

Balcony People

by Bob Young

A number of years ago, I received as a gift a wonderful little book by Joyce Landorf entitled *Balcony People*. Landorf contrasts two kinds of people: basement people and balcony people. The text of Hebrews 12 gives us a glimpse of some of the original balcony people: a great cloud of witnesses who have already finished the race are pictured as cheering us on as we run the race.

I grew up in a little central Kansas town where the basketball court and the performance stage were in the same area. Do not picture some of the modern versions you may have seen with high vaulted ceilings, folding bleachers on one or both sides, and a reasonable amount of space around the court. Picture a Depression era construction with minimal clearances and the spectators seated on three sides in an overhanging balcony about 8 feet wide—enough space for 4 cramped rows. When I think of balcony people who cheer us on, I picture that very small gymnasium—certainly inadequate by today's standards. (Fortunately, at about the same time that my family and moved to that town, a new gymnasium was constructed.)

All of us have known basement people. They know what's wrong more than what's right. They offer a lot of "constructive criticism" which is not all that constructive. Many are born pessimists. They rejoice in and relish the negative. If they were fish, they would be both bottom dwellers and bottom feeders. Such people seldom make any mark in history. Do you recognize these names—Palti, Igal, Sethur, Nahbi, Geuel, Ammiel, Gaddi, Shaphat, Shammua, Oshea, Gaddiel, Caleb? Probably not! These are the names of the twelve spies (Oshea is Joshua). They are some of the original basement people. The message of the majority was, "We cannot do it; we are too weak; we are too small."

A much better goal in life is to be a balcony person. Hebrews 11 gives us a roster of balcony people. These are likely the ones the author refers to as a "cloud of witnesses" (Hebrews 12:1-2). We each need our own personal "cloud of witnesses" to cheer us on. All of us can be a part of someone else's "cloud of witnesses." Balcony people live life and run the race with hope and expectation. History is not full of the stories of basement people. History is filled with the stories of balcony people, because they are the ones who leave a mark.

My favorite balcony person is Jesus. Read the gospels and make a list of the people Jesus encouraged. You may be surprised at how long your list becomes. Jesus wants to be a balcony person in your life. He believes in you. He wants you to be his. He calls us to imitate him and become encouragers to others. Here is a worthy goal for this month: **I Will Be a Balcony Person to as Many Other People As I Can!**