WOW: Word Of the Week

Holistic

March 4, 2026

Radical discipleship, a series of WOWs. After unpacking the root meaning of radical—getting to the root of something, we turned our focus to maturity, conformity, nonconformity, and character. This week's WOW, #5, holistic.

I begin by unpacking our word. What does it mean to say that radical discipleship is holistic? To understand the challenge, consider how discipleship is often lived out in the contemporary church. Many Christians use tunnel-vision in defining what it means to be a follower of Jesus. Views of discipleship are fragmentary, partial, specialized. I will do this but not that. I can be a Christian without church, without missions, without telling others about Jesus.

Holistic discipleship looks at the entirety rather than focusing on individual parts. This WOW began with a different word—identity. The identity of a discipleship is multifaceted. A holistic picture comes from considering many biblical descriptions. Holistic. Radical discipleship must be comprehensive, integrated, encompassing.

The challenge seems impossible. How can a short 5–6-minute WOW be comprehensive. I can only give an example, a beginning point. Taking a cue from Stott's work, which I mentioned previously, I come to 1 Peter, to a few identifiers from Chapter 2. A quick scan of 1 Peter would add to my list. I have chosen specific words to summarize multiple identifications.

Seeking a holistic view of radical discipleship, we are called to be…

Spiritual. Disciples are living stones, a spiritual house (which means household in the context), holy priests offering spiritual sacrifices. Disciples desire spiritual nourishment (the unadulterated "milk" of the word). As spiritual beings, disciples are elect and chosen by God.

Holy. This word has as its basic, root meaning, "to be set apart." Saints is a common translation for holy ones. Dig deeper. Race, offspring, lineage (genos), nation (ethnos), possession, priest, people.

Different. Disciples live contrasting lives. Strangers, sojourners, immigrants, foreigners, aliens. The idea was introduced in 1:1, 17). Different value system, but see also that this world is temporary.

Glory-bearers. Look at 2:12, we live such different lives that we become glory-bearers, reflecting God's glory into the world.

Servants. Servants of God, 2:16, literally slaves (in the first century there were both voluntary and involuntary slaves). Some translations say bond-servants.

Our purpose is not only to understand radical discipleship – it is to be radical disciples. One item remains in this short overview series.