. And it isn't just that God has named us to demonstrate our identification, our authority, our character, and our reputation. I believe that God named us, so He could give us a new name, so He could give us *His* name. And that's what I want us to talk about as we close.

I would remind you, this morning, that the reason women take their husband's name in marriage is because when you and I came to Christ, the angels in Heaven began to sing redemption's song, and God called roll again. And He added a new name to the Book of Life. Mary Smith has been born again. And Jesus writes in His own blood on the pages of eternity, "Saved forever—Mary Smith Christian." She now takes the name of the one to whom she has been given in marriage. And from that moment on, through all eternity, God will call her by that name, the name of His Son.

So, the miracle of miracles is not just that God calls you by name. The miracle of miracles is that He calls you by *His* Name. Something totally new has taken place. Now we are not simply known by *who* we are, we're known by *whose* we are. We now bear the name "Christian." We have been given a new name—a new identification.

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And the disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.

(Acts 11:26)

It was no longer Peter, the fisherman, it was Peter, the Christian. He had a new identification, new authority, new power, new character.

And (have) put on the new *man*, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:

(Colossians 3:10)

Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom... and whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him.

(Colossians 3:16)

You are now a new creature. His nature is your nature. His works become yours. You take on His name. You are infused with His character in ever increasing splendor, from one degree of glory to another. And now, you are the possessor, not only of a new name and a new character, but therefore, a new reputation. It's not your reputation anymore, it's His. And He who thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation (Philippians 2:6), has now given to you the opportunity to live and breathe for Him. In I Timothy 6:1, we are admonished to honor those under whose authority we have been placed, "that the name of God be not blasphemed." A new name.

Do you see what John 10:3 is trying to say to us? You and God have become one. He created you. He named you. He called you by name. And when you responded to His call, He married you and gave you His Name. He gave you the name before which one day, every knee will bow. He gave you the Name that one day every tongue will confess. And now, He gave you the Name that is above every name.

And now when He calls His sheep, He calls, Billy Smith Christian and says, "I have come that you might have life, and have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). Think about it, beloved, when someone marries a king, and she is first presented before the nation as "Queen Elizabeth," or "Queen Mary," there ought to be a holy sense of awe in her heart. She no longer is just another name. She has been wed to the king. She bears His name. And everything she does now indicates she is royalty.

How much more ought we to stand in awe when we come to

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realize we no longer are known by God just by the name He gave us in eternity past. Now when the courts of heaven convene, the King rises and He introduces His bride, trumpets blast, and God calls our name. Angels bow, and fold their wings. We are royalty. The enemy shrinks in disgust, because he knows, though he has limited access to test us, no longer does he have access to our eternal souls. He cannot take from us the title God has bestowed upon us. God has called our names. And He has called our name “Jesus”—the only authority delegated by the King for His glory. We have a new name, a new freedom; a new power; a new assurance; a new future.

Maybe it’s time we stopped calling one another by partial names. Maybe we ought to introduce ourselves as “John Jones Christian,” or “Elizabeth Williams Christian.” Now, I know the “C” pages in our church directories might get a little long. And I know that the Christian schools might all center around one word in the alphabet at roll call, but so what?

One day very soon, beloved, you and I are going to be participants in the grandest roll call ever. We are going to stand before Almighty God and He is going to call our names. He will call us by the names He gave us, but in heaven we will not be married in the same sense to our spouses, because we will all be married to Him. And we will all have the same last name. We will all be known as “Christians.” It really won’t matter whether we were born into affluence, or poverty. It won’t matter if we were a member of this denomination or that denomination. We will be recognized at last, by our only real identity. We will be called Christians, those who are wed to Christ.

I have to ask this question, in closing. If there is anyone listening either here or otherwise, and you have never responded when God called your name, you don’t have a new name yet. And when the roll is called in glory, only those with the last name “Christian” will be present. I beg you, this morning, as God calls you once more, to cry out to Him in your spirit. “Dear God, please forgive my sins. Please give me Your life. Please give me Your Spirit, and please, give me Your Name.”

He will. And He will eternally call you by that new name; a name that will be recorded in the Lamb’s Book of Life, forever. It cannot be erased. What joy! What honor! What a Name!

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THE SHEPHERD IS GENTLY CALLING

The Shepherd is gently calling;  
He's calling you by name  
He's calling you to save you;  
And ne'er will you be the same.

But listen to what He calls you;  
It seems too good to be true!  
He's calling the name of "Jesus";  
He's given that name to you!

Let's pray.

*Our Father and our God, what an awesome privilege to bear that Name.*

*If there be any here today who are not yet called Christian in the courts of eternity, may this be the morning in which their names are changed and Jesus gives His name to them.*

*And may each one of us, Father, leave this place, this morning, renewed in Spirit, humbled, not only at the name You have given us on this earth and what it means, but much more than that; that we have been given the privilege of bearing the King's Name for all eternity. We are royalty in the courts of heaven. May we live like it in the courts of earth.*

*In Jesus' Name.*

*Amen.*

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### A Challenge to Further Study

1- Find three significant statements in John 10:3,4. See if you can “make the spiritual switch” in each case. What is God saying to you personally through those two verses?

2- What do you think it means when it says “they know His voice”? What relationship do you think this phrase has to the word of God?

3- Why did Adam name the animals? Why did he name Eve? Do a study of the word “name” in Scripture. What conclusions do you come to?

### A Challenge to Further Application

1- Take the four things a name represents and make the “spiritual switch” for your family, using one at a time:

- a- Identification
- b- Authority
- c- Character
- d- Reputation

2- Meditate on Exodus 33:17-34:8. What did God say His “name” was? What do you think that means? Based on that, what does *your new name mean*?

3- You are now married to Christ. He has given you *His name*. What does that name imply? How does your life reflect that name? What do you say to the world when you defile that name? Stop this week and worship God for giving you “the sweetest name I know”.

### A Challenge to Scripture Memory

Memorize John 10:3-4

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