

SERMON DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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Unpuzzled

“Unveiling of God’s Mysterious Plan”

Ephesians 1:9-11

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How long do you think it would take you to put together a 500 or 1,000-piece jigsaw puzzle? Last year, 3,500 of the best jigsaw puzzlers from over 60 countries competed at the annual World Jigsaw Puzzle Championship held in Spain. Participants competed in individual, pairs, and team categories to solve 500 or 1,000-piece puzzles under tight time limits, where 30-year-old Kristin Thuv from Norway took the number one individual title, taking just over 37 minutes to complete a 500-piece puzzle of tigers and greenery...with the top winners completing 500-piece puzzles in roughly 37 minutes.

There is a video you can watch to give you an idea what this competition looked like and what it takes to be the champion. That stresses me out just to watch the intensity of putting puzzles together that quickly. We all know the first step of putting a puzzle together is to see the picture of what the finished puzzle is going to look like. Think of God’s master plan as being the biggest, most complex of all puzzles. There are countless pieces to this puzzle of His masterplan. As history unfolds from the beginning of time to today and into the future God is putting it together one piece at a time and slowly but surely God is revealing His masterplan.

We begin this sermon series entitled, “Unpuzzled.” In this series we will be walking through some of the highlights of the book of Ephesians. We are using a daily devotional as our guide that takes us verse by verse through the book of Ephesians. You can get the free devotional emailed to you daily and then read it on the email or on the internet, or listen to it on Spotify, Apple Podcast, or even watch it on YouTube. You can get the link to sign up for the daily email on our app. There is also a workbook that has the daily devotion and can be used as a journal. This is a great opportunity to immerse ourselves in the book of Ephesians for the coming weeks and it only takes a few minutes a day. We are only seven days into it, so we have just gotten started. It is not too late to join us. Today, we begin the series by especially focusing on God’s mysterious plan that He has unveiled to us through Jesus and the work of the Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 1:9-11

God has now revealed to us his mysterious will regarding Christ—which is to fulfill his own good plan. ¹⁰ And this is the plan: At the right time he will

bring everything together under the authority of Christ—everything in heaven and on earth. ¹¹ Furthermore, because we are united with Christ, we have received an inheritance from God, for he chose us in advance, and he makes everything work out according to his plan.

The book of Ephesians is written by the Apostle Paul to the church in Ephesus while Paul was in prison for unapologetically preaching and teaching the good news of Jesus Christ. Paul spent several years in Ephesus, leading people to Jesus and getting the churches in that area established and growing. Here in the first chapter of Ephesians Paul tells us God has a masterplan that has been a mystery to us. God's masterplan has been a mystery because the big picture of God's plan is beyond our ability to fully comprehend and because God has not fully revealed it. J.D. Walt says this about God's masterplan in his book "Unpuzzled", "Paul shows the puzzle is infinitely larger, cosmic in dimension, exquisitely brilliant in design, and intimately personal in its detail." God did not hide His masterplan from humanity, but He has been slowly but surely unraveling the plan from the Old to the New Testament. From the beginning of time, God has and continues to put together the puzzle of His masterplan one puzzle piece at a time.

THE FATHER WILL BRING EVERYTHING IN HEAVEN AND EARTH UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF CHRIST

The Old Testament as a whole pointed to a pivotal, absolutely essential piece of God's masterplan. It all pointed to the birth, life, suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus the Christ, the Messiah. Jesus is the heart of God's masterplan. Paul makes that clear as he says in *verses 9-10 of Ephesians 1* that God's masterplan is that ***The Father Will Bring Everything in Heaven and Earth Under the Authority of Christ (vv.9-10)***. Jesus was more than just another great rabbi, teacher, religious leader, prophet, or miracle worker. Jesus came into this world as God in the flesh and when Jesus returned back to heaven, God turned over the keys of the Kingdom of God to Jesus. Jesus now is leading the Kingdom of God, the Church, and even all of creation. God's masterplan has now unfolded to the point that the Apostle Paul says about Jesus in *Ephesians 1:21-23*, "²¹ Now he is far above any ruler or authority or power or leader or anything else—not only in this world but also in the world to come. ²² God has put all things under the authority of Christ and has made him head over all things for the benefit of the church. ²³ And the church is his body; it is made full and complete by Christ, who fills all things everywhere with himself."

All of history has been moving to this point of God's masterplan that Jesus will reign with everything under His supreme authority, especially us His church that is made up of people from the past, the present, the future, people of all nations, languages, cultures, and skin colors.

It is important then to remember the focal point of God's masterplan is not on us, but on Jesus. We are not the masterplan nor the center of God's masterplan. We are but one piece of the puzzle of God's masterplan. When the last piece of the puzzle of God's

masterplan is put in place it will be the perfect picture of Jesus with everything in all of heaven and earth under His authority which is what the Bible calls the glorious Kingdom of God. Pete Greig, in his book, *God on Mute*, refers to the artist and architect, Antoni Gaudi, who started his masterpiece work on *The El Templo de la Sagrada Familia* (or *The Church of the Holy Family*), in Barcelona, Spain back in 1882. For Gaudi, *La Sagrada Familia* was the unfinished summation of his life's work. For several years he actually lived on the building site, breathing the dust, and drawing his ultimate inspiration from the organic symmetry of creation as well as the teachings of the church. As the building rose skyward from its foundations, Gaudi's fame also soared. Kings and queens came to see the building site, imagining what it would one day become. But then, in old age, Gaudi was run over by a tram. Because of his ragged attire and empty pockets, taxi drivers refused to pick him up, thinking he was a tramp, and he was eventually taken to a pauper's hospital. Nobody recognized the great man until his friends eventually tracked him down the next day. They tried to move him into a nicer hospital, but Gaudi refused, reportedly saying, "I belong here among the poor." He died of his injuries two days later and was buried in the midst of his unfinished masterpiece.

Gaudi had begun planning *La Sagrada Familia* in the 1880s and was still working on it the day he died, some 40 years later. When Gaudí died in 1926, the basilica was between 15% and 25% complete. Other architects have since continued to apply and interpret his designs, but the towers and most of the church's structure are to be completed this year, the centennial of Gaudi's death; decorative elements should be complete by 2030 or 2032. Gaudi's vast project reminds us that my life, your life, is not a short story where we are the star of our story. As followers of Jesus, we are puzzle pieces in God's plan. We are a part of God's epic masterplan. We are not the center of that masterplan of God, Jesus is.

WE HAVE AN INHERITANCE THROUGH BEING UNITED WITH CHRIST

Paul also points out there is another glorious piece to God's masterplan that God is unveiling through Christ: ***We Have an Inheritance Through Being United with Christ (v.11)***. Paul shares here in *Ephesians 1:3* God's plan is that we who are united now with Jesus Christ as His followers have inherited all kinds of spiritual blessings. Then in *verses 4-8* Paul says even before God laid out the foundation of the world, God loved us and chose humanity to be holy, perfect, as if we had never sinned. God set a plan in place to adopt us into this family by bringing us to Himself through Jesus. I like how Paul says that it gives God great pleasure in His masterplan to generously pour out His kindness and grace upon us. Because of our sin and rebellion against God, the spiritual riches we have inherited in God's masterplan is that God loved us so much that He would purchase our freedom from sin and death through the blood of Jesus, His one and only Son. As a result, spiritual riches of God's masterplan also included forgiving our sins, and then God showering us with His kindness, wisdom, and understanding. These are just some of the spiritual blessings God's masterplan has in store for us. What is wonderful about the spiritual riches we have inherited is that we do not just receive them when we go to heaven. Paul says in *verse 13-14* that all who believe in Jesus are filled with the Holy Spirit. Paul says this about the significance of the Holy

Spirit in *Ephesians 1:14*, “*The Spirit is God’s guarantee that he will give us the inheritance he promised and that he has purchased us to be his own people. He did this so we would praise and glorify him.*” The Holy Spirit is described as being a kind of downpayment or advance, where the Holy Spirit is now beginning to give us a taste of the spiritual riches of our inheritance. Do we truly realize how great an inheritance that God has provided for us in His masterplan for us?

Erik Raymond, in his article in *The Gospel Coalition* entitled, “Discovering a Secret Journal of Grace”, shares about a man who was a good husband and dad. He loved his family faithfully, was always around, steady, and took care of them. His influence, even if it wasn’t fully realized, was central in everyone’s life. But his family didn’t fully appreciate the scope of his love until one day when they found his journal. Upon opening it, they could see the backstory to their memories. They were surprised to find that their happy experiences were intricately planned and carefully executed. He even reflected about how glad he was that he gave his wife and children such joy. When they could see the backstory, these previously hidden details, in the journal, the family was filled with a new kind of appreciation and love for their dad and husband. They were welcomed into the quiet place of intentional planning and loving execution. They could see how they were central to everything he had done. Thumbing through the journal, they realized his love for them engulfed their entire experience.

In *Ephesians 1*, it’s as if the children of God are permitted to thumb through the journal of their heavenly Father. Reading through it, we find out that the experiences we enjoy so much were carefully and intricately planned. God has set his love on his people before the foundation of the world, and he carried it out in real-time. What’s more, these thoughtful, intricate, and loving plans gave our Heavenly Father to you Himself. He loves to shower His abundant spiritual blessings on us, His children. We are blessed beyond our comprehension to have a Heavenly Father, who before we ever sinned and ruined all of God’s creation, already developed a plan to love us, choose us to be His children, forgive us and transform our lives now and one day fully when we will live for eternity under the authority of Christ. What unbelievable spiritual blessings God has showered upon us by His grace, blessings we did not earn, but were freely given to us through Jesus. *1 Peter 1:3-5* beautifully describes the abundant, spiritual blessings God now and forever has in store for us from God’s great masterplan. It says, “³ *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,* ⁴ *and into an **inheritance** that can never perish, spoil or fade. This **inheritance** is kept in heaven for you,* ⁵ *who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.*”

In the Sacrament of Holy Communion God’s gracious spiritual blessings are generously poured out into our hearts. The price paid for God’s grace that we experience in communion is the body and blood of Jesus given as a sacrifice for us, all according to God’s masterplan. As we take of these elements we are uniting with Christ Jesus and thus experiencing all of God’s spiritual blessings.

Ephesians 1:3,2, “³ All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ.” “² May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace.”

SUGGESTED RESOURCES: (Books marked with * are available to be checked-out in the Asbury Discipleship Resource Center)

- *The Holy Bible* (Several FREE copies are available in the DRC)
- *Unpuzzled*, J. D. Walt *
- *Knowing God*, J. I. Packer
- *The Gospel According to Jesus*, John MacArthur

Icebreaker Questions

1. If you were putting together a large jigsaw puzzle, what part do you usually start with and how does that reflect how you approach big or complex situations in life?
2. Have you ever been part of something much bigger than yourself (a project, event, or team)? What did that experience teach you?

Sermon Discussion Questions

1. The sermon describes God's plan as a vast puzzle with Jesus at the center. What are some ways we unintentionally place ourselves at the center instead of Christ? How can we realign our perspective?
2. Ephesians 1:9–10 reveals that God's ultimate plan is to bring everything under the authority of Christ. What does that practically mean for how we live day-to-day?
3. The illustration of Gaudi's unfinished masterpiece reminds us we are part of something ongoing. How does this change the way you think about your legacy and your role in God's kingdom?
4. The sermon highlights that we already experience part of our inheritance through the Holy Spirit. In what ways have you personally experienced a "foretaste" of God's promises?
5. Reflecting on the "journal of grace" illustration, how does seeing God's intentional love and planning behind your life deepen your trust in Him, even in difficult seasons?
6. What impacted you most from the sermon? How might you apply this week's sermon to your life?
7. How might this group pray for you this week?