

There are television programs and magazine articles that tell of finding treasure amongst garage sale items. The unwitting seller has been living with some treasure handed down from previous generations but had no idea of the value of the item. The buyer is a savvy antique dealer looking for rare items of value. The story usually has the buyer unsure of the actual value and then shocked to find out it is worth even more than he dreamed. There is actually a proverb about this. <sup>14</sup> *"It's no good, it's no good!" says the buyer; then off he goes and boasts about his purchase.* Proverbs 20:14 (NIV)

The seller was living with a treasure and wasn't aware of it. Unfortunately, that is how most Christians live with the Word of God. We are told it is a treasure, but we just don't live like we believe it or test it to see its true value. We often say we believe it is the unfailing Word of God, His love letter to us, but then we rarely read it or make use of the treasure within. We are like the man living with the valuable antique not truly realizing its worth.

One couple bought an old fixer upper back East. As they were demolishing a wall, a huge cache of coins came pouring out. Apparently a former owner generations earlier had used the wall as a kind of safe, and had died without telling anyone about it. The coins were so old, and many so rare, that they more than paid for the purchase of the home. How many owners of that house had lived with a treasure and not even known it?

Jesus told a story about a man who found a treasure buried in a field. He went and sold everything he had to buy the field to obtain the treasure. (Matthew 13:44) Is that your attitude toward the Word of God? **Do you realize the treasure that you are living with?**

**Commented [Paul Wall1]:** Matthew 13:44 (ESV)  
44 "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

Our problem stems from the fact that we do not see things as God sees them. When the nation of Judah returned from captivity, there was one man who saw things from a heavenly perspective. His name was Ezra. He is the author of Psalm 119. He was a treasure chest of God's word. The heart in his chest was a treasure chest for the Word.

We look at the world through our heart. If our heart is longing for the things of this world, then we see the value of things from that perspective. (Colossians 3:1-2) If our desire is for the comfort of possessions and security of riches, then we interpret what we observe through that filter. That is the vision of fallen man because that is the heart of fallen man, self-reliance.

**Commented [Paul Wall2]:** Colossians 3:1-2 (NIV)  
1 Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.  
2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

But for the children of God whose hearts are transformed, their eyes should see through that renewed heart. The heart of the believer values Jesus above all else. Nothing can compare or even come close. The old nature within us is tempted at times to seek satisfaction in the things that once satisfied us, and there is pleasure in sin for a season. The season quickly passes and then we are just left with the guilt of betraying our Savior for something so meaningless.

Ezra's vision was one of faith. Though he did not know of the full revelation of Jesus, he saw the greatness of the coming Messiah in the Word. Jesus is the Word made flesh. (John 1:14) To love Him is to love the Word. He saw the value of the Word because his heart was set on God.

Listen to the value he placed on Scripture. Psalm 119:14 (ESV) <sup>14</sup> *In the way of your testimonies I delight as much as in all riches.* Psalm 119:72 (ESV) <sup>72</sup> *The law of your mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver pieces.* Psalm 119:127 (ESV) <sup>127</sup> *Therefore I love your commandments above gold, above fine gold.* He prayed that the lens of his heart would always be to value the word above all else. Psalm 119:36 (ESV) <sup>36</sup> *Incline my heart to your testimonies, and not to selfish gain!*

Ezra repeatedly used a number of descriptive words to describe his attitude toward God's Word. He used terms like "my delight", "long for", "stand in awe of", and even "love exceedingly". Ezra was a treasure chest of God's Word because his heart valued the Word so highly. He stored up that treasure in His heart. (Psalm 119:24; 47; 77; 40; 131; 120; 161; 167) The Word in his heart translated into action. It was because he saw the Word through that lens of his heart that he meditated in, kept, observed, sang about, found counsel in and comfort from it. (15; 48; 34; 172; 24; 52)

If we indeed believe that the Word is so valuable, above all else, then what do we do about it? In the first century, when Jesus was a child in Galilee, the boys made an effort to memorize the first five books of the Bible. Some went on to memorize much of the oral interpretation and a very few even memorized the writings and the prophets. It was generally acknowledged that one's authority derived from their understanding of God's word. That is really the only authority in the spiritual realm. It is the authority Jesus demonstrated in every conversation and confrontation.

In some African nations today, young boys leave home to live with a Muslim Imam and memorize the Koran in its original language, which they do not understand. Imagine the effort that would take! The motivation is often to merit heaven.

We have a God who loves us and gave Himself for us. We should be memorizing our Scriptures because it is such a treasure to hide in our heart. We should be

**Commented [Paul Wall3]:** Colossians 3:1-2 (NIV)  
1 Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.  
2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

**Commented [Paul Wall4]:** Psalm 119:24 (ESV)  
24 Your testimonies are my delight; they are my counselors.

**Commented [Paul Wall5]:** Psalm 119:47 (ESV)  
47 for I find my delight in your commandments, which I love.

**Commented [Paul Wall6]:** Psalm 119:77 (ESV)  
77 Let your mercy come to me, that I may live; for your law is my delight.

**Commented [Paul Wall7]:** Psalm 119:40 (ESV)  
40 Behold, I long for your precepts; in your righteousness give me life!

**Commented [Paul Wall8]:** Psalm 119:131 (ESV)  
131 I open my mouth and pant, because I long for your commandments.

**Commented [Paul Wall9]:** Psalm 119:120 (NIV)  
120 My flesh trembles in fear of you; I stand in awe of your laws.

**Commented [Paul Wall10]:** Psalm 119:161 (ESV)  
161 SIN and SHIN Princes persecute me without cause, but my heart stands in awe of your words.

**Commented [Paul Wall11]:** Psalm 119:167 (ESV)  
167 My soul keeps your testimonies; I love them exceedingly.

**Commented [Paul Wall12]:** Psalm 119:15 (ESV)  
15 I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways.

**Commented [Paul Wall13]:** Psalm 119:48 (ESV)  
48 I will lift up my hands toward your commandments, which I love, and I will meditate on your statutes.

**Commented [Paul Wall14]:** Psalm 119:34 (ESV)  
34 Give me understanding, that I may keep your law and observe it with my whole heart.

**Commented [Paul Wall15]:** Psalm 119:172 (ESV)  
172 My tongue will sing of your word, for all your commandments are right.

**Commented [Paul Wall16]:** Psalm 119:24 (ESV)  
24 Your testimonies are my delight; they are my counselors.

**Commented [Paul Wall17]:** Psalm 119:52 (ESV)  
52 When I think of your rules from of old, I take comfort, O LORD.

filling the treasure chest of our mind with the priceless jewels in the word of God.

In some cultures, women wear a part of their dowry to show how valued they are and their status in this life. Men can flaunt golden rings and necklaces or the vehicle they drive to show their worth. But real value is not in physical things, but in our Creator God and His love for us. He is revealed in His Word.

You have the same opportunity as the children in Jesus' day. You can memorize the Word of God, hiding those treasures in your heart. Through those treasures you will gain wisdom, for the Word of God is true wisdom. (98) Through it you will be guided on the path of righteousness. (23:3)

**Commented [Paul Wall18]:** Psalm 119:98 (ESV)  
98 Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies, for it is ever with me.

**Commented [Paul Wall19]:** Psalm 23:3 (ESV)  
3 He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Jesus' words in the gospels are filled with references to Old Testament passages. Almost everything that Jesus said came from the Law, the Psalms and the Prophets. Because the life of the people of Galilee revolved around the Word of God, and so many memorized large portions of Scriptures, they readily knew to what He was referring. They had the jewels stored in the treasure chest of their hearts. When Jesus spoke, He shined a light on those jewels and helped them see a greater beauty than they had seen before.

It is never too late to begin to study and memorize the Word of God, but of course the best years to hide it in our heart is in the days of our youth. It is more easily retained when we are young. (Ecclesiastes 12:1)

**Commented [Paul Wall20]:** Ecclesiastes 12:1 (ESV)  
1 Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near of which you will say, "I have no pleasure in them";

Palestinians today in the old city of David dig under their floors to find ancient coins that are often worth a great deal. Imagine finding a mine under the floor of your home. Down its corridors are tunnels with gold nuggets in the walls. When should you start collecting and using that gold? NOW! Why wait? That is, unless you see it as just another yellow rock. Then why trouble yourself to go down and work at digging it out? It all depends on your perspective, on the interpretation of your heart.

**First we must ask ourselves if we are truly born again.** Did we accept the new life of Christ to be the Lord of our life or are we just being religious? Religion will memorize Scripture and quote it for the desire of the respect of men. That is of no value now or in eternity. Only a heart that has humbly repented of sin and accepted Jesus as their Lord and Savior is really made new to hunger and thirst after righteousness. Only that new heart can see the real value of things. (Romans 8:7)

**Commented [Paul Wall21]:** Romans 8:7 (ESV)  
7 For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot.

Then we must **ask if we have devoted ourselves to the Word or are we just dabbling in it?** The Apostles devoted themselves to the ministry of the word and prayer. (Acts 6:4) Paul tells us to *"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly,"*

**Commented [Paul Wall22]:** Acts 6:4 (ESV)  
4 But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

Colossians 3:16a If we are not using the Word to teach and admonish, we are using man's wisdom that will fail. Have we surrendered to the God given desire to fill our hearts and minds with the treasure of the Word, or are we unwilling to accept the Lord's spirit of self-control? North Korean believers will risk their life to possess a Bible. Iranians hand copy the Bible into notebooks. That is how much they treasure the Word of God!

Many Christians hunger for the Word but want others to do the work of digging in and finding the treasures. They want the jewels handed to them. Their greatest value comes from discovering the truth directly from the Word of God yourself!

Finally, we must cooperate with the Holy Spirit. He will guide us as to what to memorize and how to discipline our lives so that we can fill our treasure chests with the jewels in His word. He will guide as to which jewel to share with others as well. The amazing thing about the treasures in the Word is that when you give them out, you are richer, not poorer. The treasures appear even more valuable after you share them with others. (Proverbs 11:24)

**Commented [Paul Wall23]:** Proverbs 11:24 (ESV)  
24 One gives freely, yet grows all the richer; another withholds what he should give, and only suffers want.

We live in a culture where the Word of God is desperately needed to bring the light of truth into the darkness. The enemy of the Kingdom of God would have us keep our mouths closed because the Word of God is so powerful. But we have the answer to so many needs. The word of God addresses almost every situation in life. Next Sunday we'll see that even portions of Scripture we tend to see as boring and out dated have something very relevant to say to our day.

When the Spirit of God brings a verse to your mind, speak it out. Declare that it is the Word of God. Let the light in and the darkness will flee.

What is in your treasure chest? Is it filled with things that will burn when that final day comes, or is it filling up with treasure that is eternal? Are you clinging to the security of money? The Bible says that it grows wings and flies away. (Proverbs 23:4-5)

**Commented [Paul Wall24]:** Proverbs 23:4-5 (ESV)  
4 Do not toil to acquire wealth; be discerning enough to desist.  
5 When your eyes light on it, it is gone, for suddenly it sprouts wings, flying like an eagle toward heaven.

**If you are a follower of Jesus Christ, you should be hiding His word in your heart.** (Psalm 119:11) It is your true treasure. It is the wisdom of God. It guides you daily. It is the light in this dark world. Like Ezra, we should delight in it, hope in it, keep it, observe it, stand in awe of it, long for, love and believe in the Word of God. Study it! Memorize it! Share it!

**Commented [Paul Wall25]:** Psalm 119:11 (ESV)  
11 I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.

What passage did you hear this morning? Will you meditate on it? Will you put it in the treasure chest of your memory? Are you ready to pull it out and share it with others?

We say we want to know Jesus better and follow Him more closely, but, my dear brothers and sisters, He is the Word made flesh. To be intimate with the Word is to know Him better. Jesus said, John 14:23-24 (ESV) <sup>23</sup> ... *"If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. <sup>24</sup> Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me.* The word "keep" is to fix your eye upon, to observe, as well as to obey. 1 John 2:4-5 (ESV) <sup>4</sup> *Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, <sup>5</sup> but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected.* Every true believer wants to see the love of God perfected in the treasure chest of their heart. This is how, by keeping your eye on God's word.

When you meditate on the Word it affects how you see the world. **Coincidences become providences.** What we think about we tend to see in the world around us.

The word and prayer sanctify our thought life. What we would just pass over as common we suddenly see as the Word in application or as an answer to prayer. There is actually a physiological reason for this in a nerve cluster at the base of our brain called the reticular activating system. It's the reason that when you buy a certain car you suddenly notice that type and model everywhere. Thousands of people didn't buy the car the same day you did; you just became attuned to notice it.<sup>1</sup>

Now think of how your life would change if you did what Ezra did and meditated every day on the word of God? How would that affect the way you see the events of the day? How would it shape your conversations?

James warns us that we are to be doers of the Word and not hearers only, deceiving ourselves. (James 1:22) We can store up the Scriptures but then refuse to do what they say. When we do, we deceive ourselves. It is usually out of the desire to remain the lord of our life and not have the living Word place His demands upon us. First comes the desire for the Word. Then comes the storing of it in our hearts and minds. Then comes submission to the leading and instruction of the Word.

We have some wonderful tools available to us today. If you've struggled in the past with studying the Scriptures, I'd suggest the New Living Translation Life Application Study Bible. The easy reading translation and notes will help you understand any passage and be able to find an application to your daily life. Bible handbooks are also useful tools. Computer Bible programs can come loaded with study helps. Taking the time is simply a matter of your priorities in life. You will take time for what you value the most.

**Commented [Paul Wall26]:** Mark Batterson, *In a Pit With a Lion On a Snowy Day*, p 134

**Commented [Paul Wall27]:** James 1:22 (ESV) 22 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

Ezra's words and life example should challenge us all to hold the Word as our precious treasure, as Paul did, but more importantly as Jesus did. **To know the Word is to know Jesus. To love it is to love Jesus.** Will you, by the grace of God, daily set aside time for His word that we might know and love Him more? He wants to fill your treasure chest with the most valuable thing of all – Himself!

#### Questions

- 1 Give some examples of not knowing about a nearby treasure.
- 2 Do you think that describes you with the Word of God?
- 3 What was Ezra's heart attitude toward the Word?
- 4 What did he do about it?
- 5 What did they do about it in Galilee of Jesus' day?
- 6 Are you devoted to or dabbling in the word of God?
- 7 What happens when you give the Word away?
- 8 To know the Word is to know \_\_\_\_\_!
- 9 What does the word "keep" mean in John 13:23-24 and 1John 2:4-5?
- 10 How can we deceive ourselves?

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