

# PUZZLE PIECES

Sunday, March 1, 2009

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Do you ever feel like you are living out your life as nothing more than a random collection of daily sensory input? God wants us to see the connectivity to what goes on in our life. He daily gives us puzzle pieces of information about what we're supposed to be doing and what decisions we are to be making. He *wants* us to see how much He is involved in our lives. **These puzzle pieces, once they are connected, show us a picture of how God is orchestrating every part of our life.**

For example, some of you may have heard a song that was popular a while back, "Bad Day" by Daniel Powter. One line goes, "Well you need a blue sky holiday." God used this song to encourage Terry during a particularly discouraging time, and we began to joke about God giving us our "blue sky holiday." A week later, after friends treated us to Chinese, Terry's fortune read, "Learn Chinese: Blue sky." Then, opening a piece of junk mail a month later, I discovered a pamphlet from *Blue Sky Auto Finance*. The cover said, "*Answers to Your Questions about Blue Sky.*"

One year later, visiting with friends, one suddenly left the room, then returned to hand something to us. In a blue backpack with a blue baseball cap hanging on it was a three-day, all-paid vacation to any state park in Kentucky. Without knowing about our blue sky holiday, they had decided to give it to us. After carefully picking our state park and making reservations, we ended up leaving directly from there on a business trip to Florida. We had planned on spending the weekend before our business appointment with friends, but a family emergency for them suddenly freed up our time, and we ended up at Disney World, making the whole ten days one extended vacation, a true "Blue Sky Holiday"! Notice here how each separate incident (puzzle piece) comes together to make a whole picture.

## Some ways to collect puzzle pieces

Learn to walk in a constant listening mode, being open to Holy Spirit speaking, and by "speak," I mean every way He uses to communicate. It may be through junk mail, a billboard, or losing your contact lens. Because He loves us each individually,

nothing in our life is too small for Him to use. For example, for years the number 222 has had spiritual significance to my sister Jan, because of an event in the past where God spoke to her using that number. A few days ago she, my mom, and I were out together when we pulled up behind an SUV at a light. The license plate in front of us read, "222 - JAN." That meant nothing to anyone else, but God wasn't talking to anyone else, He was talking to Jan.

Another way to find puzzle pieces is to watch for anything that catches your attention, or something unusual that happens. Stop and ask, "Holy Spirit, what are You trying to tell me?" If you're not sure that it's God, make a note of it anyway, you'll be surprised how many times it later becomes relevant. Once I was sitting in an office when God spoke to me clearly through some magazines that were lying on the table. There were three of them, and the three titles read like this: *Next Step*, *Real Simple*, and *Rock Solid*. It was the answer for which Terry and I had been listening.

Another time, Terry and I were desperate for money, and it was difficult to trust God for provision. One night as I drove our youngest son to town, my eye caught on a fish-shaped mailbox. Over the next few days it continually caught my eye. I finally asked Terry, "What's with the fish mailbox, it's driving me crazy. Have you seen it?" He hadn't noticed, but referring to the story of the gold coin in the fish's mouth (Matthew 17:27) he said, "I think God is telling us that money is coming in the mail." Over the next two weeks, from unexpected sources, our mailbox delivered to us a total of \$1,876.00. (I know that because I journal.)

Pay attention to your dreams, God will give you puzzle pieces through them.

Often, once God speaks to us about something, He'll use that as a basis to keep speaking. We begin to build what we refer to as a spiritual "dictionary," things we can use to help us put our puzzle pieces together. Then, when one of these words/subjects/items grabs our attention, we go into listening mode.

Another way to collect pieces is to notice random words or phrases that drop into your thoughts during the day, or at night around your dreams when the busyness in your head shuts down. He often uses unusual phrasing to get our attention. Sometimes it makes sense when you hear it, other times you just write it down and listen, putting it with other puzzle pieces for a possible picture. For example, some

phrases I have heard are "Almost heavy with fruit," "Hearts ease," and "After all that, 5 weeks and 2 months."

### **How to put your puzzle pieces together**

The easiest way by far to see a picture is to journal the things that you believe God is saying/showing/doing in your life. Otherwise, how would Terry and I have known what God meant when at a meeting a stranger said to us, "I don't know if this means anything to you or not, but I feel like God is saying to you, 'You're building with God's blueprints now.'" By itself it's a cool word, but by journaling it's even better, because then when I vaguely remembered something along that line I could look it up, and see that almost a year ago Terry had had a dream where God told him, "You have everything you need to build now, but you don't have any blueprints."

Look for common denominators in things: key words, ideas, dates and timeframes, or subjects. God will often use a particular word or subject to mean something specific to you. Because of a quote by Randy Clark, and because the Bible tells us that Holy Spirit is our engagement ring, for me, diamonds represent Holy Spirit. Therefore, when I have puzzle pieces relating to diamonds, unless He tells me differently, I know He is speaking to me about Holy Spirit. For example, a year ago on Valentine's Day I got a junk email from *Kings Diamond Company*. That was fun, and I thought God was just sending me a Valentine, but then He began to speak repeatedly to me about Holy Spirit. The birthday present from my sister, a glass, two-inch fake diamond, confirmed what He had been telling me. She had not known anything about the spiritual significance of diamonds to me or that He had just been speaking to me about Holy Spirit.

Another way is to listen for Holy Spirit to fit pieces together for you. Often something will suddenly "click," and you'll see how it connects with something else. One December I went shopping at a toy store that was going out of business, and the one thing I wanted the most was a brain puzzle, but one of the pieces to the puzzle was missing. I bought it anyway, telling them that if they found the piece to call me. They laughed; it'd been missing for months. The next week Jan went back to shop again, and while there found my puzzle piece. With the odds against it that great, it had to be God, so I said, "You must be giving us a puzzle piece God, what is it?" A few days later I was looking back through my journal for something and came across an entry I had made the past summer, where I was referring to

something that had spiritually frustrated us. "There has to be some catch," I wrote, "some clue, some puzzle piece we're missing. But what? What clues, hints do we have?" Then I knew what God was referring to with my found puzzle piece, He was going to give us the answer.

An important way to put together pictures is to develop an awareness of what's going on around you, always looking to see what God is connecting. There was a time where God was speaking to us about building "forms," as when you're going to pour concrete. Out one day with my mom, it seemed that everywhere I looked were cement trucks, in front of me, pulling up beside me, parking by me. Driving home I saw another one and thought, "What is it today with all these cement trucks?" Instantly the "Aha!" hit. "Hey God, what are you saying?" I asked. He showed me that He was bringing the concrete to fill the spiritual forms we had built in anticipation of His filling them.

Often, once God speaks to you about something, He'll use that as a basis to say other things. For example, a while back Terry and I were visiting with some friends, and as we were leaving our friend said, "Terry, I feel like God is telling me to give you my staff." So Terry brought the staff home. One night, soon after that, I woke hearing Holy Spirit saying, "Today's a new day." Then God spoke to us about being between the Red Sea and Pharaoh's army. All seemed unrelated, and we took each instance as an isolated event. Soon after that, I heard a song by Kimberly Rivera off their album *Captured*, titled "Stand." Part of the verse says, "And I saw the Lord open the heavens and pass out all of these staves. He placed the staves in the hands of the people that were running, for they were coming to the waters, and even as in the day of Moses, I heard the Father say, 'Let my people go.' And each of you held out the staff, and the waters began to part, the waters began to rise ..." The chorus goes, "It's a new day, it's a new stand, it's a new day, it's a new land." In this song, God specifically put the puzzle pieces together for us. Because of my journaling I could connect these pieces. The song not only encouraged us but also told us specific things that Holy Spirit wanted us to know about what we were going through at that particular time.

### **So what do we do with the pictures we now have?**

There was a time when David (before he became king) arrived home, only to discover that during his absence his enemy had come and burned the city, capturing the families of all his men, including his own. He was devastated, and it

says that "David and his men wept aloud until they had no strength left to weep."  
But then what did David do?

*And David was greatly distressed; for the people spoke of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters: but David encouraged himself in the LORD his God. (1 Sam 30:3,4,6)*

**The pictures are the key to choosing to look at our circumstances through God's perspective, instead of our own, which in turn will encourage us, as we physically see God directing our life and speaking into it.**

The sad thing is that many people, if they even pick up any puzzle pieces, just carry them all jumbled together in a box, without ever working the puzzle. Ask Holy Spirit to give you puzzle pieces and to open your eyes to recognize them. Make the choice to believe that God is giving them to you, and then expect to find them. You can collect any number of puzzle pieces daily, there is no limit to how much God will speak to you. He's always speaking, but if we're not listening or aren't open to the ways He speaks, our puzzle pieces will fall lost along the wayside. The more pieces we have, the more we'll understand what Holy Spirit is saying and what God is doing in our life.

When I get discouraged seeing our children walking through hard times, I encourage myself with picture promises that God has specifically made to me about our children. When we are floundering in our business, I can pull out my journal and see with my own eyes the proof that God is directing our steps through this, and remember all the times He has come through, given direction, and made promises we can walk in with confidence. When I start feeling like our lives are going nowhere, I have pictures that Holy Spirit has not only given us but has fulfilled, and things He has spoken into our lives that show me that His path is strong and sure before me. Not in a vague, God-loves-you-and-you're-going-to-heaven sort of way, but with specific words and examples.

Start looking for puzzle pieces and collect them into a journal **with dates**. Begin to put the pieces together to form pictures. When you get discouraged, pull out your picture book (journal) and encourage yourself with what God is personally doing in your life.

**Open your eyes, look around, and start collecting.**