WOW: Word Of the Week

Radical

January 28, 2026

Radical: from the Latin radix, meaning root. Thus, related to the root or core, basic, fundamental, foundational. How did the word come to mean extreme, often implying drastic change? One connecting idea is that real, lasting change begins by identifying root causes, by changing the foundation of something.

In math (you knew I would get around to this, didn't you?), radical signifies the root: radical 4, the square root of 4, is 2.

I have suggested several synonyms – root, core, basic, foundational, revolutionary, drastic, thorough. An online summary caught my attention with antonyms such as moderate and conservative.

John Stott wrote a book called *The Radical Disciple*. Stott was not trying to identify extremes – he was trying to get to the core of what discipleship means and involves. His book caused me to think about how I would answer the question: What are the basics of discipleship? What is radical discipleship? My answers are not his answers although there is overlap. Do not miss this point: biblical discipleship is radical, which means it is never moderate or conservative. It is all in! Never lukewarm! Never middle-of-the-road? Never half-hearted!

Radical. In coming weeks, my WOWs will involve some concepts and words I consider foundational for disciples, core values or needs of discipleship. I haven't made final decisions. Here are some possibilities.

Grow up in Christ, **mature**, with strong biblical and theological foundations.

Integrity, **alignment** of thinking, attitudes, and actions.

Conformity to Christ, in thinking, attitude, and action. Philippians 2 comes to mind. I also like Jesus' words: not be served but to **serve**, giving myself as a **sacrifice**.

Nonconformity, a logical entry point to thinking about **transformation**.

Identity. Several biblical descriptions could serve as interesting WOWs. Stott chose six descriptions from 1 Peter for his little book (as babies, stones, priests, people, foreigners, and servants) but Peter suggests other descriptions that are helpful for distinguishing the radical (genuine) disciple.

Our WOW this week: radical. Get radical. Be radical. Not unguided, spontaneous, extremism. Firmly rooted, grounded, Paul in Col. 2: rooted and built up. Stable, firm. Radical. Let's get back to the root meaning—now that would be radical!

I look forward to the series, I look forward to experimenting with a series of eight or nine WOWs that are headed somewhere—with plot, direction, purpose. Something new for me. I trust these will bless you in coming weeks as much of the Christian world moves toward a high day in Christian faith—Resurrection Sunday.