



"It requires wisdom to understand wisdom: The music is nothing if the audience is deaf."

—Walter Lippmann

23-Nov-18

Knowledge and Wisdom (Part Three)

After distinguishing godly knowledge from [wisdom](#) in Parts One and Two, and realizing our need for both, we need to look more closely at a detail in [Proverbs 2:4](#): "If you seek her [wisdom] as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures. . . ." The detail we will concentrate on is these "hidden treasures." This two-word phrase is a literal translation of the Hebrew noun *matmônîm*, which means "a cache, reserve, stockpile, secret storehouse, buried valuables, hidden riches or treasures, things of hidden value."

Solomon urges us to seek wisdom as we would seek for something valuable like a hidden stockpile of silver, as we would search for buried treasure. There is something about hunting for treasure that has excited people from the beginning of time. For some, it might be greed or necessity, and for others, it is the thrill of the hunt. Everyone would [love](#) to find a hidden cache of valuables because, they believe, it would change their lives so much for the better.

In recent years, the Fenn Treasure has frequently garnered national media attention. In 1988, Forrest Fenn, a wealthy art and antiques dealer in Santa Fe, New Mexico, was diagnosed with terminal cancer. In order to give others

hope, he claims to have hidden a small, ornate, antique bronze chest filled with gold coins and rare artifacts somewhere in the American West. He asserts that he stuffed 265 American Gold Eagles and Double Eagles into this chest, as well as precious jewels, Middle Eastern gold coins, gold nuggets (two of them as big as a hen's egg), and a jar of gold dust. Due to the fluctuating price of gold, this treasure has been estimated to be worth anywhere from one to five million dollars.

Mr. Fenn is now 87 and in good health. He estimates that 350,000 people have gone searching for this treasure based on clues in a poem he wrote. The 24-line poem features nine clues, to which he has added a handful of hints. For instance, it could be hidden anywhere from New Mexico to Montana, on mountainous land between 5,000 and 10,200 feet in elevation.

Some people have spent large amounts of time and money on attempts to find the Fenn Treasure. A man from Washington state, Dal Nietzel, has made upwards of seventy search trips since 2011. His blog, "Thrill of the Chase," documents his quests and those of others. It receives over a million new visitors every year from all over [the world](#). Another treasure hunter, Cynthia Meacham, found out about the treasure chest in 2013 and has now made more than a hundred trips to search for it.

The area where the treasure is supposedly buried is wild country, to which I can personally attest. Most of it is rough terrain, bears, snakes, heat, and few roads. At least three people have died trying to find it. In 2016, authorities found the remains of Randy Bilyeu along the Rio Grande River north of Cochiti Lake. Last June, New Mexico authorities recovered the body of a Colorado pastor, Paris Wallace. Also last summer, Eric Ashby was swept away in a rafting accident on the Arkansas River and is presumed dead. According to their families and friends, each of these people was on the trail of the Fenn Treasure.

The New Mexico State Police chief has asked Fenn to call off the hunt for his treasure. Yellowstone Park rangers have responded to a dozen or more treasure-related calls in the last five years, and they have said they would prefer treasure hunters to stay away from the park. An episode of the "Longmire" television series (Season 6, Episode 2), set in Absaroka County, Wyoming, featured treasure hunters competing for the Fenn Treasure,

though it was called by a different name. In the episode, Sheriff Longmire investigates the murder of a man who owns land that is a favorite site of treasure hunters.

In an interview he gave to [ABC News](#), Mr. Fenn admitted, "I didn't anticipate that people would die searching for my treasure. But in the back of my mind, it had to be logical that that could happen because there's so many things that can happen to a person when he's out in the wilderness. I mean, the grizzly bears alone are something to think about."

Other than repeating his previously published clues, Mr. Fenn persists in his silence on the location of the treasure. People often tell him where they have searched, hoping to get even a hint of an additional clue from him, maybe a "You're getting warmer . . .," but he has so far held his tongue. One person, he claims, nearly found it, standing just 200 feet from the hiding place.

This story is just one example of humanity's dogged search for buried treasure. For thousands of years, people have walked away from their day-to-day lives, from family and friends, to scour the earth for hidden riches. They have endured hardship, starvation, brutal weather, living in tents (or less), and some have even died, all in the hopes of finding their "pot of gold." And once they find it, they guard it with their lives! They will not let it out of their sight!

Solomon writes in [Proverbs 8:1](#) in the *Good News Translation* ^{*}: "Listen! Wisdom is calling out. Reason is making herself heard." It is in our best interest to hear what is being said here; it only makes sense. Later, in verses 10-11, he advises: "Receive my instruction, and not silver, and knowledge rather than choice gold; for wisdom is better than rubies, and all the things one may desire cannot be compared with her." The *Contemporary English Version* [†] renders verse 11 as, "Wisdom is worth much more than precious jewels or anything else you desire."

Wisdom, common sense, skill in living, is more valuable than any physical treasure chest full of gold Eagles! Rather than risk our lives searching for "gold that perishes" ([1 Peter 1:7](#)), we need to listen to [God](#) and seek His wisdom, which has as its reward eternal life in God's Kingdom. "The fear of

the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. For by me your days will be multiplied, and years of life will be added to you" ([Proverbs 9:10-11](#)).

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- Mike Ford

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