Single Moms #2: **Puzzled About Parenting?**

**Scriptural Principle:** *“And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns.” Philippians 1:6 (NLT)*

**Synopsis:** Being a single mom often feels like trying to complete a jigsaw puzzle that has missing pieces. How can the picture become complete?

**Materials Needed:**

* Baggie with a Puzzle for Each Group

**PASS OUT A PUZZLE TO EACH GROUP.**

* One puzzle is all intact. Only give the photo of finished puzzle to this group.
* Switch couple pieces in two other puzzles.
* In another, mix in over half from another puzzle.

You have been divided into groups. Each group has a boxed puzzle. Work together to complete the puzzle. As soon as you have completed your puzzle, sit down and complete the first question on your hand-out.

**Activity:** Puzzled?

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| ***Puzzled?*** | *“And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns.” Philippians 1:6 (NLT)* | Sometimes we may lack what we need in order to accomplish our goal. We need to utilize the strengths in family, church members, or friends. And, sometimes, it’s ok to admit that we feel like the lost puzzle piece. | 1 Puzzle for each group | Participants are placed in teams of 2-3. Each team is given a boxed puzzle with one task---complete the puzzle. They are unaware that each box has had several pieces removed and placed in another team’s box. They must go in search of what they lack. |

Puzzled Parenting Pieces- Each group shares what they wrote down.

Possibilities include:

* How does this activity relate to parenting solo?
* Talk about the lessons in group that had no picture of the puzzle they were putting together.
* What about when you have a picture and you have all the pieces?
* What about the fact that your group had two homes?
* Some groups had to seek missing puzzle pieces from another group.

Life is puzzling, isn’t it? We are all trying to put together these different pieces in hopes of creating something beautiful in the end. All of our puzzles are the same, yet different. I absolutely love putting together puzzles and find them to be a useful tool in my self-care kit to help calm my mind down. When I started putting together my last puzzle, I could not help but think of the lessons we could learn about life from a jigsaw puzzle. As I kept putting the pieces together, more reflections came to my mind. I came up with seven main life lessons from puzzles you can start using in your life today!

1. **One Piece at a Time** - Puzzles have a lot of different components- just like our lives. It is hard to focus on everything at once- relationships, personal development, work, school, and self-care just to name a few! It is important to remember we can do anything, but not everything. If we are worried about getting everything done right now the truth is we will end up getting a lot less done- and be a lot more stressed along the way! Our minds are distracted and not able to give each section the attention it deserves. Take life, and puzzles, just one piece at a time!
2. **Don’t Force a Fit -** If something is meant to be, it will come together naturally.
3. **Every Piece Counts -** With a puzzle, it is easy to not give yourself credit for your work until it is all put together. However, it is important to recognize the hard work we are doing every step of the way! Every puzzle piece fitting together is a step in the right direction and the puzzle could not be complete without it! We should celebrate our progress in puzzles just as we should celebrate the progress and victories in our everyday lives. We are having little victories every single day that are unfortunately overlooked. Staying hydrated is a little victory with huge rewards just as reading a chapter of your new book is a little victory too! Celebrating yourself and little victories are key to a positive life- and enjoying putting the puzzle together a little more!
4. **When Things aren’t Going so Well, Take a Break -** Everything will look different when you return.
5. **The Creator of the Puzzle gave you the Picture as a Guidebook -** Refer to the Creator’s guidebook often. Know what you are making. Could you imagine getting a box of puzzle pieces without an idea of what the completed puzzle will look like? Life can sometimes feel this way if we are not sure what life we want to build ourselves or where to even start the process. Luckily, we have the power to design what our life will look like. I have a vision board above my desk that acts as a picture for my completed life puzzle with goals, aspirations, and travel destinations just to name a few items! When we know what we are building, it is far easier to plan and start putting the pieces together. Be sure to look at the big picture. Getting hung up on the little pieces only leads to frustration.
6. **Perseverance Pays Off -** Every important puzzle went together bit by bit, piece by piece. When one spot stops working, move to another. But be sure to come back later.

Sometimes there is a part of the puzzle that seems impossible to figure out. Finally, we just start to move the pieces around in different ways that seem a bit crazy until something works. This is actually similar to figuring out life too- we must go outside of our comfort zones and try something new! The next thing you learn could be your passion, your hidden talent, or the calling you never knew you had. Do not be afraid of the pieces not fitting, just keep experimenting and learning! We never know what might fit together. Trying something new could help you make the pieces fall together. Don’t be afraid to try different combinations - Some matches are surprising.

1. **Variety Makes it a Beautiful Picture-**  It’s the different colors and patterns that make the puzzle interesting.
2. **Utilize the Help/Support You Have -** Life can be overwhelming at times and hard to navigate. What would happen if you decided to not use the picture on the box to help you with the puzzle? When we decide to not use the help available to us in life, this is essentially what we are doing. It can be hard to create our own vision for our lives, but it is important to remember that we do have help. Take some time to reflect on yourself using a journal, meditation, or a good book. Therapy is also a wonderful resource because the essence of therapy is to help you become the person you want to be. Our support systems can help us too, as long as we are able to let them know we need them. Just as the picture of the puzzle helps us to create the picture ourselves, our lives are filled with resources to help us see and create our very own puzzle! Working together with friends and family makes any task fun.
3. **Establish the Border First -** Boundaries give a sense of security and order. Most people start solving a puzzle the same way- with the border. When creating a puzzle, you have to clear an area big enough for you to put it together and figure out where every piece fits. The border defines a sacred space of where you are getting ready to build this masterpiece. A puzzle’s border reminds me a lot of the boundaries we place in our own lives. It is important to have boundaries so we are staying focused on what is important to ourselves and our lives while upholding our rights. Our boundaries help ensure we do not take on the role of a people pleaser and allow things to interfere with our own puzzle of life. Boundaries help us stay focused on what is necessary to help us grow in a positive way.
4. **Celebrate your Successes** - even little ones.
5. **Anything worth Doing Takes Time and Effort -** A great puzzle can’t be rushed.
6. **Have Fun-Enjoy the Journey! -**There are two basic ways to go about solving a puzzle: enjoying the journey or rushing to complete the masterpiece, stressing yourself out along the way. I feel something similar can be said about life and how key our attitude is. It is important to have your childhood excitement and to keep life fun! Find out what makes you happy and make a point to add more happiness into your life- you deserve it! Just as the puzzle can seem like an overwhelming mess or like a fun adventure- life can too! When you finally reach the last piece, don’t be sad. Rejoice in the masterpiece!

Often, our days are filled with puzzling parent pieces. The picture on the box may be marred, pieces may seem lost or not fitting into place. But, at each stage of your parenting puzzle, keep putting the pieces that you have together, one at a time. And, within time, you will see the picture much more clearly. Every piece is important. A masterpiece is emerging in the life of the child God has given you - one puzzle piece at a time.

**Remember our Scriptural Principle for today:** *“And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns.” Philippians 1:6 (NLT)*

God will continue to put together the puzzle pieces of your life, one piece at a time, until His masterpiece is finished!