



[Matthew 13:52](#)

(52) Then He said to them, "Therefore, every scribe who has been instructed in the kingdom of heaven is like a man *who is* a householder, who brings forth out of his treasure *things* new and old."

A Faithful Version

One can tell immediately that this parable is different from the others; it does not start with "the [Kingdom of Heaven](#) is like." Obviously, it deals with the Kingdom of Heaven, because it says so within the context. Also, it is aimed directly at the disciples. [Jesus](#) says to them, "Because you said you understood this, here is My instruction." We could say it is aimed specifically at the ministry.

The word "scribe" may cause us a problem at first, because we normally think of a scribe as someone who writes something down for another person. For instance, a king would have an official court scribe. All that took place in his throne room would be written down by the scribe as the official record of the kingdom.

That is not what is meant here. Among the Jews in the first century, the scribe had an important position in the community. Ezra was the proto-typical scribe 450 years before Jesus spoke this parable. [Ezra 7:6](#) tells us that the specialty of a scribe was the [law of God](#) or the words of [God](#), the Bible. His job was to know the Bible. A scribe spent his life studying the Bible and knowing just as much as he could about its content (see [Nehemiah 8:2,5,7-8](#)). He stood before the people and expounded and explained it until they understood. Ministers fill the same function today. Jesus sent His disciples out to preach the [Kingdom of God](#) ([Matthew 10:7](#); [28:19-20](#)); it is the church's commission. He says to the apostles, "Teach everything that I commanded you to the people."

"Instructed" is a very interesting Greek word. It is the verb form of the noun that means "disciple." So Jesus really means, "every scribe *disciplined* concerning the Kingdom." This depicts the scribe, the minister, as a student. He has been taught, but the word contains the idea that he is continuing to learn. Not only is he a teacher, but he is simultaneously

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a student. The preacher is under judgment too. He must continue learning so he can continue teaching.

The parable gives us a third description of this person: He is called "a householder." It literally means "house despot." It means "the ruler" or "the master of a house." "House despot" implies a great deal of authority as well as responsibility over his house. The buck stops with the householder, with the master of the house. Jesus says a scribe/minister is like a householder, meaning that the minister of God has been charged with being an authoritative interpreter of Scripture.

The more [independent Christian](#) probably does not think that a minister has much authority, but this parable bestows upon a minister a great deal of authority in expounding God's Word. Back then, "despot" did not have quite the same negative connotation as it does now, but it still meant a master or a person with great authority. Nevertheless, a minister is a teacher, a student, and a leader—one who has authority, but one who also at the same time has a great deal of responsibility.

His responsibility: "This householder," Christ says, "brings out of his treasure things new and old." "Treasure" may remind one of the same word in verse 44, but it is only the same English word. The word in verse 52 does not mean "treasure"—as in precious metals, jewels, and gems—but "treasure house," "treasury," "storehouse," or "storeroom," where one would store valuables. It is clear in the Greek that it means "a place" and not the actual treasure itself.

In this place one would store what is necessary, like food or clothing, for the house's provision. One would have a certain storeroom for grain, fruits, vegetables, and meal. One may have another room or closet to store valuables—the family papers, jewels, silver, or art. All the good things that a person would want to put away for safekeeping would be put into the treasury, storeroom, or storehouse. In the context, then, the minister is to use what he has learned and experienced in his life for the good of his house. He is to bring out all the things he had stored up to present to the people. A minister's treasure is mainly in his head—what he has witnessed and come to understand as he has lived and studied God's way.

Jesus instructs the scribe/minister to bring out "old and new." This becomes more understandable if we think of "old and new" in terms of foodstuffs. The master of the house is in charge of ensuring that his storeroom is full and had everything in it necessary to feed the family. A wise householder would balance serving his oldest store with fresh produce so that the old or the new is not wasted. If he served only the new, the old would go moldy and be ruined; it would have to be thrown out and wasted. But if

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he served only the old, then the fresh and the new would also be wasted because the family would not receive the benefit of the flavor and nutrition that is in fresh produce. So the wise householder serves his family old store as well as fresh-off-the-farm food, and he mixes them in balance so that neither is wasted.

This is how Jesus says a minister should teach the people: by carefully balancing the teaching of, say, the Old and the New Testaments. That would be "old and new." Or, old and new could be balancing traditional understanding of God's [truth](#) with new insights and applications of how it could be used in our time and situations.

He does not mean that the old is thrown away or that the old is wrong. It means that a minister may see an angle to a subject that has not been seen before in his experience, and he needs to preach on it because it will help the people in their present situation. This is exactly what Jesus did in the [parables](#). He had taken the old truths of what the Kingdom of God is and shined new light on them so that people would understand that He had come as the Savior and have a hint about how events would transpire in the establishment of His Kingdom. He had taken old truth and put it in a new context.

Notice the Parable of the Faithful and the Evil Servant:

Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. ([Matthew 24:45-46](#))

To summarize, a minister's duty is to make the truths of God clear, fresh, and living so that the church may grow.

— Richard T. Ritenbaugh

To learn more, see:

[Parables of Matthew 13 \(Part 3\): Hidden Treasure](#)



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