

### Matthew 12:46 – 13:23

<sup>12:46</sup> While he was still speaking to the crowds, behold, his mother and brothers were standing outside, seeking to speak to him. <sup>47</sup> Someone said to him, 'Behold, your mother and your brothers are standing outside seeking to speak to you.' <sup>48</sup> But Jesus answered the one who was telling him and said, 'Who is my mother and who are my brothers?' <sup>49</sup> And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, 'Behold my mother and my brothers! <sup>50</sup> For whoever does the will of my Father who is in heaven, he is my brother and sister and mother.'

<sup>13:1</sup> That day Jesus went out of the house and was sitting by the sea. <sup>2</sup> And large crowds gathered to him, so he got into a boat and sat down, and the whole crowd was standing on the beach. <sup>3</sup> And he spoke many things to them in parables, saying, 'Behold, the sower went out to sow; <sup>4</sup> and as he sowed, some seeds fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate them up. <sup>5</sup> Others fell on the rocky places, where they did not have much soil; and immediately they sprang up, because they had no depth of soil. <sup>6</sup> But when the sun had risen, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. <sup>7</sup> Others fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked them out. <sup>8</sup> And others fell on the good soil and yielded a crop, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty. <sup>9</sup> He who has ears, let him hear.'

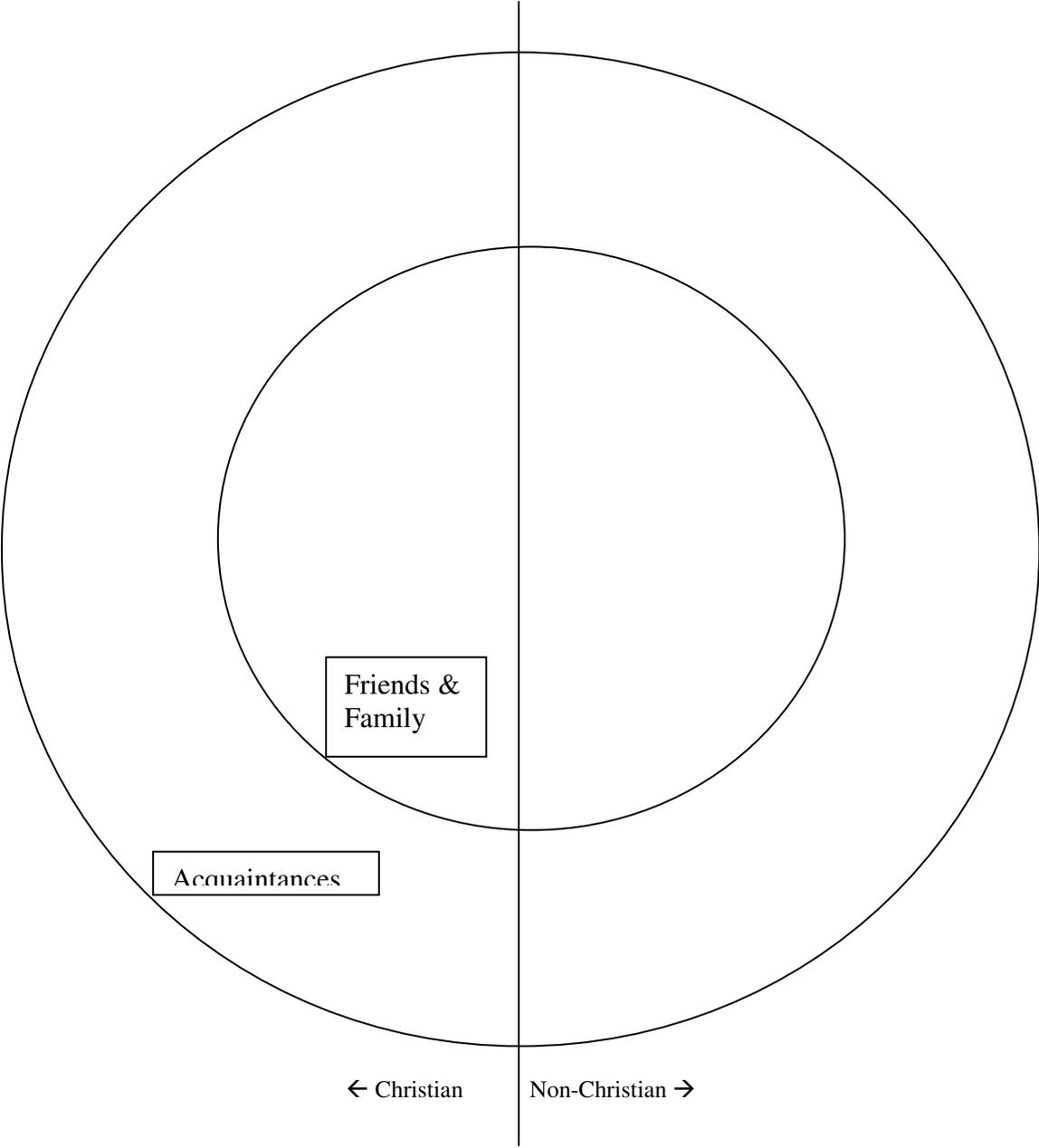
<sup>10</sup> And the disciples came and said to him, 'Why do you speak to them in parables?' <sup>11</sup> Jesus answered them, 'To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted. <sup>12</sup> For whoever has, to him more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him. <sup>13</sup> Therefore I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. <sup>14</sup> In their case the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled, which says, 'You will keep on hearing, but will not understand; you will keep on seeing, but will not perceive; <sup>15</sup> for the heart of this people has become dull, with their ears they scarcely hear, and they have closed their eyes, otherwise they would see with their eyes, hear with their ears, and understand with their heart and return, and I would heal them.' <sup>16</sup> But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear. <sup>17</sup> For truly I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired 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 the one on whom seed was sown beside the road. <sup>20</sup> The one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; <sup>21</sup> yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away. <sup>22</sup> And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. <sup>23</sup> And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty.'

## Historical and Cultural Background

- *The Human Heart*: Jesus was quoting from Isaiah and Jeremiah
  - Isaiah referred to hearts, and Jesus quotes Isaiah 6:9 – 10 in Matthew 13:14 – 15. In that context, Isaiah was speaking of Israel's resistance to hearing God's word. God would use Israel's own resistance to refine the true Israel down to a 'holy seed' that serves as a new 'stump' for a new tree. Jesus' use of the terms seed, word, soil, and thorns comes from Isaiah 55:10 – 13 as part of God's promise to renew His covenant with the Davidic line of kings.
  - Jeremiah also used soil quality to describe heart quality: 'Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns. Circumcise yourselves to the Lord your God, and take away the foreskins of your heart, lest my fury come forth like fire, and burn that none can quench it.' (Jeremiah 4:4)

## Questions

1. What kind of obstructions are there to being in Jesus' family? What's challenging about how he defines family?
2. What are the obstructions around you? How do they compare with Jesus' explanation in the parable?
3. What kind of soil are hearts of people in your life? Do the diagram below if it's helpful to see patterns.
4. Think about the people in various places in your life: family, friends from high school, dormmates, classmates, other student organizations on campus, etc (be specific about the various areas of their lives just to get them started thinking). Place them on the graph.
5. Looking at the non-Christians in your life, what do you notice? Is it easier for you to have more and more Christian friends and fewer and fewer non-Christian friends? Is there another pattern?
6. Who do you feel comfortable sharing your faith with? (a common tendency is to feel that you have to be really good friends with people before you share your faith with them) You can share about Jesus with acquaintances too, before you're good friends! In fact, many acquaintances can become better friends with you on the basis of spiritual conversations. We'll talk about how to do that in a later session.
7. State: Notice that Jesus has a more expansive view of community than most of us. In 12:46 – 50, he broadens his definition of family, from natural family to spiritual family. Then he explains how the spiritual family grows. A *lifestyle* of kingdom advancement (evangelism) involves always being open to new people. It involves having space in your life for new people to come in. How can we keep space in our lives open for new people? Note: This can be quite a long discussion.



Goals: To help students identify and think more intentionally about...

1. Friendship patterns – ‘I don’t have many non-Christian friends!’
2. Evangelism patterns – ‘You mean I don’t have to make my acquaintances my friends in order to share my faith with them?’
3. Challenge of the lifestyle of evangelism – always leave room for new people in your life
4. Discernment – Seekers vs. Snackers – ‘Who is a real seeker?’
5. (Why invest in a brand new Christian – ‘They have lots of non-Christian friends!’ For example: Terry Erickson, IVCF’s Director of Evangelism, did this a few months after becoming a Christian. He invited 10 of his friends to study the Bible with him. He said, ‘How about studying Jesus with me, and you tell me if you think I made a mistake.’ Six of those ten guys became Christians, too!)

Insofar as it’s appropriate to reflect on evangelism:

- State: Some of our non-Christian friends are seeking; some we don’t know where they’re at in their spiritual openness; some are ‘snackers.’ Let me read something by John Teter in *Get the Word Out* on p.78-79 about Seekers vs. Snackers. It comes out of a reflection on John 6, where Jesus fed the five thousand. They loved it. The next day, they followed Jesus around the Sea of Galilee and said, ‘We’re hungry – can you do that again?’ Jesus said, ‘NO. (Wow, huh?) I’m not going to feed you again, because you missed the point. I am the bread of life. You need to internalize me. I fed you bread because eating bread is a physical parallel of internalizing me.’
- From John Teter, *Get the Word Out*:

‘Seekers are people who are genuine in their search for God. They are looking for something more in this world and they have a conviction that Jesus offers something special. They are willing to pay great costs to enter into new, spiritual culture, to come to church, to study the Word, and to take real steps of faith toward God. These are the ones who will worship the Father in spirit and truth. Seekers have tasted something of God, and their lives have begun to manifest a deeper hunger for God himself.

Snackers are an entirely different type of person. The problem is that their actions and behaviors look very similar to those of seekers. Snackers are excited about being part of the spiritual ‘club’ that is developing. They love it that Christians are servants, and they are eager for more chances to be served. They can never eat enough free, fresh-baked cookies. They might even find the Word of God somewhat interesting. But they do little to change their lives after hearing the Word of God. They look like seekers on the outside, but inside their hearts and wired completely differently.

Jesus had a hard word for such snackers, according to John 6. He did not allow them to stay in their spiritual deception for long. He confronted them and called them to be true seekers. He publicly rebuked them for only coming for bread that fed their stomachs. His immediate challenge for them was to become true seekers.’

- Here’s an example of a snacker from p.82-83.

‘Michael lived on the dorm floor where a handful of Christian leaders had committed to reaching out to younger students and non-Christians. He came from a highly secular background and liked poking fun at Christians. Yet he came to our Bible study and enjoyed being around us. He particularly liked one of the Christian student leaders. He thought she was cute.

During the next nine months, Michael became a regular part of our lives. A *very* regular part. About five of us ministered to him. We would stay up at night answering his questions. We would go out of our way to care for him and bless him. We cooked for him, helped him with his laundry, let him borrow our cars, loaned him money. I even took him on weekend getaways with my friends. All of us thought that the next act of service, the next conversation or the next Bible study would be the one that would cause Michael to follow Christ.

Unfortunately that next step never came. He regularly told us that he needed God to do a miracle in his life before he would believe. When a miracle would in fact happen, he would come up with a new reason not to commit.

- Now, I don’t think he’s saying that we should just drop all the non-Christian friends we have who are not seeking. There is some value in being there for them because one day they might become true seekers. But there is an issue of proportion and balance. We need to invest our time wisely. And if we want to live an evangelistic lifestyle, we need to have some part of our lives be continually open to new non-Christians.