



# CULTIVATING “4TH SOIL” DISCIPLES IN OURSELVES AND OTHERS



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EDITORIAL

**THE ROMA, THEY ARE THE** people of myth, legend and media creations. They are commonly known by the name, Gypsy, given to them by outsiders. Most of us have images in our minds of what “Gypsies” are like even though the vast majority of us have never gotten to know someone who is Romani. These mental images of “Gypsies,” largely generated by how they have been portrayed to us in books, television and movies, often paint the picture of a very colorful people, but ones who are shady in character. And yet this is the association that many may have of a people they have never met. How do these mental images or prejudices get in the way of our ability to bring the gospel to them? This is a major problem in missions, not just for reaching the Roma but also for many peoples and religious blocs. The common preconceived ideas and stereotypes surrounding Muslims are just one example.

The only way to overcome these stereotypes is to confront them with the truth. That is what we are doing with this issue of Mission Frontiers. We are allowing actual Roma people to speak for themselves—to give you a glimpse into the reality of who they are, their struggles, and their passion to make Jesus known among their own people. I hope that after you read this issue, you will come away with a newfound appreciation for the Roma people and how we can reach them more effectively with the gospel.

## **The Continuous Search for “4th Soil” People**

Regardless of what people group we come from or what people we are seeking to reach with the gospel, we must be “4th soil” people who are seeking to discover 4th soil people in others and equip them to go and bear much fruit. A 4th soil person is a reference to Jesus’ Parable of the Sower from Matt. 13 where the seed that fell on good soil produced a crop of 100 fold, some 60 and some 30. Three previous sowings of seed mentioned by Jesus did not fall on good soil and therefore did not bear fruit. Jesus provides an explanation of the parable starting in Matt. 13:19.

*“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. 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; 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. 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. 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.”(NIV)*

Clearly, Jesus wants us to bear fruit in terms of saved souls or disciples made. That is the purpose of teaching the parable. He wants us to understand what can rob us of faith and fruitfulness. First let us think about what are the characteristics of a “4th soil” person.

## They Obey the Word

In each of the four soils Jesus puts great emphasis on “the word.” The word is the seed that is being sown in each of the four soils and the response of a person to the word will determine what kind of soil they are. ***A 4th soil person is one who eagerly receives the word and is faithful and obedient in applying the word to their life.*** Whatever the word tells them to do, they do it. In many churches there are countless Bible studies where people learn about the word but there is seldom much emphasis on obeying the word, or accountability for doing so. As a result, people remain immature and often succumb to the snares of the first three soils: affliction, persecution, worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of wealth. Knowledge of the word alone must not be our end goal, but rather obedience to what God has called us to do through his word. Only in doing so will we bear the fruit Jesus desires and become 4th soil people.

## They Successfully Pass Through Suffering and Persecution.

We probably all know of someone who was apparently a believer but when suffering came or God did not answer their prayers as they desired, they turned their back on God and walked away. Whenever suffering or persecution comes into our lives we have the choice of responding like Job’s wife or like Job. We can either “curse God and die” or we can entrust our future and ourselves to God and His loving care. Only 4th soil people endure suffering and remain faithful to God.

## They are not lovers of money, but are generous.

This gets to the root of what is truly important to a person. Is it the status, safety and security that someone may think money can provide or do they see money as a tool or resource for the expansion of God’s kingdom? Ralph Winter talked about living a “Wartime Lifestyle” where the focus is on spending what is needed to accomplish the mission, not on what will make our lives most pleasant or comfortable. The American church, perhaps more than most, must beware of the deceitfulness of wealth that Jesus talks about. The great majority of funds collected by the church stays within the church to bless the people of the church, not to reach out to the lost and make disciples, both near and far.

## They are not consumed with the cares of the world.

It is normal and natural for people to care for their families and to work hard to provide for them. But there is a big difference between that and having the things of this world be the focus of a person’s existence. The goals, priorities, interests and passions of 4th soil people are completely different from those in the church who are not living on mission with God. Those who take seriously Jesus’ command to “go and make disciples of all nations” will live very differently from those “believers” who do not.


## They work to make disciples up to 100 fold (their maximum potential).

The last word that Jesus sowed into his disciples was a command to go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them and teaching them to obey all that Jesus has commanded. If this word is to become fruitful in our lives as 4th soil people, then it must be obeyed. We can’t just talk

about it; we actually need to do it. The majority of people who take the “Great Commission” seriously still just talk about making disciples rather than actually doing it. Fourth soil people will seek to obey the Great Commission and will seek out the training they need in order to make disciples.

This is a reality check for all of us. If we are not regularly and intentionally seeking to share our faith with others and to make disciples, then we need to ask the Lord if we are producing the fruit that is commensurate with 4th soil people.

## 4th Soil People Are the Ones Who Will Complete World Evangelization.

Providing access to the gospel to every person living within every people will only happen if we foster movements of discipleship within every people. These movements will only take place if average Jesus-followers are equipped to make disciples one generation after another. These equipped disciple makers, by definition, will be 4th soil people because they are obeying the word and they are bearing fruit one generation after another. Our job is to be 4th soil people who seek out other 4th soil people who are eager to be equipped and released as disciple makers in every people, tribe and tongue until God’s promise to Abraham is fulfilled as seen in Rev. 5:9. 

*Some categories in this column were inspired by Profile of a 4th Soil Person published by Global Gates. <https://globalgatesinfo.wordpress.com/2017/01/13/profile-of-a-4th-soil-person/>*

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