

Coach House Church BEACONS

A - M A Z E - I N G

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Lots of people like to do puzzles. Maybe you enjoy solving a Sudoku number puzzle, putting together a jigsaw or planning moves in a game of chess. All of these keep your brain cells firing. It's a way to challenge yourself and there is a sense of satisfaction when you complete the challenge. It's about making decisions, selecting choices and planning a series of strategic moves. While it may be a challenge and sometimes be frustrating, the achievement of coming to a conclusion is very satisfying. However, in our daily lives there are puzzling situations and challenging circumstances that are often difficult to solve.

In the bible there are instances of when people are feeling puzzled by events and circumstances. They are not sure why or how something has happened. They are often amazed by what they learn. Consider the following events recorded in the bible. In John 4, Jesus spoke to a Samaritan woman as she came to a well to collect water. She was firstly amazed because Jesus spoke to her which was not the done thing, culturally. Jews and Samaritans kept their distance from each other as they held each other in low regard. As Jesus continued his conversation she was even more surprised that he knew all about her background, and furthermore, he didn't focus on the wrongs in her life, but rather introduced himself to her as the one who was able to bring her deep satisfaction. She recognised in Jesus, something special that was puzzling in a good way, as the bible records:

28 Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, 29 "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?"

In Luke 19 there were crowds of people waiting to see Jesus travelling through their town. One man, Zacchaeus who was too short to see over the crowds, decided to climb a tree for a better view. While Zacchaeus was surprised that Jesus noticed him and asked if he could visit his house, the crowds were even more puzzled because they couldn't understand why Jesus would ever want to meet up with a tax collector for the Roman authorities.

Yet following the visit, Zacchaeus' life was totally transformed and at the end of the visit:

9 Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. 10 For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost." In Genesis 22 is the story of Abraham and Isaac. This is a tense story where Abraham is asked to prepare his own son as a sacrifice to God. They journey together up the mountain and Abraham's faith in God is truly tested when Isaac asks: where is the lamb for the sacrifice? Abraham says: "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son."

And amazingly, God did provide the lamb and the Angel of the Lord spoke to

Abraham saying:

17 I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, 18 and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me."

In Numbers 13, Moses sends out spies to assess the land that they are to conquer. They return and report back:

27 They gave Moses this account: "We went into the land to which you sent us, and it does flow with milk and honey! Here is its fruit. 28 But the people who live there are powerful, and the cities are fortified and very large.

Despite the fact that God has already rescued them from slavery and promised a new land that will be their own, the Israelites are only too aware of the problems in front of them.

In Luke 24, two of the early Christian believers were walking away from Jerusalem having witnessed the crucifixion of Jesus. As they walked along the road to Emmaus, these puzzled and forlorn followers were joined by someone they did not recognise. They were so consumed by the previous events and absolutely devastated that they said spoke indignantly to the stranger:

"Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?"

It is certainly true what it says in 1 Corinthians 13:12

For the present we see things as if in a mirror, and are puzzled; but then we shall see them face to face. For the present the knowledge I gain is imperfect; but then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

One day we'll solve the puzzle of all those aspects of life we don't understand. For now it is enough to deal with one day at a time and allow God to guide us. We're not meant to know everything. That way we put our trust in Almighty God, just as Abraham did. If we could look ahead, or look from above we would be able to see the course of life. But this is what God does for us.

Remember the examples of the people we mentioned earlier. Jesus knew all about the woman at the well and understood Zacchaeus and the need to change their lives. God understands us more than we realise and knows the quandary we sometimes feel about our life choices. When you don't know which way to turn, tell God that you

need help with your decision making. You'll be amazed when he answers your prayers and shows you where to go.

The spies saw huge problems in front of them rather than relying on the promises they had been given to take the land. We often see the problem and forget how powerful and huge God is. We worry about a solution when we should be giving God the problem to deal with. He wants to lighten our load, to walk along with us. Psalm 55:22 Give your burdens to the Lord, and he will take care of you.

The friends on the road to Emmaus were puzzled because they were looking at the immediate situation. When Jesus broke bread in front of them, he revealed who he was and they were suddenly amazed. The puzzle was solved for them as they knew that Jesus was alive again, risen to life as he has told them and they had witnessed this with their own eyes.

Corrie Ten Boom reminds us:

"God's viewpoint is sometimes different from ours - so different that we could not even guess at it unless He had given us a Book which tells us such things....In the Bible I learn that God values us not for our strength or our brains but simply because He has made us."

When life feels like navigating a maze or a labyrinth- this way or that way? When there are options, decisions to make and you don't know which one to take, isn't it better to be guided by someone who is not just one page ahead , not just round the first corner, not just one minute ahead of me. It's far better to rely on someone who has the whole of time at his hands, the entire road layout visible, the complete journey plotted.

So, don't leave yourself feeling like you are stuck in a maze, hitting a dead end or bemused by what life throws at you. Tell God how you feel, ask for his help and he will guide you and give you his peace because he loves you and only he is truly Amazing.



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