

## A Passion for God's Word

# 8

## Digging for Hidden Treasure

### Read Job 28:1-28

Job asks the question: “Where can wisdom be found? Where does understanding dwell?” The answer, simply put, is that it is located in the Lord himself. And as we have seen, God has invested himself in his Word. Wisdom and understanding are found in the Word of God.

### Read Proverbs 2:2-4

### Read Psalm 19:7-10

As a student of God's Word, we are on a search “as for hidden treasure.” As Oswald Chambers once put it:

“God's Book is packed full of overwhelming riches; they are unsearchable – the more we have, the more there is to have.”<sup>1</sup>

But what do you do with buried treasure? As any child will tell you, a treasure hunter must:

- ➡ Locate it
- ➡ Dig for it
- ➡ Store it

Let's take a look at each of these three stages in the treasure-hunting process.

### ***Locate the treasure***

The Bible contains incredible “treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (**Colossians 2:3**). We all know where the treasure is found in the most general sense – in the Bible. But that is like saying that I know there is a treasure chest buried *some-where* on this deserted island.

What any treasure hunter needs is a good treasure map. Understanding the structure of the Bible is like having a treasure map. Once you have learned to read the map, and have established the reference points on that map, you will be able to find the treasure.

### ***Dig for the treasure***

The treasures hidden in God’s Word are “unsearchable” (**Romans 11:33; Ephesians 3:8**) – not in the sense that you *cannot* search them, but in the sense that you cannot search them *to their end*. “The more we have,” as Oswald Chambers said, “the more there is to have.”

You will find as you study the Bible that there is always more to it than meets the eye. It is like a bottomless well: The deeper you plumb, the deeper it gets. You can read a verse many times, then suddenly something new will come to light. An overlooked diamond has surfaced in the texture of that passage.

### ***Store the treasure***

God never intended for the treasures of his Word to stay locked up in the Bible. God has planned for that treasure to be transferred from the pages of the Bible to the pages of your heart (see **2 Corinthians 3:3**). You now hide the Word in your heart (**Psalms 119:11**). As you study the Bible, the treasure of God’s Word is buried within you (**2 Corinthians 4:7**)!

You are developing the skills of a treasure hunter. And as with anything, the more time you spend prospecting in God’s Word, the more skilled you will become. As you locate, dig and store the treasures of God’s Word, you will quickly build a storehouse out of which you can share with others.

**Read Matthew 13:52**

## **The Spot Marked ‘X’**

**Read Colossians 2:2-3**

The purpose of a treasure map is to reveal the spot marked ‘X’ – the exact location of the hidden treasure. So what is the ‘X’ marked on our treasure map? According to the passage we’ve just read, it is Christ himself. The whole Christian life is a discovery of these hidden riches found in the person of Jesus.

**Read Ephesians 3:7-8**

The writers of God’s Word often stand in awe of the treasure bequeathed to us by God. Paul calls it “unsearchable riches” (**Ephesians 3:8**), an “indiscribable gift” (**2 Corinthians 9:15**) and a “prize for which God has called [you] heavenward in Christ Jesus” (**Philippians 3:14**). Isaiah speaks of “wonder upon wonder” (**Isaiah 29:14**) and Peter writes of “an inexpressible and glorious joy” (**1 Peter 1:8**). No wonder the prophets of old “searched intently and with the greatest care” to discover the very treasures they themselves were placing into God’s Word.

**Read again 1 Peter 1:10-12**

What they searched for intently, we also now search for intently. But we have an advantage they never had. Our treasure map is complete. We now know the location of the spot marked ‘X’!

**Read Luke 10:23-24**

Oh that we may catch a greater understanding of the wonder that we have in the Bible! How many yearned for the ability to hold God's Word in their own hands? How many longed to understand the mystery of God's unfolding purpose? Like the disciples, we too are blessed, because through their accounts we also see and hear the Lord Jesus. We have open access to the One in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, the One who makes the words of the Bible burn within our hearts (see **Luke 24:32**).

As Horace Bushnell observed:

“My own experience is that the Bible is dull when I am dull. When I am really alive, and set in upon the text with a tidal pressure of living affinities, it opens, it multiplies discoveries, and reveals depths even faster than I can note them. The worldly spirit shuts the Bible; the Spirit of God makes it a fire, flaming out all meanings and glorious truths.”<sup>2</sup>

**The Process of Discovery**

The discovery of the treasures of God's Word is a process. There are no shortcuts. Although the reading of Christian books and Bible commentaries can be helpful in the journey of discovery, the discovery itself can only happen by *actually reading the Bible!*

Now it's important to say that books can be a great tool. The Online Bible College, too, can be a powerful training system. But these are no more than roadmaps. Never confuse the roadmap for the journey. The road must still be travelled.

There is no such thing as second-hand discovery. No one can discover the treasures of God's Word for you. There can only be a first-hand discovery, a personal discovery, or there is no discovery at all. At the Online Bible College, we can only guide you, point you in the right direction, provide the clues to where the treasure is hidden. But you must dig it up for yourself. You have both the responsibility and privilege of discovering *all over again* the wonder of what has been hidden in God's Word all along! Personal discovery is re-discovery!

Now as you progress through God's Word you will discover something quite incredible: true study of the Word of God is closely and inextricably linked to your worship. Like a self-feeding spiral, your insight into God's Word will inspire worship, and your worship will introduce deeper revelations which will send you searching the Scriptures again. Worship and the Word go hand in hand. How can you discover something new about the Lord and not want to shout his praise? How can you uncover something richer in your knowledge of Jesus and not want to raise your hands in worship?

**Read Revelation 4:8-11; 5:3-14**

Note in these two passages how the 24 elders are constantly falling down in wor-

ship before the throne of God. It seems that as they worship, they see a new aspect of the Lord, a new revelation of who he is, and this causes them to fall upon their knees in worship once again. This eternal cycle – of *worship, revelation, worship, revelation* – is also at the heart of the discovery process in God’s Word.

### Read Psalm 27:4

It is this repeated cycle of discovery and enhanced discovery – this “gazing upon the beauty of the Lord” – which makes the Bible fresh every time we read it.

## The Prism of Scripture

### Read Ephesians 3:16-19

Paul writes that, as Christians, we need “power...to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ” and Paul talks about this “grasping” as something that “surpasses knowledge.” Someone can tell you about the love of Christ, but this is mere information. It has to be “grasped” through the revelation power of God’s Spirit.

As we have emphasized many times already in previous lessons, the study of God’s Word is not the mere transferral of information. As Fuchsia Pickett writes:

“Information is transferring my notes to your mind. It has no eternal value unless it goes beyond that.”<sup>3</sup>

The only thing of eternal value is that which lodges in your heart, that which awakens you to the splendor of God’s Word previously unseen. That awakening is not a momentary experience but a life-changing one. You are never the same again. It is what transforms you “from glory to glory” (**2 Corinthians 3:18**, KJV).

Just as the love of Christ is described as having length, breadth, width and depth, so too does the Word of God. There are depths that can only be discovered in intent searching.

If you were to hold a large cut diamond up to the sun and turn it, the rainbow colors would shift and new patterns of light would unfold. The light does not come from within the diamond itself. All the diamond is doing is splitting the sunlight into its component colors. The colors have been there all along, but it took the diamond to reveal them. In the same way, the prism of Scripture “splits” the radiance of God’s glory into exquisite combinations and patterns. You may think you have seen what God is like, but then you read that same scripture again and something new emerges, like shifting rainbow colors of God’s glory.

Now its important to understand that we are not talking here about “secret” meanings in the Bible, which can only be understood by the initiated. The Bible’s meaning is plain. It means what it says.

### Read Proverbs 30:5-6

But having said that, the revelation of God contained in God's Word is constantly in motion. The Word of God is "living and active" (**Hebrews 4:12**). There is a dynamic quality to the revelation it contains. This is because the Holy Spirit is able to take exactly the same verse and bring out something brand new about himself. The truth was always there, but when we had read the verse before, our hearts had at that time been enthralled by another aspect of the truth contained in that verse.

### Read Psalm 119:18

God has layered meaning upon meaning in his Word. As you study the Bible, you will discover that its depths are found in the interconnectedness between different parts of God's Word and in the subtle nuances of its words and phrases.

As Charles Spurgeon phrased it:

"Nobody ever outgrows Scripture; the book widens and deepens with our years."<sup>4</sup>

## Prospecting Tools

Any prospector worth his salt has tools to assist him in his search for treasure. So too the Bible student has tools. Some of the most basic are:

### ***Pen and paper***

We recommend that you keep a journal. Write down what you receive from the Lord during your study of his Word. Take notes when someone teaches the Word. Jot down the nuggets of truth that God drops in your heart during this time.

### ***Your own Bible***

We also recommend that you mark your Bible. This, of course, is a personal decision, since some people prefer not to deface their Bible. But by underlining key scriptures and making notes in the margins, you personalize your Bible.

Some people also like to use highlighters of different colors – yellow, green, blue and red – to color-code the passages they read. The key point is this: Don't just rely on your memory. You'll be amazed at how much more you retain when you boost your memory with written notes.

One word of warning, however. Beware of reading only what you have already underlined or highlighted. Read the rest of Scripture too. Make sure that previous notes don't distract you from what God wants to speak to you about today.

### ***Other Bible translations***

Try reading other translations or paraphrases\* of the Bible. *The Amplified Bible*, for example, can bring out the hidden nuances of the original language.

\* A paraphrase is a rendition of the Bible into modern English, rephrasing the English rather than translating directly from the original languages of Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek.

Note that in the mornings we are now often reading an entire book in one sitting. Although we did not ask you to read the whole of Ephesians through again this morning, we recommend you get a good paraphrase, such as *The Message*, or a modern-language translation, such as *The New Living Translation* or *J. B. Phillips' Translation of the New Testament*, and read Ephesians again. You'll be amazed at the new things you will pick up using this prospecting tool.

### ***Commentaries and helps***

Commentaries can often be helpful, but as we've already emphasized, beware of relying on second-hand discoveries. A good commentary, however, can help you understand the background to a word or phrase, which open up a whole new vista of personal discovery for you.

Other Bible helps (such as Bible handbooks, word studies and, of course, a good concordance) can also assist you in your prospecting for seams of gold in God's Word.

### ***Sharing with others***

This may seem an unusual "prospecting tool," but sharing with others helps you plumb the depths of God's Word in two ways. First of all, by sharing what you have discovered with others, you consolidate what you have learned. There is no greater joy than sharing a discovery with another.

Secondly, as you share with others, they also can share their insights with you, sparking a whole new understanding of God and sending you back to his Word to dig deeper for the seam of truth you have uncovered. Note that in **Ephesians 3:18** Paul prays that you will "have power, *together with all the saints*, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ." It seems that God has designed that the discovering of the truths of God's Word be a "together" experience.

This is the paradox of Bible study. Unlike natural treasure hunting, the more you give away, the more you get in return. For what you uncover in God's Word multiplies in the sharing of it with others.

## **Eight Steps**

For the Word of God to have its full effect, there is an eight-step process in the study of God's Word:

- **Mark** your Bible
- **Maintain** a journal
- **Memorize** the key verse
- **Meditate** on the passage
- **Mine** the rest of scripture
- **Mirror** God's Word in your life
- **Minister** the message to others
- **Mentor** another in God's Word

## The Driving Ambition

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What drives the natural prospector is the pull of the treasures that are still hidden, the “prospect” of the next big strike. It is exactly the same with the spiritual prospector.

### Read Matthew 6:21

Where is your treasure? If your treasures are in earthly things, that is where your heart will be. But if your treasure is in the Lord and in his Word, then you will discover treasures in the Bible that will last you an eternity. That’s where the hunger for God’s Word comes from – a realization of the unsearchable and endless treasures of Christ hidden in its pages.

The Amplified Bible proclaims the Bible student’s heart in **Philippians 3:10**:

“[For my determined purpose is] that I may know Him – that I may progressively become more deeply and intimately acquainted with Him...and that I may in the same way come to know the power outflowing from His resurrection...that I may...be continually transformed [in spirit into His likeness]...”

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<sup>1</sup> Oswald Chambers (1874-1917), quoted from *Draper’s Quotations for the Christian World*, excerpted from QuickVerse 5.0.

<sup>2</sup> Horace Bushnell (1802-1876), quoted from *Draper’s Quotations for the Christian World*, excerpted from QuickVerse 5.0.

<sup>3</sup> Fuchsia Pickett, *Receiving Divine Revelation* (Orlando: Creation House, 1997), p.102.

<sup>4</sup> Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834-1892), quoted from *Draper’s Quotations for the Christian World*, excerpted from QuickVerse 5.0.