

Russell Kelfer

Searching for Hidden Treasure

905-A

Series: Living Lessons From Proverbs

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INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

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Note: Russell wrote each of these lessons in a manner that would enable him to clearly communicate them to his weekly class. The grammar or punctuation you encounter may not be technically perfect, but you will certainly “hear” his unique gift for making the message applicable to the common man in everyday situations.

It’s been said of him that he was really a writer who read his stuff. And that’s a very accurate statement!

May you be richly blessed as you “hear” as you read.

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How hungry are you for the Word of God? On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you classify the intensity with which you hunger for the Word, with which you search the Word for answers? Do you enjoy coming to church occasionally and even marvel occasionally at the power of the Scriptures, but never search the Word or even read it for yourself? Let's color you about a "2" . Do you listen with regularity, even with intensity, but still rarely study it for yourself? Perhaps you're a "4" . Do you read it every day, maybe even attend a Bible study group and answer an occasional question. We'll call you a "5". Or do you read the Word, study the Word, memorize the Word, but seldom apply it to your life? At best, let's say you're a "6" . Suppose you read it, study it, memorize it, and meditate on it daily. We'll call you an "8" . You say, "8"? Well, what does it take to be a "10"?

Well, a "10" would be someone who reads it, studies it, memorizes it, and meditates on it with such a spirit of intensity that the Word is like frontlets before his eyes. It's as though the Scriptures were engraved on the door posts of his house and on the dashboard of his car. He talks of it when he walks by the way, teaches it to his children at every turn, goes to sleep with the Word in his mind, awakens in the morning with the Word on his lips. It regulates his prayer life. He prays through the Word. It is the basis for all his decisions, the base for all his ministries, and the only criteria by which he or she measures right and wrong. In other words, the Word controls his life.

That person would be a "10"! You say, well that's good. Every church needs a few "10s" and boy, the pastor ought to at least be a "nine" . Do you know what the problem is? The description I just gave you is God's standard for "normal Christianity"—the man or woman so saturated by the Scriptures that his or her every breath reflects the Word. That's God's idea of a normal believer in Scripture.

We have lowered the standards to suit our performance,

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but God isn't erecting new goals for the kingdom based on the latest Gallup poll of evangelicals. God has set the standards for normality for the Word of God in the Word of God, and those standards will never change.

He designed the church to be a powerhouse ignited and transformed by the regular infusion of the Word of God. If the church is anemic, it isn't because God doesn't care. It's because we don't care, we don't care enough about the Book!

In this lesson we return to the Book, the Book of Proverbs in particular, and take a look at the second step to wisdom. Our lesson is entitled, "Searching for Hidden Treasure." It's about the process of becoming teachable. Our outline has three parts:

- I- The Prerequisite for Treasure Hunting
- II- The Progression of Treasure Hunting
(Eight steps to desperation from Proverbs, chapter 2)
- III- The Purpose (The Results)

Our goal is to come to a clear understanding of just how teachable you and I are to be, how desperate we ought to be, if you please, for the Word of God. Of course, this lesson does not stand alone. It is but a part of the natural progression in our seeking after wisdom.

We determined, you recall, that our objective is to come to have the mind of Christ in every facet of our experience. We came to see that the first step to releasing the wisdom of God (that is resident within us) is to learn how to humble ourselves, how to cease being preoccupied with ourselves. "Self", you remember, is dead! Some of us finally got around to burying him last week. With self dead, we came to the delightful conclusion that we can quit struggling to live the Christian life and simply let God live it in us. That the battle is not ours, it's God's. Like the children of Israel, we need to take our positions, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord. As we begin to sing and to praise, the Lord will set ambushments about the enemy, and HE wins the battles as WE simply praise Him.

So the last word is that before we can really see God at work in our lives we have to humble ourselves, get out of the way and simply let Him be God. That kind of Godly humility is the prerequisite for a teachable spirit. You and I can only be as teachable as we are humble. You see, to whatever degree

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we are proud, to that degree we cannot be taught. Humbling ourselves is only the beginning. It is the burying of the old you. Now as God becomes God IN you, He wants you to cooperate with the putting on of the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. He will do it, but we must make some deliberate choices.

The first of those choices is what part will the Word of God play in our quest for the mind of Christ. God has a plan. He has an outline for just how hungry we ought to be for the Scriptures. It's found, you guessed it, in the Book of Proverbs.

Turn with me, if you will, to Proverbs, chapter 2. We will see unfold an eight-stage progression for the teachable saint. Proverbs, chapter 2, the first verse begins, "My son, if..." That opening phrase indicates there are some conditions; a progressive kind of attainment of a particular attitude. "My son if" which points to verse five. "My Son if..." (verse 1) you do the following,

Then thou shalt understand the fear of the Lord, and find
the knowledge of God.

For the Lord giveth wisdom. (Proverbs 2:5,6a)

In other words, do you want wisdom to control your life? Then humble yourself and do what verses 1-4 state are God's conditions. That's what our lesson is about today.

CONDITION #1- "If thou wilt receive my words," you're on the way.

Step one is to receive the Word of God. Now to be in a position to "receive" something, you must a) acknowledge it, and b) be in a position to accept it. John 1 says,

But to as many as received Him (Jesus), to them gave He
the power to become the sons of God. (John 1:12)

To receive Jesus, you must acknowledge Who He is and reach out and accept Him as a personal gift. This word "receive" in verse 1 of Proverbs chapter 2 means precisely the same thing. In fact one translation translates this verse, "My Son, if thou wilt accept my words..." You must acknowledge that the Word of God is what it says it is and reach out and receive it as a personal gift from God. The Bereans in Acts, chapter 17, verse 11 were considered to be "more noble than those in Thessalonica" in that they "received the Word," accepted it for what it said it was, and reached out and took it as a gift from God. They "received

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the Word with all readiness of mind.” The Amplified Bible reads,

...they were entirely ready and accepted *and* welcomed the message [concerning the attainment through Christ of eternal salvation in the kingdom of God], with inclination of mind *and* eagerness, searching and examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.

(Acts 17:11 Amplified Bible)

They were ready for the Word. It was welcome food for their souls. It could be said of them,

Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart.

(Jeremiah 15:16)

Hear O my son, and receive my sayings, and the years of thy life shall be many.

(Proverbs 4:10)

The wise in heart will receive (the) commandments: but a prating fool shall fall.

(Proverbs 10:8)

On what basis do you receive the Word of God? First, if you are not a Christian, you cannot “receive it” in a real sense any more than your AM radio can receive (acknowledge and accept) FM signals.

But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: (*He will not acknowledge what they are, so he will not reach out and accept them.*) neither can he know them, (it’s an impossibility) because they are spiritually discerned.

(I Corinthians 2:14)

You see, the Word of God is spoken in the language of the Spirit. It is foolishness to the natural man. It’s a foreign language, and the Holy Spirit has been placed IN the believer as God’s interpreter. It’s true, to some the Word of God seems dry, cold, confusing. When they read it, no illumination takes place, no reality exists. If that is true of you, why not get alone before God and ask Him, just ask Him, if perhaps you cannot discern spiritual things because you have not yet been born of the Spirit. The man or woman who has been “born again (from above) who humbles himself can receive the signals the Word broadcasts with all readiness of mind.

When the Word is read, when the Word is heard, a light goes on inside the soul, and the computer of the heart sends back a signal, “All systems go... we are receiving truth.” Even to the one with the capacity to receive the signals of the Word, a malfunction

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known as “U.S.”, unconfessed sin, can and will automatically cause the system to fail. Though all the information is present and the capacity to receive it is there, an unexpected error code flashes onto the screen of your heart. You will know, because of sin, though you are hearing the Word, or reading the Word, or even studying the Word, you are not “receiving” the Word. Praise God, our master programmer has written a recovery program.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

(I John 1:9)

Immediately the systems are all go again.

Step one is to be able to “receive” the Word, to be born again, to have sins confessed, to be able to acknowledge the Word for what it is and accept it personally into your life.

CONDITION #2- “My son, if thou wilt receive my Words and HIDE my commandments with thee...” (verse 1) It is progression #2. The key word here is “hide” . One translation puts it. “Storing up laws in your mind.” “Placing them in memory,” is another way of saying it. This Psalm amplifies it,

Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his ways? by taking heed thereto according to Thy Word.

Thy Word have I hid (memorized, stored up) in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee. (Psalm 119:9,11)

Colossians 3 adds,

Let the Word [spoken by] the Christ, the Messiah, have its home (in your hearts and minds) *and* dwell in you [in all] its richness,... (Colossians 3:16a Amplified Bible)

Let it be placed in storage for ready access. These verses are even more specific,

Therefore shall ye lay up (hide, memorize, meditate) these my words in your heart and your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand (make them visible at every turn), that they may be as frontlets between your eyes (controlling everything you see). (Deuteronomy 11:18)

This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth (always ready to be spoken); but thou shalt meditate therein day and night (infuse it into your life), that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein.

(Joshua 1:8)

Now, you tell me if, in the light of these passages, a Christian

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can become all God wants him to become if He's not memorizing, storing up, hiding the Word of God in his heart. Now I'm one of the world's most unfaithful and inconsistent memorizers. I'm a hypocrite "par excellence" , but I can tell you this much, with perfect certainty from experience, the verses I have allowed God to lay up in my heart through Scripture memory are the portions of the Word that God continually calls to my mind in teaching, in counseling, in praying, in battling the enemy. Again and again, he uses those verses because they are all that's available to Him in my life. It breaks my heart when I realize what power I could experience if I had been really faithful through the years in memorizing the Word of God.

Many of us are like yo-yos when it comes to memorizing. When we get "motivated," we go crazy. When we're not, we act as if memorizing were an elective in the curriculum of spiritual maturity. We allow the enemy to deceive us. We forget that just to be "normal" Christians God expects us to "receive" the Word and faithfully "hide" it in our hearts daily.

Let me, by the way of illustration, ask a question or two to those of us who have been Christians for a number of years, but have not been faithful in storing the Word in our hearts. Can you imagine how much of God's mind you would have in your spiritual memory bank if you just memorized two verses a week:

for 10 years? = 1,040 verses

for 20 years? = 2,080 verses

for 30 years? = 3,120 verses

What if we just were faithful at laying up four verses a week:

for 10 years? = 2,080 verses

for 20 years? = 4,160 verses

for 30 years? = 6,240 verses

Words from God for Him to use IN us and THROUGH us.

That's power! Spiritual power to stand before the enemy. Power to wield in prayer. Power to share in witnessing. Power to use in counseling or encouraging others. That's why Proverbs 4:4 says, "Let thine heart retain my Words..." I'll leave this subject with five practical thoughts:

Suggestion 1- Get yourself an SMP, a Scripture Memory

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Partner, a friend or family member who will agree to sit down with you and review you on the verses you are memorizing. You say, “Well that’s humiliating!!” It is only to self. (Self is dead. So you can’t humiliate him.) And it sure doesn’t humiliate God. It delights His heart. The Scripture encourages this kind of support. Remember? It says,

Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labor.

For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up. (Ecclesiastes 4:9,10)

That’s what happens to most of us. We begin to slip in our faithfulness, and we’re not accountable to any one, so no one knows but us. We’re alone as we fall, so we just give up. There’s nobody there to help us up. Get an SMP, either someone else interested in memorizing, too or even someone who’s not.

Suggestion 2- Set reasonable goals. Most people are governed by enthusiasm rather than reason. They’re like a sports car on a drag strip. They go after it like a vengeance for a few weeks, learn more than they can review and burn out. It isn’t how many verses you can learn in a week that counts. It’s how many verses you can learn and retain in a lifetime that counts.

Suggestion 3- Make a vow or a promise to God on the first day of every week for one week at a time or on the first of the month for one month at a time. It gives you a goal to realize, if you’re faithful, and a place to start over if you’re not.

Suggestion 4- Give yourself visible, tangible penalties if you refuse to be faithful. I believe the best one is if you haven’t laid the Word on your heart or reviewed it by supper time, no supper till you do. Which is more important, physical food or eternal food? Most of us could stand to miss a meal, and meals are motivators.

Suggestion 5- Start today! Chances are if you make a commitment to God today and find a Scripture memory partner today, chances are, you’ll do it. Every day you wait to begin, the chances of beginning drop tremendously. You can start with this passage, if you like, Proverbs 2:1-6. There are all kinds of aids available to you in Christian book stores. Mainly we need to remember we must be able to “receive” God’s Word to become wise. Once we learn to receive it, we are commanded to memorize

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it, to hide the Word deep in the storehouse of our hearts. First we receive it and then hide it.

CONDITION 3- You do this so you can “**incline thine ear unto wisdom.**” (verse 2) Leroy Eims says of this verse that the meaning can be compared to sitting on the edge of our chairs, listening to every Word God speaks, or like listening to a symphony, so enraptured in the music you’re on the edge of your seat hanging on every note.

When the Word of God is read or taught, all other thoughts should vanish, and the ears of our hearts should be “finetuned” so no extraneous signals can find their way into our minds. Many of us pretend to be caught up in being taught, but our minds are a thousand miles away. Like the time one of the ladies in our class took her husband to the opera to get him a little culture. (He needs it.) At a particularly moving time in the presentation she looked over at him and his face seemed filled with rapture, with intensity, and with excitement. She was delighted! “Larry,” she sighed, “isn’t it wonderful?” Just then she saw a tiny little wire running out of his coat pocket into his ear. His body was at the opera, but his mind was tuned into the basketball game on his radio.

Now you’d like to know if that’s a true story or not. It doesn’t matter. The truth is that some of you are sitting here right now, but your minds are tuned into lunch or someone or something or some business deal. You sit down to study the Word, and your mind flies in a thousand directions. You’ll not gain wisdom that way. You and I must learn to “incline” our ears unto wisdom. To sit on the edge of our seats and tune out everything that competes with the Word of God when it is read or taught. That’s God’s posture toward us!

I love the Lord, because He hath heard my voice and my supplications,

Because He hath inclined His ear unto me, therefore will I call upon Him as long as I live. (Psalms. 116:1,2)

CONDITION 4- God’s progression to desperation is to apply our hearts to understanding. (verse 2)

Understanding, you remember, is the personal application of truth. It’s where the rubber meets the road. And what this verse says is, open your eyes and look for conviction. Become spiritually sensitive to personal correction from the Scriptures.

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Stop imagining how badly your wife or husband needs that verse and let God speak to you. Place the Word in the first person. So what has the verse said to date? Let's review. It says this: "Son, if you want to be wise, personally open your heart to the Word of God, letting the Holy Spirit interpret it to your spirit." Memorize it as you go along, sitting on the edge of your chair, tuning out all other thoughts whenever the Word is spoken or read, eagerly seeking to determine, "What is God saying to me?"

God's guidelines seem clear. Of course, we're only half way there, so let's go on. Verse 3 begins, "Yea, if thou criest after knowledge..." NOW the passage is beginning to take on an atmosphere of desperation. Up until now, very little emotion has shown up in these verses. They were attitudes we needed to have or activities we needed to engage in to make the Word real.

Now suddenly, the tone changes. It was receive, hide, incline, apply (things you can do without great effort). Now it shifts to verbs like criest, liftest up, seekest, searchest. Now the passage seems not so concerned with WHAT we do, but with the INTENSITY with which we do it. Herein lies the secret of real wisdom. "Yea if thou criest after knowledge..." Here is a picture of a baby needing a bottle. No calm, purring, cooing grin, but a desperate pleading, "FEED ME!!!"

Get wisdom, get understanding; forget it not; neither decline from the words of my mouth.

Forsake her not, and she shalt preserve thee; love her, and she shall keep thee.

Wisdom is the principle thing; therefore get wisdom and with all thy getting get understanding. (Proverbs 4:5-7)

The tone is one of urgency. It's something you cry for. When was the last time you fell down before the Lord, took up His Word and cried for conviction, and cried for wisdom? It speaks of a broken spirit that can be healed only through the Word of God. It's not a casual reading of the Word, hoping that God will pop some little gem into your heart. It is a desperate cry to God, a brokenness of spirit that longs to have it's needs met from the Word of God.

Now the intensity heightens. The cry becomes an audible distress, "If thou liftest up thy voice for understanding." Now your plea to God for wisdom MUST be heard or you'll die. You cry out to God, "I need answers, Lord. Speak through Thy Word."

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Oh, if we had that kind of burning thirst for truth, every time we open the book and every time we hear it preached how much more transformation would take place in our lives. It would be like someone who must have a certain kind of medicine to stay alive and he's out of it, and he sees someone coming with that medicine just in time. He cries out, "Hurry! I need what you have." We ought to crave the Word and cry for understanding every time the Word of God is read or taught.

CONDITION 5- "If thou seekest her as silver. (verse 4) Now the pleading turns to intense searching. We begin to search the Word as though there were something precious to be found. As in the parable of the lost coin, we lay everything else aside and search for wisdom as though we know it's there. We have a glimpse of its relative value in our heart.

Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, the man that getteth understanding.

For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold.

She (Wisdom) is more precious than rubies and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her.

(Proverbs 3:13-15)

So now your search for wisdom becomes so intense, the finding of it so important, the value of it so priceless everything else begins to pale into insignificance. Choices of how to evaluate priorities are no longer choices. Everything automatically rises or falls in proportion to its relationship to the Word of God.

Now the Word you've received and hidden and listened attentively to, sought to apply, cried for, poured out your heart to God becomes the search light of your life. Now comes the final stage, the goal of God for every Christian. "If thou seekest her as silver." (That indicates a desperate looking for the place where the treasure is.) "And if thou searchest for her as for hidden treasures ..." (If you "dig for her like buried treasure," the New English Bible words it.)

Now the search becomes exciting. You've spotted the place where you think the treasure is buried. You don't wander along, casually, occasionally kicking over a rock to see if a nugget of gold happens to bounce up into your pocket. You get out all your tools, and you start to dig and dig and dig. You've cried for it, looked for it. Now you've found it. You don't satisfy yourself with

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the surface. You dig deep for the real thing. You don't want part of the spoil. You want the whole thing—all of it!

How often do you search the Scriptures with the same intensity you would were you searching for hidden treasure? When you begin to see a nugget of truth appear, do you take all your tools, your concordance, your translations, your Bible dictionaries, and do you dig and dig and dig? Do you compare Scripture with Scripture seeking to confirm and illuminate the truth you've found? Remember, the best commentary on the Bible is the Bible. Dig deeply into its storehouse. My dear friend, here God is writing a prescription for the normal Christian, a standard vitamin supplement for the soul, not a special tonic for someone in the Olympics. This is how its supposed to be for the housewife, the secretary, the clerk, the businessman, the laborer, the pastor. This is how it ought to be all the time for all of us.

The Word of God is the treasure house wherein all of the rare jewels of spirituality are buried at different levels beneath the surface. Those content only to be spoon fed, only to glance at the spoils others have unearthed are not destined for normalcy in the Christian life. The normal Christian is a miner, a treasure hunter. He opens his heart to receive the Word. The receiver of his mind has been retuned to that frequency by the presence of the Holy Spirit by the absence of unconfessed sins. He hides it in his heart consistently day after day, week after week. Regularly, he places it in the memory bank of the spirit, available for instant recall. He meditates on it day and night, calls it back to his mind, personalizes it, obeys it. He inclines his ear to the Word, sits on the edge of his chair as the symphony of Scripture swells with the music of transformation, lest he miss even a note of its melody. He personally makes himself vulnerable to correction, rebuke, and instruction in righteousness. The Scripture to him is not a textbook of information, but a guidebook to maturity written personally by God to him. He cries in his spirit, longing for more of its goodness. He lifts up his voice and cries out to God, "Feed me. I long for wisdom in this area of my life, in this decision for my life."

He not only listens and he not only cries, he begins to search. He searches its pages filled with expectancy. He's searching for silver, something rare, something precious, something powerful. His searching intensifies. He begins to find the spoils of the

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Spirit. The treasures of eternity unfold. Then his searching intensifies yet more. With all the tools he needs, with all the time he can give, he digs and digs and digs for hidden treasure. He's delightfully desperate for every nugget of its gold, every tiny facet of its diamond-shaped reflection of the person of Jesus Christ. That's the profile of the normal Christian and his relationship to the Word of God. And the results?

Then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God. (Proverbs 2:5)

Then you will understand how to worship the Lord and attain the knowledge of God. (paraphrase)

For the Lord giveth wisdom: out of His mouth cometh knowledge and understanding. (Proverbs 2:5,6)

Kenneth Taylor reads,

For the Lord grants wisdom. His every Word is a treasure of knowledge and understanding. (Proverbs 2:6)

In other words, you become a normal Christian in your relationship with the Word of God, and three things will happen:

1 - You will be in awe of God. You will grow to reverence Him. You will learn to worship Him. You will understand the fear of the Lord.

That's the crying need of the hour—men and women in awe at the majesty and the mercy and the magnificence of their God, learning on earth the vocation of eternity—how to worship!!!

2- You attain the knowledge of God. The Scriptures come alive. Every Word has meaning. You become wiser than the ancients and wiser than your teachers. You find God's perspective ruling your life because God's Word, God's every Word, makes sense to you. It is the grid through which you measure your every move. The subtle reflections of its principles crystallize into clear-cut concepts and convictions. You become a man or a woman of principle, purpose, and power because you're a man or woman of the Word.

3- The Lord will give you wisdom (verse 6). You will have the mind of Christ, for knowledge and understanding come from His mouth, from His Word. Your every thought becomes captive to the Word, so your every thought becomes His every thought. Your life begins naturally but super-naturally to be what you prayed for—the life of Christ alive and well, living in your body.

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Wisdom is a gift from God. He alone gives it. He alone releases its capsules of power and grace. There are conditions He has set which, when we have met, set Him free to make us wise. Do you want the wisdom of God to control your life? First, you humble yourself, bury self, and acknowledge that the battle belongs to God. Then in humility, you bow before an omniscient God, and you give your life to being taught; to becoming teachable. You let Proverbs 2:1-6 become your life. It says, "Son, if you want to be wise, personally open your heart to the Word of God, letting the Holy Spirit interpret it to your Spirit." Memorize it faithfully as you go along, sitting on the edge of your chair, tuning out all other thoughts whenever the Word is spoken or read, eagerly asking, "What is God saying to me?" Your heart is broken in anguish over your need to be taught.

Your lips are crying out in desperation, "Lord, give me wisdom." Your eyes are searching, your spiritual feet are moving, hunting for the treasures of the Word. Then it happens! Truth emerges. Precious truth. With all your energy, all your time, you search, you dig, you carefully eye each nugget you unearth, as one lost in the pursuit of hidden treasure.

As that becomes the pattern of your life, the awesomeness of God's character becomes real, and you learn to worship Him in all His glory. The truth of God becomes clear, and life begins to focus itself into God's perspective. The wisdom of God begins to permeate every facet of your life. You think God's thoughts, do God's will, live God's life.

You've become a normal Christian, a treasure-hunting Christian who daily uncovers the priceless gems that turn the commonplace into crowns, the natural into supernatural, the daily discoveries of life into the dynamic of discipleship.

(see poem next page)

TREASURE-HUNTING CHRISTIANS

Treasure-hunting Christians
That's what we're to become.
The treasure of the Word is ours
And yet we've just begun.

To see unfold before us
Hour after hour,
The glory of its riches,
The marvel of its power.

Every fiber of our lives
Longing for its pages,
Every Word receiving as
The wisdom of the ages.

Crying for the mind of Christ
Pleading to the Lord,
Make this Book to come alive!
Change me by Thy Word!

Treasure-hunting Christians,
That's what God has in store.
Oh, God, may this Book be to us
As ne'er it has before.

May it be all that you desire
A treasure, rich, and rare
Exploding as the spade of faith
Uncovers all that's there.

Treasure-hunting Christians,
That's what You've called us to...
And praise Your name, the treasure is...
More and more...of You!

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