**“KNOW ME!” (KNOW ME Series, January, 2019, GGSDA, 1/5/19; LS Spanish 8/15/20; LLBN, 8/28/20**

**INTRO.** A. Start a new series tonight: The **SIMPLE SERIES.** How much do you have to know and believe, in order to be saved? Do you have to be able to draw the charts, know big Latin words, be a theologian, in order to be saved? What does a kid in Outer Mongolia have to believe, in order to be saved? **EINSTEIN said,** when we get the GRAND UNIFIED THEORY figured out, the scientific formula that would explain and tie the whole universe together, it would fit on a T-shirt! If it didn’t, if you had to write all over the blackboard to explain it, then you didn’t have it yet! We were having a big debate in our church about what we called the **INVESTIGATIVE JUDGMENT.** A small group in Michigan were afraid the church was going to give it up, so they wrote a pamphlet called **ADVENTISTS AFFIRM**—about it. 150 pages. I sat down to read it one Sabbath afternoon—after I got to page 70—I just decided—this may be true—but it can’t be necessary for salvation. The kids in Mongolia and Thailand are not going to get this. If they have to know all this to be saved, they’re going to be lost. You don’t have to be a PH.D. to be saved. Someone invited me to their house, they had the **JUBILEE CYCLES, on paper, went all around their house.** I said “Have all the fun with this you want—but it can’t be this hard to be saved! Don’t have to have a masters in Math!” **PHILIP YANCEY** tried to boil the whole Bible down to one phrase—“**GOD GETS HIS PEOPLE BACK!” Simple. We’re going to do try to do that!**

 B. I ask you this question today—**Do GOOD people have a better chance of getting into heaven than BAD PEOPLE?** We met one of my youth from La Sierra while we were walking. Used to be on marijuana, issues. Now, going to our college in Florida, doing great. **More likely to be saved now, he’s good, before he was bad?** Kid at La Sierra years ago, snuck into the girls dorm, did something he should not have done, his roommate put it on the Internet, now he’s in trouble—but in the meantime he got his act together, apologized, becomes this great kid!

**I. “OBEY HIM.”** A. That’s what I grew up with—like **Karma, “Do good, get good.”** “**A” Christians** are more likely to get in than “B” Christians. If you didn’t wear **earrings** and didn’t go to **movies** and went to **Prayer meeting**, you were more likely to get in. Like buying more lottery tickets. The more tickets you buy, the more chances to win. **This is how the world works. The best students get into medical school. The fastest runners win the gold medal. You get the most votes, you get to be the president. That’s fair!**

 B. And so that’s what I worked on. All we were told was be good, **can’t eat anything before the blessing, close your eyes during prayer**. Always put the **BIBLE** on top of the stack of books. No **SHOWERS** on Sabbath. No **eating out** on Sabbath. No **paying** for anything on Sabbath. We were at one college, couldn’t eat in the cafeteria, would have to pay. Girl let us put it on her card, my parents sent her money, so wouldn’t pay on Sabbath! You could play **ROOK** but not regular cards. No **ROCK MUSIC**, no **BEATLES**. No **dancing, no pepper, no Coke no Pepsi no coffee**. God grades on the **CURVE**, get the best grade, you’ve got the best chance to get in. **FOOTBALL**, the best teams get into the playoffs. Good people get saved, bad people are lost. GOD’s main job—help you be “**GOOD”** so you could pass the final test. That’s the way it is.

 **C. Ellen White said, “Not 1 in 20 were ready for Jesus to come.”** There was a group years ago, called themselves “The 5 Percenters.” Wanted to be that 1/20. The best. The most pure. **And that’s PAUL tried to do: PHILIPPIANS 3:4-6: “Whatever anybody else claims, I have more. A Hebrew of the Hebrews, a Pharisee, as far as the Law was concerned, perfect.”** He’s in the top 1%.

 D. And that’s what I believed. If you wanted to be SAVED—**OBEY HIM.**

**II. “IN HIM.”** A. And then I heard the Gospel. Early ‘80s, young pastor in OR, began to hear rumors, Gospel. I was at a pastors’ meeting, went to one of the controversial guys, “What do I need to know.” Got out his Bible--**PHILIPPIANS 3:7 “But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss, that I may gain Christ and be found “IN HIM.”** Works didn’t count. Works were good, but they didn’t count for salvation. **GALATIANS 2:16 “No one will ever be justified by keeping the Law.” ROMANS 3:21 “But now a righteousness from Christ has been shown, apart from works.”**

**B. And so the answer is NO, good people don’t have a better chance at being saved then bad people.**

C. If we’re saved by works, then everybody is lost, because nobody could do the works, 100%, all the time, day and night, from 0-85. One guy said, “It’s like you’re at a party at somebody’s brand-new mansion, and you have to carry a full bowl of **TOMATO SOUP** across 50 feet of this brand-new white shag carpeting. I just can’t do it.” One guy I know decided couldn’t handle television, cut the plug off, **CUTTING THE PLUG** off the TV cord, then splice it back, like ten times, finally cord was like 12 inches long, had to lie on the floor to watch! Another guy wanted to quit eating **ICE CREAM**, put a half-gallon of ice cream on the table, sat there staring at it, going to get the victory! Made it five minutes, “that deserves a reward,” ate the ice cream! Says, **“All have sinned.” We just can’t do it.” Morris Venden would talk about trying to get rid of 7 sins, soon as you got to the 7th one, the first one had come back.**

 D. Then the Bible says, Jesus’ perfect life and death takes our place. He trades our list of sins for His blank page. Your name comes up in the judgment, your page is blank, at the top it says, “**SEE JESUS’ PAGE.”** I preached that everywhere, sins were forgiven, to the bottom of the ocean, as far as the east is from the west. God says, “I will remember your sins no more.” **ABRAHAM—believed God, it was COUNTED to him for righteousness. All I cared about, getting sins off my record**. Get on a plane, last thing I would do, make sure God had forgiven all my sins, if we died, no sins on the record. That was my 2nd stage—**IN HIM.**

**III. “KNOW ME.”** A. **But then all of a sudden none of that worked for me anymore.** I was a young pastor, just starting to date Hilda. I started asking myself, “Is that all God cares about, record books in heaven? God’s going to have all these bad people, like the thief on the cross, but they accepted Jesus, and their pages are as white as snow—and now they’re all in heaven?” And it just wasn’t enough for me any more.

 B. At the hospital where I was the pastor, there was a fire, burned some medical records. Now you’re going to let all the patients go home? I asked myself—**What does God want? For 1000 years in heaven—what does God want? White RECORDS? No—He wants FRIENDS. He wants RELATIONSHIPS!** We’ve had some great dinners since we’ve been retired, old friends. Sabbath afternoons, outdoors, under umbrellas, 5 hours, 8 hours, Monday, Mission Inn, 3 hours. Our sons have been home, gone skiing and golfing with them, took them all out to dinner for one of their birthdays. Cost us $250! Never mind, it’s all about relationships. God’s the same! Jesus said—**JOHN 15:15 “‘I have called you friends!’”**

 **C. PRODIGAL SON—**leaves his father’s house, goes into the Far Country, sins. Girls, drugs, drinking. But look at the order—We usually say—If you sin, God will kick you out of the Father’s house. But here it’s the other way around—He leaves the Father’s house—and that leads him into sins! **What makes you UNRIGHTEOUS is not sinning in the Far country. Breaking all the rules. What makes you UNRIGHTEOUS is leaving the FATHER’S House! Not in a right relationship anymore. So go to the other side? What made him RIGHTEOUS again? Father didn’t care about the sins tonight! Didn’t ask, “Where’s the money?” Just glad—My son is home. What made him RIGHTEOUS? Going home to the Father! It’s always relationships.**

 **D. LEVEL ONE, OBEY HIM--legalism, works, says, If you’re going to get in by points, I was first in line. Then he went to LEVEL TWORighteousness By faith, be found “IN HIM.” Jesus paid for your sins, get your sins off your record. But then he says, Level THREE, the highest level—PHILIPPIANS 3:9 “‘I count it all loss, for the surpassing greatness of KNOWING Christ Jesus my Lord.”** Yes, I was happy to have all my sins erased out of the record books of heaven. I’m happy God doesn’t remember them any more. But there is so much more than just record keeping in heaven. **We think that’s it, we are declared righteous, got nothing to worry about, “everything’s all right in my Father’s house.”**

 **D. TESTIMONIES TO MINISTERS 367: “No human being is righteous any longer than they maintain a vital connection with God.” Christianity is not first of all a MORAL** religion, all about laws and rules. It’s not just about a group of **BELIEFS, or rituals, or services**. Christianity is a personal religion. It’s about Jesus.

 #1—It’s not just about being a good person, following all the rules. I have been in the battle with so many people, in a restaurant late at night, fighting for their soul. They have bought into the great myth—that even if you don’t believe in Jesus, if you’re a good person, God will let you in. Pay your taxes, mow your yard, don’t cheat on your wife, open the door for people—God’s not going to send you to hell for that! And I have had to tell people—“There are no **SUBURBS** in heaven for those who don’t even believe in Jesus! Heaven is all about Jesus. Not for nice people, good people, moral people. It’s for people who want to hang out with Jesus for the next 1000 years! **When you get off the cloud—or come off the train into the gates of heaven, and Jesus is standing there to greet everybody—nobody is going to walk right by Him as if He didn’t exist. Jesus said, “I am the Door!”**

 #2—And It’s not about just get your sins erased out of the record books of heaven. All metaphor. God is not obsessed about black marks on white pages in heaven. He wants your heart. He created you in the image of God to have a relationship. It’s why He’s knocking on the door every day.

**E. JOHN 17:3 “‘This is eternal life—that you know Jesus.’’. JEREMIAH 9:23-24: “Don’t boast in your wisdom or your strength or your riches—boast in this—that you KNOW Me.” MATTHEW 11:28 “‘Come unto Me.’” REVELATION 3:20 “I stand at the door and knock, if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat WITH THEM.’” JOHN 14:3 “‘And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back, and take you to be WITH ME, that where I am, there you will be also.’”**

 F. I had a hard time with this at first. I bought every book, **“Knowing God,”** Seeking the Face of God, Hearing God. Called everybody. How do you have a relationship with this God, you can’t see, you can’t hear. **1 CORINTHIANS 13:12 “We see through a glass darkly.” I called Morris—said, “Read STEPS TO CHRIST 125: “But even here Christians may have the joy of communion with Christ, the light of His love, the comfort of His Presence.” And then this one—JEREMIAH 29:13-14 “You will seek Me, and you will find ME—when you seek Me with all your heart. I WILL BE FOUND BY YOU.”** It’s possible to have a relationship with Jesus. No voices. Yes, we only see through a glass darkly. But we can hear His whisper

 **G. EMMAUS--**Jesus had died. 2 guys are heading home, wiped out, it’s all over, they thought He was the one, and they saw Him die. All of a sudden someone is with them, showing them stuff from the Bible, they ask Him to eat, He prays, they see the scars, it’s Jesus! They go racing back 8 miles to Jerusalem and say—**LUKE 24:32: “’Didn’t our hearts burn with us?’”** No, we don’t get to see Him, hear Him. But we can feel something in our soul, a relationship with the living God of the Universe.

**APPEAL:** 35 years ago my father told me about this Dutch girl who did special music in his church. I asked her out, 2 years later we got married in my church at Newbury Park Academy. Then I went back to my house, she went back to her apartment in Glendale. I had pictures of her all around my house. I framed the marriage license, hung that on the wall. 2 years later somebody asked me—if I was married. “Yes.” “We’ve never seen your wife.” “I haven’t either—not for 2 years.” “When was that?” “Day we were married.” “You haven’t seen her since then? Do you write to her?” “No.” “Do you telephone her?” “No.” “But you’re married?” “Yes, I said I do, here’s the ring, and I have a certificate to prove it!” **Just a parable!** No, what really happened was, we drove up to Santa Barbara, hotel on the beach, and this guy took us to our room, and he put our suitcases away and he turned on all the lights and the fireplace and everything. But he wouldn’t leave. Finally figured out he wanted a tip, so I found a dollar, and then he left, and for the first time in my life I got to stay in this room alone with this lady. Because we had a relationship! What God wants—not a piece of paper, not just a ring—not just obeying a bunch of laws. A relationship.

**SECOND APPEAL:** Before we had the boys, we grabbed a chance to go to Europe. Flew all night. Got to Newbold College, put our stuff in the room, went down to London. Hilda wanted to see **KENSINGTON PALACE**, where Prince Charles and Lady Diana were. She goes up to the guard, big sin, asks him when they’re coming out. Not supposed to tell, but he says, “If you’re around about 6, maybe you’ll see something.” We sit on the curb and ate granola bars, waiting. Maybe 30-40 of us eventually. 6, the gates open, out comes their purple limo! Comes out—and they stop! And they get out, and start shaking hands with all of us! Got to us, realized we were Americans, and said, “We’ve been wanting to talk to some Americans, see what you think of England. Can you come for tea?” Wow! We’re dressed like bums, just backpacking through Europe. We put on sweaters next afternoon, went there at 3, took us to the dining room, had tea, answered all their questions, got to swim in the royal pool--and then they said, “Want to go see a play?” Got to go to a play, sit in the royal box! **NO! They didn’t stop. They didn’t look at us. We don’t know them. We have no relationship! BUJT I’LL die for this! I have a relationship with the LIVING GOD in the Universe! Because He said, “You will find me, when you search for me with all your heart!”**