WOW: Word Of the Week

Gap

October 14, 2026

I will finish the month of October with three words (WOWs) that look back over my 60 years of ministry, 1966-2026. Perhaps you will not tire as I observe again that my years in ministry span seven decades – the 60s, 70s, 80s, 90s, 00s, 10s, and 20s. I unveil my proposed words in advance: gap, effect, threescore.

Gap. A simple word; multiple meanings and applications. A gap is an empty or blank space, an opening. "There is a gap between what is and what could be." Physically, a gap is a hole or broken place; a place of separation. "Mind the gap," the space between the platform and the train. In ministry and mission work, a gap is often a deficiency, a need, something lacking, something that needs to be filled in.

For the past 20 years plus, Jan and I have tried to stand in the gap as we devoted ourselves fully to God's saving mission in this world. To "stand in the gap" is a Bible phrase (Ezek. 22:30). Ezekiel describes a city wall with a hole in it, a weak place, an entry point for the enemy. Defenders had to stand in the gap to hold off an attack. For us, across almost six decades of ministry and mission work, the phrase has meant to step up when there was an unfulfilled need. Be a connector, helper, counselor, mentor, comforter, presence. A need for workers, for teaching, for training. A need for a plan, a process, a method – evangelism, church planting, spiritual growth. That summarizes our ministry and mission work.

Evangelism is gap work, helping bridge the gap between where a person is and where they could be in our Lord. Ministry is gap work—helping the church and Christians move from where it is to where it could be. Preaching is gap work – advancing knowledge, values, and behaviors from present reality to a new reality. Ministry means helping people across the rough spots, comforting in times of illness and grief. The preacher arrived at the hospital bedside of a member who was near death. A family member observed, "We're glad you're here. There's something comforting about having a minister with us."

Mission work has been for us gap work. Over 40 years ago, as I became involved in mission work, I saw two great needs, two gaps if you will. The churches needed training, teaching, encouragement – in evangelism, discipleship, leadership, and Bible study. I saw also the challenge of developing a biblical methodology for mission work, imitating Paul's approach in the New Testament. I saw the need to help national workers, largely vocational workers, move from where they were to where they could be – becoming effective in leading and helping develop the people of God.

Two decades plus later, God has blessed these efforts. Dozens of workers are standing in the gap, providing teaching and training, serving as church leaders—Chile, Uruguay, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, Venezuela, Panama, Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala, the Dominican Republic. Hundreds equipped and now equipping, trained to train, taught to teach. Growing churches, thriving churches. Churches planting churches.

Our WOW: Gap! Application time. What gap is God calling you to fill?

Gaps are everywhere around us. Family, children, friends, brothers and sisters in Christ, neighbors, coworkers. Perhaps you are God's bridge to help someone from where they are to where they can be in Jesus Christ. Your ministry, service, encouraging words, cards, calls. All these are gap-fillers. We are called to be God's caulk! Fill in the gap. Complete the connection.

Our little word is much bigger than it appears. Three letters—dozens of applications. Let us resolve to be people of the gap, people who stand in the gap as God gives us opportunities.