Encouragement
By Bob Young

Note: This article was born from a search for words to use for my weekly "Words of the Week" (WOWs). How easily simple words are overlooked! After hundreds of WOWs, I had to check to make certain I was not duplicating myself. An edited version of this article will be my first WOW focused on the word encouragement!

Everyone needs encouragement. When Paul and his companions arrived in Pisidian Antioch on the first missionary journey, they were welcomed in the synagogue with these words, "If you have a word of encouragement for us, please share it." Lynn McMillon told about a man who became and elder and was soon after visited by a friend who offered congratulations and counsel. Make it your goal to be a source of encouragement to everyone!

Lynn continued with descriptions of three Josephs in the Bible. Bible students easily identify Joseph of the Old Testament, sold into Egyptian slavery by his brothers only to become second in command to Pharaoh; also, Joseph the husband of Jesus' mother Mary. Less in view is another Joseph. Joseph, A Cyprian Levite, is better known as Barnabas, "son of encouragement" (Acts 4:36-37).

Barnabas is best known for being Paul's encourager. "Barnabas and Paul" eventually became "Paul and Barnabas." Second fiddle! No problem. God uses encouragers to facilitate his work. Paul describes church leaders as those who make easy the ministry of others (Eph. 4:11-13).

My middle name is Joseph. I was named after a paternal great-grandfather. The name means "God adds or gives the increase." Encouragement multiplies itself. Encouragement leads to encouragement. Joseph Barnabas was well-named -- twice.

In my decades of ministry, I can confidently affirm that the widows and older women in the church are most often the greatest encouragers. Look around you. Identify the great encouragers in your life, in the life of the local church. Imitate their example. Become like them!

The difference God is calling you to make may not be in what you accomplish, but in what you help others accomplish.