

What Happens When God Puts All the Pieces Together

God has an unusual sense of humor. I am not sure everyone will agree. I, however, have found it to be true. Through almost 40 years of ministry, I am sure God has looked down on me and said, “Will he ever get it?”

I have realized there is plenty I don’t know. I truly resemble Jacob. You do remember Jacob, right? He said, “Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it” (Gen. 28:16, ESV). As I share the story of how God led me to write the *Now What* book, I hope to inspire you to watch for the ways He is working in your own story—and to share your story with others as well.

Sometimes God asks unusual questions. Did you know He always knows the answers? God will ask us what we might call a “leading question” to reveal things we have overlooked or do not know.

Leading questions lead us to curiosity, and curiosity leads us to what God is doing. The answers are never simple, but the outcomes are profound.

In this unusual way, God desires that we learn more about Him and ourselves. His goal is to teach us His ways. God is passionate about us knowing Him. He could choose to do everything in a hurry, but that is not His way. God is a patient shepherd. You’ve got to love that. He does not push us; He leads us.

That truth brings me to the story of how God led me to write the *Now What* book. It resembles a puzzle—another metaphor for the way God reveals Himself. This story includes pieces of the many different ways God works, which, when put together, also reveal Him and a bigger picture of what He intends.

Meeting a Need

A while back, in my role as lead pastor, I was searching for a book to give our church's first-time guests and new Christians. The one we had previously used was out of print.

I jumped on Google, my go-to search engine. But that day's search brought me nothing.

I searched Amazon, Books-A-Million, Thrifty Books, Morningstar Ministries and other publishers. My search was futile. No book matched our church's need.

The following day, I heard the Lord say, "Why don't you write the book you need?" That thought resonated with me, so I went to work. I never prayed about it. I was acclimated and aware of my topic and my purpose, and I felt the Holy Spirit leading me.

I wrote the first draft of *Now What* in less than two hours.

I felt nothing special while writing it. I used simple biblical content and was honestly underimpressed with the material. It was also the shortest book I had ever written.

I gave the rough draft to my wife, Charlotte, who is the most Spirit-led person I know. She also proofreads everything I write. She read the book and disgustedly said, "Where is the Holy Spirit? You left Him out."

How could I have written about salvation, baptism, worship and serving while omitting the Holy Spirit and His importance? Surprised, embarrassed and challenged, I prayed, "Holy Spirit, show me what You are doing with this little book."

Including the Spirit and Salvation

I also went back to work. As I added the copy about the Holy Spirit, the Lord revealed another piece of the puzzle. Suddenly, I realized the purpose of this book was for people

to find God and the baptism of the Holy Spirit without human intervention. So I added prayers about how to receive Christ and the Holy Spirit.

God's work amazed me. Excited, I still battled the thought that information about the Holy Spirit would keep the book out of the mainstream. My thoughts argued with me: *Evangelicals and some denominational leaders will never use Now What.*

I also know that God knows about rejection. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not" (John 1:11, KJV).

We know the enemy has a strategy to block every God-given purpose. I am familiar with his strategies to thwart God's plan. I decided to focus on His overall goal for the book: to see people saved and filled with the Holy Spirit.

I daydreamed of someone picking up *Now What* and repeating the prayer of salvation. I further dreamed of someone voraciously reading about Christ, the importance of baptism, the Word of God and serving in the local church. I also imagined the moment a reader would discover the Holy Spirit while reading the *Now What* book.

I considered the possibility that the reader might never have been introduced to the Holy Spirit. That section of the book has already proven itself valuable, as the following review shows: "Now What is a salvation manual all by itself. The Holy Spirit section in the book is clearly written and easily understood."

Here's an excerpt from page 21 of the book:

We receive the Holy Spirit into our human spirit when we get saved. However, the baptism of the Spirit is an infilling of the Spirit of God upon the believer. We believe it is often a separate experience and follows your salvation experience.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit involves being covered with,

immersed in, and empowered by the Holy Spirit. Some have described the Holy Spirit's presence on the believer as being in, on, and upon.

John the Baptist said, "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire," (Matt. 3:11, NKJV).

God kept working on me, and I kept walking through the process.

Adding Illustrations and Customization

The next piece to the puzzle came when the Lord said, "Illustrate the book." *What does that mean?* I thought. So I asked someone.

"It means adding digital pictures to the copy," they told me. I immediately found a gifted digital artist, Timothy Lewis, and sought out his services. He was a perfect match for the *Now What* project.

Our next step was to find and choose the pictures. We prayerfully labored over the selections; choosing the right ones was top priority to our team and me. After weeks of work we finalized our work. The graphics exponentially expanded the book's value. A picture is worth a thousand words, for sure.

We were now 15 weeks into the project, and God added the next piece to the puzzle. I heard Him say, "Customize *Now What*."

"What, God?"

I never intended for this project to be a big deal. God obviously had a different idea.

At this point, I had invested nearly \$2,000 of ministry funds and not sold one book. And I doubted this customization thing would work. So, I called my digital artist and the internet

team together and presented the customization idea. They loved it—and God was not surprised.

Our internet specialist, Jennifer, said, “I will investigate the online customization and automate the customization form. Tim [our digital artist] can make a template for the printer. We can forward the customer uploads to Tim, and he can send a proof back to the buyer.”

Jennifer and Tim were in high heaven, and I was headed for more investment and added delay. But our team made customizing the book easy. The customer simply uploads a high-quality picture of the church, pastor or a graphic they want to feature. They add a professional bio and a beautiful logo. That’s it. We take it from there.

Our team professionally designs a proof, and we quickly share it with the customer. The books are shipped directly from the printer to the customer. Simple as that. The entire procedure takes only a few days.

That was the exact process for Trinity Family Church in Forney, Texas, and Living Faith in Indianola, Mississippi. Trinity was one of our first customers, and Living Faith is one of our most recent. The photo shows the back page of their customized versions.

You can also customize *Now What* for:

- Mission groups.
- Street evangelism groups.
- Christian nonprofits.
- Christian businesses.
- Discipleship groups.
- Church classes and training.

Dealing With Delays

Have you found God’s delays are also His normal? I sure have,

probably because of my lack of patience. I am much like Benaiah, my 4-year-old grandson, who said about patience, "Papaw, I don't need any."

But I have learned that as we wait, God strengthens us. Waiting is the hack to weariness. It gives God the time He needs to download the crucial pieces to the puzzle.

A whole year went by before we went to print. Was it worth it? Well, God never said it would be easy. Is anything important ever easy? Rarely. But the reward of obedience is always worth the cost of waiting, and doing God's will always carries a cost.

The customized version of *Now What* eventually became a reality. It seemed to take forever. Accomplished authors will tell you that writing a great book takes a year or more. But when God says, "Write," you write. God wants His Word and stories in print. God says we must write for the generations to read as a witness (see Isa. 30:8).

The *Now What* book will stand the test of time. Why? Because it is biblically centered and scripturally sound. The Word of God shall stand forever (see Isa. 40:8; 1 Pet. 1:25). *Now What* is God's book with God's signature on every page.

Spreading Awareness

And God added still another piece to the puzzle. One day, I received a call from Minister Albino Estrada, who left a voice mail: "I would like to get some of your books for my discipleship classes in the prison, and God bless you."

Estrada is a seasoned minister to prisoners. We became immediate friends and met face to face in the middle of the pandemic. (The work of the kingdom must go forward.)

Estrada took *Now What* (Spanish version) into the prison, and his students loved the easy-to-read style and the simple

discipleship steps. He now uses *Now What* in several prisons across Texas. People are being discipled and receiving the Holy Spirit there. Other groups like Estrada's are choosing *Now What* as the perfect tool for empowering and discipling new believers.

God is using *Now What* to spread awareness of the Holy Spirit throughout Texas prisons and Mexico. One of my missionary friends personally delivered 200 copies into the hands of senior pastors in Mexico.

As you can see, God is using *Now What* around the world to help people discover Christ and the Holy Spirit.

The *Now What* book was also featured on the Charisma Podcast Network in 2021. Here is the link on the Charisma Podcast Network and on Apple Podcasts.

Can you see how God is using this book? *Now What* has sold more copies than all my previous books combined. I have learned that trusting God is more important than understanding Him.

There are hundreds of books on salvation, baptism, reading the Scriptures and more. But you will search hard to find a book focused on salvation and the importance of knowing the Holy Spirit.

The *Now What* book is well written, illustrated and customizable. And there is nothing more important than the Holy Spirit except people finding Christ as their Savior. I am consumed with people finding Christ and then discovering the Holy Spirit through this little book.

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