



WOW: Word Of the Week

Obscurity

September 24, 2025

Obscurity: the state of being unknown, inconspicuous, or unimportant. **Important!** Those whom the world may consider unimportant are important to God. Have you noticed that in the Bible God used obscurity to shape his servants? And, the Bible is filled with brief mentions of obscure folks – unknown, on the stage only briefly. Many persons we know well in Scripture spent time in obscurity—Abraham, Joseph, Moses, David. There is an 18-year gap in the story of the life of Jesus, from age 12 to age 30, and little is known of his first 12 years.

Many contemporary churches clone ideas and ministries, imitating growing successful churches, because they are looking for growth and success. Growing successful churches did not start out successful! Growing successful churches started in obscurity! Often overlooked are the trials and challenges those churches endured. And in most cases, successful churches did not “arrive” by chasing numbers. The numbers came because they were making disciples who multiply themselves, making more disciples.

Important! God’s servants do not start at the top but at the bottom. God’s greatest servants did not start out being highly visible. They started in obscurity. And many of God’s servants live their entire lives in obscurity, doing a great work for God without human applause. We do well to ask ourselves: Where am I on my journey with God? Am I progressing toward God’s goal for my life?

In ministry, I have experienced seasons of growth, frustrating plateaus, and energy-sapping valleys. I have learned valuable lessons. Often it was in the valleys—difficult and spiritually dry seasons—that God shaped me most. The lessons learned continue to guide my ministry and equip me as I facilitate and train others for kingdom service.

I look back. I remember. I am grateful for those who buoyed my spirit and my ministry in dark days. I want to do the same as I train and encourage others. Mentors and ministry friends were available at just the right time. (My short list would include Wayne Smith, Raymond Kelcy, Hershel Dyer, Maurice Hall, Wilburn Hill, Loren Geiger, Jerry Tallman, Don Vinzant, Howard Norton, and Dan Coker, and of course many others.) The best I can do is pay it forward.

Who is the most successful preacher? Someone unknown, serving in an unknown church in an unknown place, never in the limelight, living in relative obscurity.

Those who have guided, encouraged, supported, and mentored me remind me of Paul’s advice: We do not do well when we compare ourselves to those who constantly call attention to themselves. When they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they show that are not wise” (2 Cor. 10:12).

To serve visibly or to serve in obscurity. What an unimportant question! Jan and I have lived our lives with two commitments and a single goal. Be willing to go where God calls you to go, and remain faithful where God has planted you. May we always live to His glory!