

## Lesson 1

Our study will look at the culture and environment in which evangelism occurs today. This is not new to our time. Start with the the following passages:

### **Matthew 13**

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. <sup>2</sup> And great crowds gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat down. And the whole crowd stood on the beach. <sup>3</sup> And he told them many things in parables, saying: "A sower went out to sow. <sup>4</sup> And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. <sup>5</sup> Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, <sup>6</sup> but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away. <sup>7</sup> Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. <sup>8</sup> Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. <sup>9</sup> He who has ears,<sup>[a]</sup> let him hear."

<sup>10</sup> Then the disciples came and said to him, "Why do you speak to them in parables?" <sup>11</sup> And he answered them, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. <sup>12</sup> For to the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. <sup>13</sup> This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. <sup>14</sup> Indeed, in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says:

"You will indeed hear but never understand,  
and you will indeed see but never perceive."

<sup>15</sup> For this people's heart has grown dull,  
and with their ears they can barely hear,  
and their eyes they have closed,  
lest they should see with their eyes  
and hear with their ears  
and understand with their heart  
and turn, and I would heal them.'

<sup>16</sup> But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. <sup>17</sup> For truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.

<sup>18</sup> "Hear then the parable of the sower: <sup>19</sup> When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown

along the path. <sup>20</sup> As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, <sup>21</sup> yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away.<sup>[b]</sup> <sup>22</sup> As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. <sup>23</sup> As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.”

Jesus gives a direct statement to evangelize in Matthew 28:19-20:

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in<sup>[b]</sup> the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

However, the New Testament gives few clues about how we are to evangelize. Jesus gives a hint in Luke 9:1-6:

And he called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, <sup>2</sup> and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal. <sup>3</sup> And he said to them, “Take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money; and do not have two tunics.<sup>[a]</sup> <sup>4</sup> And whatever house you enter, stay there, and from there depart. <sup>5</sup> And wherever they do not receive you, when you leave that town shake off the dust from your feet as a testimony against them.” <sup>6</sup> And they departed and went through the villages, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere.

The environment will not always be easy. Paul instructs Titus to evangelize to the people of Crete, but notes that Titus will have to overcome prevailing attitudes:

For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party.<sup>[b]</sup> <sup>11</sup> They must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach. <sup>12</sup> One of the Cretans,<sup>[c]</sup> a prophet of their own, said, “Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.”<sup>[d]</sup> <sup>13</sup> This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, <sup>14</sup> not devoting themselves to Jewish myths and the commands of people who turn away from the truth. <sup>15</sup> To the pure, all things are pure, but to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but both their minds and their consciences are defiled. <sup>16</sup> They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work. (Titus 1:10-16).

**Question for Discussion: How do you describe the environment in which we evangelize today?**