

Searching for Hidden Treasure



...search for skilful and godly Wisdom as for hidden treasures

(Proverbs 2:4 - AMP)

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Any underlining or bolding of Bible text is added
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“Searching for Hidden Treasure”
Version 2015-1 — Table of Contents

Study Main Headings

- 1** The Search Begins | Tool No. 1 — Reflect on what the Bible says | Attitude No. 1 — A passionate desire to find God’s hidden treasures
- 2** The Search Begins (continued) | Tool No. 2 — Compare different translations of the Bible | Attitude No. 2 — A determined desire to understand what is right | Tool No. 3 — Find a definition of an original word(s) | Tool No. 4 — Find the best meaning for an original word | Tool No. 5 — Consider the context | Tool No. 6 — Let the Bible speak for itself
- 3** The Search Begins (continued) | Tool No. 7 — Compare related verses or related concepts | Tool No. 8 — Refer to reliable resources
- 4** Digging Deeper
- 5** Digging Deeper (continued)
- 6** Finding Patterns
- 7** Finding Patterns (continued) | Attitude No. 3 — A desire to be thorough in research | Attitude No. 4 — A desire to let the Bible speak for itself | Tool No. 9 — Find the pattern
- 8** What a difference a difference makes
- 9** “Types” | Tool No. 10 — “Types”
- 10** “Types” (continued)
- 11** Figures of speech | Tool No. 11 — Figures of Speech | 1. Allegory
- 12** Figures of speech (continued) | 2. Analogy
- 13** Figures of speech (continued) | 3. Metaphor
- 14** Figures of speech (continued) | 4. Parable | 5. Simile
- 15** Principles | Tool No. 12 — Principles | Principles for living embedded in God’s commands
- 16** Principles (continued) | Principles for living embedded in God’s commands (continued)
- 17** Principles (continued) | Principles for living embedded in narratives
- 18** Principles (continued) | Principles for living embedded in narratives (continued)
- 19** Antinomies | Tool No. 13 — Antinomies

Next? : Why not consider: “Why Am I Here?”
— A journey of discovery designed to help you
recognise and outwork God’s purpose for your life —
OR “Connected to God — The Three Foundational Experiences of Christian Life”

“Searching for Hidden Treasure”

Version 2015-1 — Listing of Search Tools and Attitudes

Search Tools

#	Description
1	Reflect on what the Bible says
2	Compare different translations of the Bible
3	Find a definition of an original word(s)
4	Find the best meaning for an original word
5	Consider the context
6	Let the Bible speak for itself
7	Compare related verses or related concepts
8	Refer to reliable resources
9	Find the pattern
10	“Types”
11	Figures of Speech
12	Principles
13	Antinomies

Search Attitudes

#	Description
1	A passionate desire to find God’s hidden treasures
2	A determined desire to understand what is right
3	A desire to be thorough in research
4	A desire to let the Bible speak for itself

Searching for Hidden Treasure

The Search Begins

Study #1



The Search Begins

Prov 2:1-5 (NIV):

1 My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, 2 turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding, 3 and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, 4 and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, 5 then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God.

In this passage, God encourages us to search for His wisdom “as for hidden treasure”. The primary source of God’s wisdom is the Bible. This series is designed to help you discover treasures God has hidden in His word. In particular, it is designed to:

- Encourage, and help, you to find ways of understanding truth and getting (correct) revelation from the Bible, that you can action in your life and impart to others.
- Enhance your appreciation of the Bible, so that your personal Bible study becomes a more vital and effective contributor to your growth as a disciple of Jesus Christ.
- Encourage you to know that the Bible was written for you and that, with the right knowledge, tools and attitudes, you can understand the important issues it addresses and not have to rely on the convictions of other people.

Here’s another important exhortation...that presents us with a stark choice—Prov 8:33-36 (TNIV):

33 Listen to my instruction and be wise; do not disregard it. 34 Blessed are those who listen to me, watching daily at my doors, waiting at my doorway. 35 For those who find me find life and receive favour from the Lord. 36 But those who fail to find me harm themselves; all who hate me love death.

To find treasure in God’s word, we have to start by treating God’s word as treasure.

But let’s expand, and dig further into, our starting passage—Prov 2:1-11 (NIV):

1 My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, 2 turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding, 3 and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, 4 and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, 5 then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God. 6 For the Lord gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding. 7 He holds victory in store for the upright, he is a shield to those whose walk is blameless, 8 for he guards the course of the just and protects the way of his faithful ones. 9 Then you will understand what is right and just and fair — every good path. 10 For wisdom will enter your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul. 11 Discretion will protect you, and understanding will guard you.

In verse 4 of this passage, God encourages us to search for His wisdom as if we were searching for *"silver"* or *"hidden treasure"*. God uses an analogy—where He likens the search for wisdom to a search for *"silver"* or *"hidden treasure"*—to motivate us to search for His wisdom.

If we reflect on this analogy, without any special knowledge of the Bible, we should be able to recognise at least four simple, but important, points:

- (1) God's wisdom is very valuable—as is *"silver"* or *"hidden treasure"*.
- (2) In some way God's wisdom is *"hidden"*—as silver ore is hidden in the earth or as hidden treasure is not lying around in full view of everyone.
- (3) To find God's wisdom we will have to *"search for it"*—as a prospector has to search for silver or a treasure hunter has to search for hidden treasure.
- (4) A casual search won't locate hidden treasures of God's wisdom any more than a casual search will discover silver ore or hidden treasure—it will take certain knowledge, resources, attitudes and qualities of character to discover God's wisdom.

Let's expand on these points.

First, in what way is God's wisdom valuable? In this passage God promises to:

- give us *"wisdom"* and *"understanding"* (v2)
- impart *"insight"* (v3)
- enable us to *"understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God"* (v5)
- *"shield", "guard" and "protect" us (v7-8), and*
- give us the right direction in life by helping us *"understand what is right and just and fair — every good path"* (v9).

Second, in what way is God's wisdom *"hidden"*? That's a point we will explore next time. But, for now, let's at least recognise that by reflecting on (thinking about) this passage we can get more understanding of what God is trying to communicate to us than if we simply read it without pausing to reflect. Reflecting on what we read is one of the fundamental keys to uncovering hidden treasure in any Bible passage.

Third, how should we *"search"* for God's wisdom? One of the main objectives of this series is to help find some answers to this question. But, to start, let's consider what we would have to do to find any type of physical hidden treasure? We would have to search for it with:

- the right knowledge, for example, that there is treasure out there, where to search for it, how to search for it etc.,
- the right skills, for example, to prospect successfully, use tools appropriately etc., and
- the right resources, for example, the right equipment and other resources needed to conduct the search.

Fourth, what is the main difference between a casual search for something and a determined search?

Answer: It's probably attitude. This is the second main objective of this series—to help identify some of the key attitudes we will need if we are to find treasures hidden in God's word.

To start, let's list some of the attitudes mentioned in this passage in Proverbs. We will need to:

- *"accept" God's "words" and "store up" His "commands"* (v1)
- *"turn" our "ear to wisdom" and "apply" our "heart to understanding"* (v2)
- *"call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding"* (v3)
- *"look for it (wisdom) as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure"* (v4).

We don't need any special attitude to find something that has little value or is easy to find. But God's wisdom is not like gravel lying around on the surface of the earth—it's like *"hidden treasure"*. We need special attitudes to find something of great value, especially if it's hidden from common view.

As we continue to reflect on our passage we can also see that:

- God wants us to find His wisdom,
- He will help us find His wisdom, and
- He guarantees that, if we search properly, we **will** find His wisdom.

Most people, I imagine, would readily embark on an expedition to find some physical hidden treasure...if they were confident that they would find it. Here, God guarantees that, if we search for His wisdom (the right way), we **will** find it—we *"will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God"* (v5).

Let's identify the first tool we have used to search for God's hidden treasures:

Tool No. 1 — Reflect on what the Bible says

We thought about what we were reading...we asked ourselves questions about what we were reading...such as why and how. Simply by reflecting on this passage, we could get some understanding of what God is wanting to tell us through this passage.

And let's identify the first attitude we need to find *"hidden treasure"* in God's word:

Attitude No. 1 — A passionate desire to find God's hidden treasures

Without this attitude, we will only ever be casual searchers and we will miss some of God's treasures of wisdom.

Let's go treasure hunting...

Application ("App-SFHT-Study#1.doc")

1. When I read Proverbs 2:1-5, does that sound like the way I have been approaching my study of the Bible in recent times?

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2. The passage in Proverbs 8:33-36 seems to suggest that there are only two attitudes we can have toward God's word—either we can listen to it or we can disregard it...and that means either we love life or we love death. How do I respond to these limited options and the stark contrast presented?

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3. How do I respond to the analogy of searching for God's wisdom as for silver or hidden treasure? Does that help me in some way?

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4. Have I found the Bible a bit like a 'closed book' at times, in the sense that I have struggled at times to understand it? What main outcome(s) would I like to see as a result of setting out on this treasure hunt?

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Searching for Hidden Treasure

The Search Begins

Study #2



The Search Begins (continued)

This was the key Bible passage we used in Study #1—Prov 2:1-11 (NIV - emphasis added):

1 My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, 2 turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding, 3 and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, 4 and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, 5 then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God. 6 For the Lord gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding. 7 He holds victory in store for the upright, he is a shield to those whose walk is blameless, 8 for he guards the course of the just and protects the way of his faithful ones. 9 Then you will understand what is right and just and fair — every good path. 10 For wisdom will enter your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul. 11 Discretion will protect you, and understanding will guard you.

To appreciate why God likens the search for wisdom to a search for hidden treasure, we will begin our search for wisdom by focusing on one word (underlined) in verse 7: “victory”.

Our second tool for treasure seeking, and one of the simplest to use, is:

Tool No. 2 — Compare different translations of the Bible

There are many different English translations of the Bible and, sometimes, we will find that one version will bring out a meaning—or miss a meaning—in a way that is different to other translations. For this reason, it is a good idea to read from more than one version of the Bible from time to time...or at the same time.

Verse 7 in the New International Version (NIV) is somewhat different to other major English translations of the Bible, such as the New American Standard Version (NAS), New King James Version (NKJ) and Revised Standard Version (RSV)—they translate the first phrase in verse 7 as: “*He stores up sound wisdom for the upright*”. This is a small difference in wording but it produces a difference in meaning because “*victory*” sounds like something quite different to “*sound wisdom*”. By comparing translations we can detect this difference in wording. The question now is: Why is there a difference in wording here between these versions...and does this difference matter?

The second attitude we need to be a successful treasure seeker is:

Attitude No. 2 — A determined desire to understand what is right

Verse 3 in our starting passage urges us to “*call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding*”. Without this attitude, either we wouldn’t care that there is a difference between translations in verse 7...or we wouldn’t bother to find out why there is a difference or, more importantly, which wording is right (or most correct). So, for verse 7 of our passage, the question is: Which translation is the most accurate/helpful?

To resolve that question we need to use another tool for treasure seeking:

Tool No. 3 — Find a definition of an original word(s)

The Bible was originally written in languages other than English—primarily "Hebrew" for the Old Testament and "Greek" for the New Testament. Our English versions of the Bible are translations from those original languages and the accuracy of a translation will reflect the accuracy of the translation process...including the capacity of translators to express adequately, in English, the meaning of the original language, where they aim approximately for a word-for-word translation.

There are many resources available to help us find the meaning of the original words from which our English versions of the Bible have been translated—from Bible dictionaries and commentaries to more sophisticated analytical resources.

Two of the best resources that can be used very effectively by any reasonably literate person, without having to be a Hebrew or Greek scholar, are Strong's Analytical Concordance and Young's Analytical Concordance. These volumes index every word in the Bible alphabetically and then show the word in the original language from which it has been translated and a literal meaning of that original word. These resources are available in book form, and Strong's is available as a module within some Bible-on-computer programs. Two Bible-on-computer programs, that you can access free of charge, are available at <http://www.e-sword.net/> and <http://www.biblegateway.com>.

Using Young's Analytical Concordance, we can establish that the original Hebrew word translated "victory" in the NIV, and "sound wisdom" in the other versions mentioned, is "tushiyyah" (pronounced "too-shee-yaw"), that has a primary meaning of "substance or wisdom".

Which of these two meanings—"substance" or "wisdom"—would be best in this passage? How should we decide?

The only way to do this is to use another tool:

Tool No. 4 — Find the best meaning for an original word

The best meaning for an original word in a passage should satisfy two main conditions:

1. It should produce reasonable (meaningful) communication, and
2. It should produce theology that is consistent with the passage in which it appears, the book of the Bible in which it appears, and the Bible as a whole.

This calls for another tool:

Tool No. 5 — Consider the context

In the context of this passage in Proverbs—that is talking about "wisdom"—it would seem that the most appropriate translation here for "tushiyyah" would be "wisdom". Therefore, the translations that start verse 7 with: "He stores up sound wisdom for the upright..." would seem, prima facie, to be preferable to the NIV that uses: "He holds victory in store for the upright..."

Now, let's shift our attention to the expression "stores up" in this phrase. Using a computer program—PC Study Bible Version 5.1 for Windows (PCSB)—we can establish that the translation "stores up" comes from a Hebrew word "tsaphan" (pronounced "tsaw-fan").

This Hebrew word has **five primary meanings**:

- (1) to hide (by covering over);
- (2) by implication, to hoard or reserve;
- (3) (figuratively) to deny;
- (4) (favourably) to protect;
- (5) (unfavourably) to lurk.

Which of these meanings would be most appropriate in our passage?

First, we can **check for reasonable communication** by inserting each of these alternate meanings into the phrase, "*He [?] sound wisdom for the upright*", and then considering whether or not it makes sense in this phrase and in the context of the larger passage we are studying...that is all about the search for wisdom. If a meaning doesn't make sense, in the context, we can rule it out as not being appropriate. Two of these meanings fail this first test. It wouldn't make sense to describe God as "denying" wisdom for the upright, or having wisdom "lurking" for the upright...as these would be negative connotations in a passage that is positive about wisdom.

That leaves us with **three acceptable meanings** for "*tsaphan*":

- "to hide (by covering over)",
- "to hoard or reserve", and
- "to protect".

The last two meanings make sense in the context of God giving wisdom—that God would reserve wisdom for the upright or that God would protect wisdom for the upright. However, the first meaning—"to hide (by covering over)"—needs more examination because the idea of God "hiding" wisdom for the upright may sound a little unusual...like another negative connotation in a positive passage. And why would God hide wisdom from us if he wants us to find it?

This is where it gets interesting. Is there anything **in the context** of this passage on the search for wisdom that would support the idea of God hiding wisdom for the upright? This leads us to another very important tool:

Tool No. 6 — Let the Bible speak for itself

This process of letting the Bible speak for itself is called "exegesis". We want the text to interpret the text. We want the text to give us the most natural (correct) meaning for any subject we are studying. The opposite process is called "eisegesis", where a meaning is read into the text, from outside the text, that may be inconsistent with the text.

So, back to our question: Is there anything **in the context** of this passage on the search for wisdom that would support the idea of God hiding wisdom for the upright? Let's look again at verse 4. We are urged to search for wisdom "*as for hidden treasure*". Why search for wisdom "*as for hidden treasure*"? The most natural answer is, because it IS hidden...by God...who is the source of wisdom. So the first meaning of that Hebrew word "*tsaphan*"—"to hide (by covering over)"—also produces reasonable meaning in this context.

Next, we need to examine these three possible meanings of "*tsaphan*":

- "to hide (by covering over)",
- "to hoard or reserve", and
- "to protect",

from a theological perspective. And that's what we'll tackle next time.

Application ("App-SFHT-Study#2.doc")

1. When I read the Bible, do I tend to stick to the one translation or do I try to read more than one translation? Have I come across situations, in my own study, where different translations seem to give quite different meanings to a certain verse or passage?

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2. Do I use a Bible-on-computer program? If "yes", has that helped my reading, and understanding, of the Bible?

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3. Have I ever tried to find the original meaning of a word in the Bible? If so, has that been helpful?

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4. How do I respond to the thought that God might **hide** wisdom for the upright? Why might God do that?

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Young, R — *Analytical Concordance to the Bible*, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA, 1975

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