

I love doing jigsaw puzzles. There's almost always a puzzle in progress at my house. One recurring problem with making jigsaw puzzles came up recently with the puzzle I was working on.

I like to start with the border pieces. They're usually easy to find, and you get something done right away, which feels good. So I had the border done quickly and started working on the rest of the puzzle.

The further I got, I sensed, then I knew, that something wasn't right. There was a cabin in the middle of the puzzle, but when I tried to attach it to the border pieces, the whole puzzle slanted to the right, like the Leaning Tower of Pisa. Some puzzles might be made to do that, but this wasn't one of them. Why didn't it work? I had put all the border together, with every piece fitting and looking good. But the whole puzzle was off.

You know what the problem was? Some of the border pieces at the top seemed to fit, but they really needed to be taken out of their place on the top right, and moved to the top middle. They seemed to fit originally, but when they were moved to a better spot, they fit even better, and the whole puzzle was now straight and looked like it was supposed to.

This illustration points out two things about our spiritual life in Christ.

First, we only fit perfectly right when we're in the right place. Spiritually, that means we are connected with our Creator through the blood of His Son. There isn't any other way that the spiritual puzzle piece that we represent fits into God's plan perfectly, as it was meant to. Ephesians 4:15-16 says, "but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love."

Sounds like a puzzle, doesn't it? Christ is the head, the master puzzle maker, and each of us are the individual parts, being fitted and held together by the other pieces. The puzzle, in this example the church, only grows when each piece fits together rightly. The good news for me is that the puzzle pieces don't have minds and wills of their own, although they do seem to fight me at times.

Second, things can seem to “fit” well at first. They look good, until you go further. Then something seems wrong. Your spiritual eye, your spiritual heart, tells you that even though it looks good initially, something isn’t quite right. We are called on to listen to our spiritual hearts at that moment, and not trust our physical eyes. Hebrews 11:1 says, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”

Our faith is not in the things of this world, the things which we can see. Our faith is in Christ alone, who we have not seen yet, but will see. We have experienced Christ’s presence through the Holy Spirit, but we haven’t seen Him yet. Still, we have faith in the things we have placed our hope in—Christ’s atoning blood sacrifice on the cross, His resurrection from the dead three days later, and His coming return.

This Lord’s day, and specifically our time of communion, remind us to examine ourselves to make sure we are “fitting” into the Master’s plan. To reexamine our spiritual eyes and hearts and make whatever alterations are needed to walk the path we are both called to, and the one which we have also chosen—to follow and stay close to the Christ who redeemed us.

Let’s pray.