



## THE PARABLE OF THE LOST SHEEP:– SHEPHERDS AND SCHOOLS

Who gets lost in the world of education? I want to suggest that quite a lot of folk do.

### Here is a list:

- Those who find learning difficult, especially those who become disaffected and then possibly excluded;
- Conversely, and paradoxically, the very bright, who get bored because they are not sufficiently challenged;
- Those with particular learning difficulties or disabilities;
- Children and young people with physical disabilities – with sight and hearing problems, unable to move easily;
- Children who have become anxious about attending school for a range of reasons, particularly bullying;
- Travellers and immigrants who often find it difficult to settle and may not remain in the same area for long;
- Girls in many countries of our world, whose education is seen as secondary to that of boys.

Some of those who are lost stay that way and struggle through a way of life that is increasingly biased towards those who are literate, numerate and able to use IT. For some it will lead to a life on the streets, scratching a living however they can. For others it may mean life in an institution, with little personal freedom.

Some find the will within them to find their own way back and the stories of late learners can be inspirational to others in the same situation. They value education in the way that people in the developing world do, seeing it as a way into a better future.

Who is it who helps the others? Who are the ‘good shepherds’?

### Another list:

- Those teachers who go the extra mile, seeing the individuals and not just the class;
- Teachers of English as a Foreign or Additional Language, making newcomers feel more at home;
- Classroom assistants who support children in many different ways;
- Visionaries who set up ‘schools’ for the excluded, whether they have been excluded for misbehaviour or have excluded themselves through fear;
- Campaigners, like Malala Yousafzai, who challenge the inequalities of education.

At the end of the parable, all the sheep are gathered in the fold with the shepherd keeping watch. Lest we see this as a one-size-fits-all answer, as we apply the parable to the world of education, remember that Jesus, in another place at another time (John 10.14-16), says that he has other sheep that are not of this fold. He is no less willing to die for them, and they will become part of the one flock – so all are truly welcome.

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