


# Treasures



Too often we search for value in the trenches when our treasure is in plain sight. Take a peek at treasure hunting in the home of preschoolers.

by Alicia Bruxvoort

I'm not exactly sure how the fascination began, but soon it became a minor obsession around our house. Just as a new year had crept upon us, so had my children's latest passion: treasure hunting. Day in and day out, Lukas and Lizzy conducted their own little gold rush. However, at our home, the search was not for precious metal, but for anything deemed beautiful and rare in the eyes of my preschoolers.

Lukas, who was 3-1/2 at the time the obsession began, devised ways to "hunt" in every season. His easy-going sister, two years his junior, was quick to follow suit. With shovels in hand and sand buckets at their sides, Lukas and Lizzy braved the Nebraska cold and dug in the snow for hours on end. With frozen fingers and shouts of glee, they unearthed stray

acorns and brittle pinecones. As spring arrived, the kids traded in their mittens for mud shoes and gathered golden dandelions, wiggling bugs and soft new leaves.

With summer just around the corner, I bought a 10-gallon crate and painted on it the words "TREASURE BOX." Soon the box was brimming with the children's precious gems: rocks they collected and painted with care, feathers found on nature hikes, and plain brown sticks that doubled as airplanes, batons or mud pie spatulas if necessary.

Once the box was full, I informed my children that they must eliminate some old treasure if they wanted to continue collecting new things. Horrified by the thought of throwing away treasures, Lukas decided to give some of his special

finds away. In a very atypical 2-year-old manner, Lizzy agreed to forego her “mine” mentality and pass out a few sacred treasures as well.

Thus began phase two of the obsession. The children moved from hunts to handouts. Each day Lukas would fill his red wagon with handpicked treasures, invite Lizzy to tag along, and together they roamed through our neighborhood passing out the goods. Our gracious neighbors may have braced themselves as they saw my two tow-headed givers trudging up the sidewalk, but they always smiled and accepted the “gifts” with appropriate ooohs and ahhs. That is, until one day when Lukas wandered a little too far down the sidewalk.

On that particular summer afternoon, the kids and I were enjoying a leisurely walk around the neighborhood. Of course, Lukas insisted on hauling his wagon along, but the houses on our street were unusually quiet that day and the familiar faces that normally welcomed his treasures were sparse. While Lizzy and I shuffled along at a 2-year-old’s pace, Lukas stormed ahead. Rather than sticking to our normal walking route, Lukas missed our turn and forged his own trail.

At the bottom of the hill stood an older woman we didn’t know, collecting her mail. Immediately Lukas stopped his wagon and pulled out one of his most precious rocks. I watched from several feet behind as he held out his hand and offered the woman his “jewel.” Surprised, she stared at my son’s outstretched hand, then scrunched up her face in distaste and shook her head, “NO.” My heart sank and my mind raced with ways to explain the rejection to my well-intentioned son.

As Lukas trod back up the hill, I expected to see on his face the same disappointment I felt in the pit of my stomach. Instead, when he reached me,

he shrugged his shoulders and remarked on the woman’s obvious loss. “Guess her box is already full,” he said with a sigh. I smiled at my son’s perspective and wondered how one could mistake a child’s simple treasure for a worthless nuisance. Little did I know, I was about to discover the answer.


Later that evening, as I sat down with a pile of laundry that needed to be folded, Lukas approached me. “Mom, do you want to play Go Fish?”

“Not now, honey,” I answered as I searched for a stray sock’s match.

“Ok?” he said, more as question than a statement, and pulled out his coloring books instead. As I finished folding the last batch of t-shirts, my daughter sauntered into the room with her blankie and climbed up on my lap. Just as we began to cuddle and rock in our favorite chair, the phone rang. Without thinking twice, I put Lizzy down and responded to the needy caller on the other side of the receiver. “We’ll rock-a-bye extra long tomorrow night,” I told myself later, as I tucked my tired daughter in bed.

The next morning as I was cleaning up the breakfast dishes, Lukas came bursting through the back door. “Mom! Mom! There’s a beautiful butterfly in our garden. Can you help me catch it? Come look! It’s so big!”

“I’ll be there in a minute. I’m cleaning up a big mess right now ...”



And then I heard it. It was only a whisper, but from somewhere in the back of my mind, the question was posed ... “*Is your box too full?*” I stopped, dish rag in hand, and watched out the window as my son raced through the grass with his bug net. A simple Bible verse I had memorized as a child myself echoed in my ears: “*Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also*” (Matthew 6:21 NIV). I set the dirty cereal bowl back down on the table and thanked God for the simple reminder. A clean kitchen could wait. My treasure in the garden could not. 🦋

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Alicia Bruxvoort is a full-time wife and mother of three young children. She treasures date nights with her husband, the sound of her children’s laughter, and the energizing Word of God. Alicia currently lives in Pella, Iowa, where she supervises her children’s backyard excavation projects and seeks to honor the Lord through her freelance writing and speaking.

