

# Treasures New and Old Schools

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## Matthew 13.51-53

No organisation in Jesus' time exactly corresponds to the schools of our own age, nor is this surprising, since each society and epoch organises its education very differently; but certainly learning is a key theme in the New Testament, and disciples are precisely people who learn. Given that schools in our society are places where people, it is natural that churches and schools have a big shared interest.

The disciples throughout Matthew 13 experience a big gap in understanding Jesus' teaching. He provides them with a whole series of parables addressing the question, 'What is the kingdom of heaven like?', but the learning proves difficult for them. These verses near the end of the chapter pick up from this sequence, so when Jesus talks about 'becoming a disciple', he needs to address this gap.

A disciple is one who keeps learning throughout life; crossing the gap in understanding is what churches should do just as schools do this too. In other words, churches and schools are both places of learning; they are about the same business, and can enrich one another in methods and attitudes. We need to re-establish the connection between churches and schools – a relationship which has deep historical roots in our country.

In England, the earliest schools began in monasteries; indeed, St Benedict himself described monastic life as 'a little school of Christ's service'. At the Reformation, many new schools were established on a Christian basis to fill the vacuum left by the dissolution of the monasteries. In later centuries, many parish churches set up parish schools for all in their local community. So linking churches and schools is not a new idea; it is a very natural and necessary thing to do, and there are many ways of doing it – providing chaplains, visits in both directions, involvement in governance, and so on.

Learning, in school or church, is both about passing on the old and exploring the new. Current educational theories and methods may emphasise one or the other, but Jesus brings them together adroitly in one image: that of the householder who brings out of his treasure 'what is new and what is old'.

'Treasure' is the word the Lord uses to describe what is entrusted to us in our house of learning. Its original, *thesaurus*, calls up the image of a chest in which many valuable things are stored, both heirlooms passed on through the generations and items more recently acquired. Training is necessary for us to know what to take out of this chest, and when to do so, in a way

that will capture people's interest; but in order to be able to do that, we first need to have some idea of what is in the chest anyway. It is fatally easy for us to take the Christian faith for granted, or to think we know it all; but we forget what amazing treasures there are in our Christian faith, our scriptures and our tradition. 'There is more light and truth yet to break forth out of God's Holy Word'. (John Robinson)

*What can schools and churches learn from one another?*

*How do we become lifelong disciples?*