

Finding Life's True Treasure

It's my Mom's fault we were so poor growing up. After all, everybody knew there was a pot of gold at the end of a rainbow. She didn't even seem to care! I remember pleading with her every rainy day to help us find it until one time she finally put us in the car. She even let me ride shotgun. I remember white knuckling my little plastic shovel like a crazed elf shouting, "Faster! Faster! Faster!" But she fooled around doing the speed limit until it disappeared into the horizon. I've never been quite able to forgive her.

I guess there's always been something in me fascinated by the allure of stumbling upon great treasure. (According to recent Lotto sales I am not alone!) I'm a garage sale junkie of the worst sort. My wife has to practically snatch the wheel from me every time I see a pile of junk set out on someone's curb. She just doesn't understand. There could be a perfectly good piece of wood in that heap I could use to shelve my other trinkets!

It was in this spirit I decided to play to the fancies of my two offspring one Thanksgiving break. From my computer I printed off an authentic genuine imitation replica of the Sheffield Family Treasure Map. It came complete with a picture of an old pirate ship, and the first clue typed in official **Old English Text**. Of course, I burned the edges and wrinkled it up some before I let them find it.

You should've seen their eyes light up. My four year old Joshua went immediately for his plastic sword. "That's my boy," I gloated. My wife rolled her eyes.

The next few days came fast and furious, and with more intrigue and treachery than I dare disclose. Let me say for the record, "Some first cousins can't be trusted." The map itself came up stolen the very first night! However my nine year old girl Kailey, who'd long since memorized it, continued the hunt. Each clue led to another. Some came by e-mail, some by phone, and some were hidden behind a couch or beneath a piece of flea market yard art. Each came by way of solving a new riddle, and each gave a key to the final resting place of the treasure.

Finally, as the sun was setting on the second day, the final clue was given and the mystery began to unravel. The kids bolted for the shed, their eyes glazed and wild. I noticed a string of slobber dangling from the boy's mouth. I got out of the way!

Dirt flew furiously from behind that shed and soon I heard a metallic clank. The kids dove in and snatched out a beautiful little treasure box. They snatched open the lid and stood there in shock as they pulled out its only contents; a little New Testament.

Kailey's left eye started twitching. Alertly, I kicked the shovels out of her reach. "Wait, now," I stuttered, "Read the verse I marked." She ripped it open and read the following verses the Apostle Paul had shared about finding true treasure. (*I want them to be encouraged and knit together by strong ties of love. I want them to have complete confidence that they understand God's mysterious plan, which is Christ Himself. In Him lie hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Colossians 2:2-3 NLT*).

Unfortunately, Kailey wasn't paying attention. She kept eye balling that shovel like she was about to push me in that hole and cover me up. "Honey, now keep reading," I defended, "There's more."

Then she noticed a clue handwritten on the page. She tore away with the boy at her heels. Around front, deep beneath a pile of leaves, they discovered a much larger box. It contained gold and silver coins made of chocolate, match box cars, plastic beads, and an assortment of other dollar store trinkets. They leapt about weeping great tears of joy! There were hugs and kisses all around. Even my wife joined the fun. It had turned out to be a truly wonderful Thanksgiving.

But anyway- Christmas is on the horizon again. (Talk about a day when a Treasure was found!) It's all got me to thinking how important it is I help the kids realize which box the True Treasure was really in that day. It shouldn't be too hard. One of them is now littered with broken trinkets and empty wrappers. The other still reveals the Pearl of a great price.

-Guy Sheffield 12-22-05