

KEY TEXT

Ecclesiastes 10:8 (NKJV) – If the ax is dull, And one does not sharpen the edge, then he must use more strength; But wisdom brings success;

2 Kings 6:1-7 (NKJV)

V1- And the sons of the prophets said to Elisha, "See now, the place where we dwell with you is too small for us.

KEY TEXT

V2- Please, let us go to the Jordan, and let every man take a beam from there, and let us make there a place where we may dwell." So he answered, "Go."

V3- Then one said, "Please consent to go with your servants." And he answered, "I will go."

KEY TEXT

V4 - So he went with them. And when they came to the Jordan, they cut down trees.

V5 - But as one was cutting down a tree, the iron ax head fell into the water; and he cried out and said, "Alas, master! For it was borrowed."

KEY TEXT

V6 - So the man of God said, "Where did it fall?" And he showed him the place. So he cut off a stick, and threw it in there; and he made the iron float.

V7 - Therefore he said, "Pick it up for yourself." So he reached out his hand and took it.

INTRODUCTION

1

The folly and frustration of using a blunt knife

2

Background of our 2 Key Texts



**SHARPEN YOUR AX
AND**

DON'T DROP IT

Outline:

- **The Folly of Working with a Blunt Ax**
- **How to sharpen your Ax?**
- **The Tragedy of Dropping your Ax Head**
- **How to recover your Ax Head?**
- **The Axed-Down One**

MAINPOINT

(I) THE FOLLY OF WORKING WITH A BLUNT AX

Ecclesiastes 10:8 (NKJV) – If the ax is dull, And one does not sharpen the edge, then he must use more strength; But wisdom brings success;

Imagine that someone is using an ax to cut down a tree that is razor SHARP.



A Razor Sharp Ax Cutting The Tree

But, after much use, it had become DULL.

Question:

**Which takes more effort to cut the tree down.....
the guy with the razor-sharp ax or the guy with
the dull ax?**

The duller the ax becomes, the more effort is required.

Illustration # 1 - A man with a new chain

Lesson: The man DIDN'T KNOW HOW TO USE HIS TOOL.

In Ecclesiastes, the problem is:

- **The man didn't keep his tool in the right condition for using it.**
- **He didn't spend enough time PREPARING his tools for achieving maximum output.**

Illustration # 2 - The man who applied to work in a logging company

Lesson: The ax had become dull and was essentially useless since it had not **BEEN KEPT IN GOOD CONDITION.**

Illustration # 3 – Wood chopping contest

Application: Maybe you need to take some time away, slow down and sharpen your tools.

A sharp knife means you have to make **fewer cuts.**

A dull knife makes you work harder; several cuts are required where one or two would do.

A sharp knife will also cut more cleanly and precisely than a dull knife, and with much less chance of slippage.

All these stories show just how important it is to take the time to **PREPARE.**

THE MEN GOD USED MIGHTILY IN THE BIBLE WHO WAITED ON GOD

- **Abraham waited 25 years**
- **Joseph waited 13 years**
- **David waited 12-13 years**
- **Paul waited 3 years**
- **Jesus waited 30 years**

God was **preparing** them, sharpening them so that He could use them.

The skilled craftsman makes sure that the axe he uses is sharp **BEFORE** he begins his work.

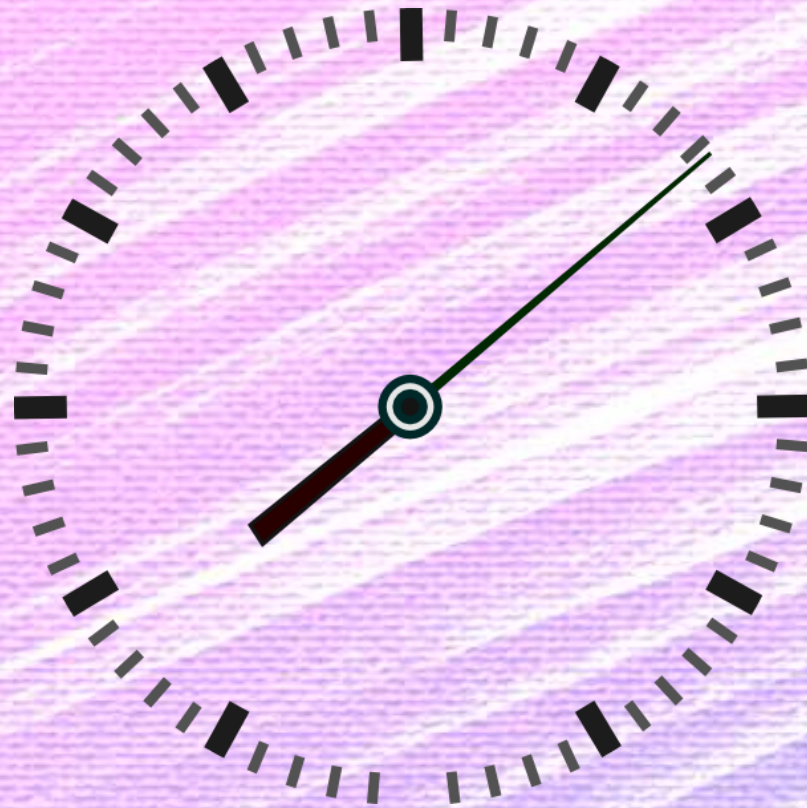
Application: "Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while."

**TO SHARPEN YOUR AX
MEANS**

**TO TAKE TIME AND REST IN
THE LORD**

WAITING IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD

Wisdom tells us to **take
time to sharpen our
tools.**



What tools has God given to you?

Your mind, your heart, your hands? Your relationships? Your ministry? Your job?

Whatever tools God has given to you, take time to sharpen them.

This principle applies to education.

It also applies to relationships.

How sharp is your blade?

Are you hacking away at life like a fool or staying on the sharp edge of wisdom?

Living wisely may take more time at the **beginning, but it saves time in the **long run**.**

Make sure you have the **right tools for the job God has given you to do, and then take the time to **PREPARE them well**.**

Zack Eswine points out: *"The fool believes he has no time to sharpen his worn-out blade. He believes that rest exposes either weakness or loss. Fatigue in persons or instruments is not permitted. People and instruments are made for our use. He will use them and will not slow down because they are worn out nor will we take the time necessary to nourish, daily tune up, or recover their strength"*

- **Slow down to speed up.**
- **Retreat to advance.**
- **Rejuvenate your resources.**

F.B. Meyer said, *"There are times with all who work for God, when they are blunt, through much usage At all such times let us turn to God and say, 'Put in more strength. Let thy power be magnified in my weakness. Give more grace, so that thy work shall not suffer' Surely more work is done by a blunt edge and divine power, than by a sharp edge and little power."*

(II) HOW TO SHAPPEN YOUR AX?

Ax is made of iron.

Iron is the very emblem of service.

The stone age –prehistoric

The golden age – the dream

The **iron age - the true age.**

Iron age builds up our civilization and our strength.

Iron stands as the fittest **emblem of service.**

But the **iron gets blunt — that you cannot help.**

What you can help and must help is this — **THAT IT DOES NOT REMAIN BLUNT.**

Our job is to always **SHARPEN OUR AX/IRON.**

How?

➤ **Counsel, Correction and Coaching of man**

Proverbs 27:17 (KJV)-"Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend."

➤ **Contact and Communion with the Friend of Friends, the Lord Himself.**

John 15:4 (KJV)- Abide in me, and I in you, As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; NO MORE CAN YE, EXCEPT YE ABIDE IN ME.

Practical Steps.....

- ***Read a chapter of Proverbs every day.***
- ***Pray daily for the Lord to give you wisdom.***
- ***Cultivate the relationships you already have with those who are already working with the Lord's wisdom.***



- **Constant surrender**
- **Consolation for “Blunt” Ax**

"Some tools are the better for not being oversharp. He who was the carpenter still needs hammers as well as chisels and planes. Only give thyself to Him." (M. G. Pearse.)

Fruitful service is proportionate to our **DEPENDENCE ON GOD.**

However, that does not mean we are **idle.**

We are called to **PARTNER with God and play the part He is calling us to play within His cosmic mandate.**

The key to having an exponential impact and a sharp edge through our life and service is learning to live in the biblical paradoxes of

- **waiting and working;**
- **striving and surrender;**
- **struggle and security.**

We start by considering how Christian service requires both **waiting on God while working for God.**

(III) THE TRAGEDY OF DROPPING YOUR AX HEAD?

It is a folly to work with a blunt ax – **WASTING your energy and time.**

But then in our second key text account, there is a greater problem while working for God – **DROPPING YOUR AX HEAD.**

Application: The need for each person in the body of Christ to be a **part of building God's Church** and assembling together.

"And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near" (Hebrews 10:24-25)

Verses 3-4 -And [Elisha] answered, "Go." Then one of them said, "Be pleased to go with your servants." And he answered, "I will go." So [Elisha] went with them. And when they came to the Jordan, they cut down trees.

Elisha has been called the precursor to Jesus.

Elisha means *"God is salvation."*

Jesus means *"Yahweh will save."*

Trees represent people (Psalm 92:12).



Application: We as the people of God, are often brought low (cut down) that He may build us up to become a lasting testament to His goodness and truth (**Psalm 116:6**).

Verse 4 - "They came to the Jordan..."

This was a foretelling of people coming to the River Jordan to **repent and be baptized by John the Baptist.**

This would also be the same river in which John would baptize Jesus Christ.



Verse 5- But as one was felling a log, his ax head fell into the water...



AX represents **Jesus**, who is the **Incarnate Word** (John 1:1).

“And now also the axe [Word] is laid unto the root of the trees [man]: therefore, if every tree [man] does not produce good fruit, it is cut down and cast into the fire” (Matthew 3:10; Isaiah 44:3-4).

HEAD represents **authority**, God, and Christ. He put all things in subjection under His feet and gave [Jesus] as *head* over all things to the Church (**Ephesians 1:22**).

For He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a *helmet [the hope] of salvation upon His head...* (Isaiah 59:17).

Thus, the ax head falling into the water represents **Jesus, the Incarnate Word, who carries all authority and hope for mankind, being baptized in the River Jordan and receiving the Holy Spirit to begin His ministry.**



Verse 5. ...and he cried out. "Alas, my master! It was borrowed."

We cannot *borrow* God's authority from anyone *except* from Christ.

All authority is given *through* Christ.

Repentance and baptism give us full access to the things of God.

**Verse 6 - Then the man of God said, "Where did it fall?"
When he showed him the place, he cut off a stick
(branch) and threw it into the [water...]**



BRANCH represents **people**.

"I am the vine; *you* are the branches. If you remain in Me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from Me, you can do nothing (John 15:5).

According to **Acts 2:38, those who repent and are baptized become the Lord's branches. As His branches, we become engrafted into His vine as living testimonies to God's goodness and truth.**

WATER represents the **Spirit of God**. "With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation" (Isaiah 12:3 ESV).



Jesus spoke of the "**streams of living water**" that flow from within those who believe in Him and receive the Holy Spirit (**John 4:13-26**).

(IV) HOW TO RECOVER OUR DROPPED AX HEAD?

Verse 6 - "...and made the iron float."

IRON represents:

- **HUMAN STRENGTH**
- **CONFIDENCE IN ONE'S OWN POWER (Daniel 2:37-40).**

"Therefore, let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall" (I Corinthians 10:12).

We can do nothing in and of our own strength.

It was the Spirit of God that raised the iron ax head.

It was that same power that raised Jesus from the dead.

And it is that same power through baptism that the “natural man with his sinful nature” is buried and then arises out of the water resurrected, “born again,” and empowered by the Holy Spirit (Jude 19).

Verse 7 -And he said, 'Take it up.' So, he reached out his hand and took it (vs. 7).

Have we **taken up our cross by dying to self and surrendering all to Christ?**

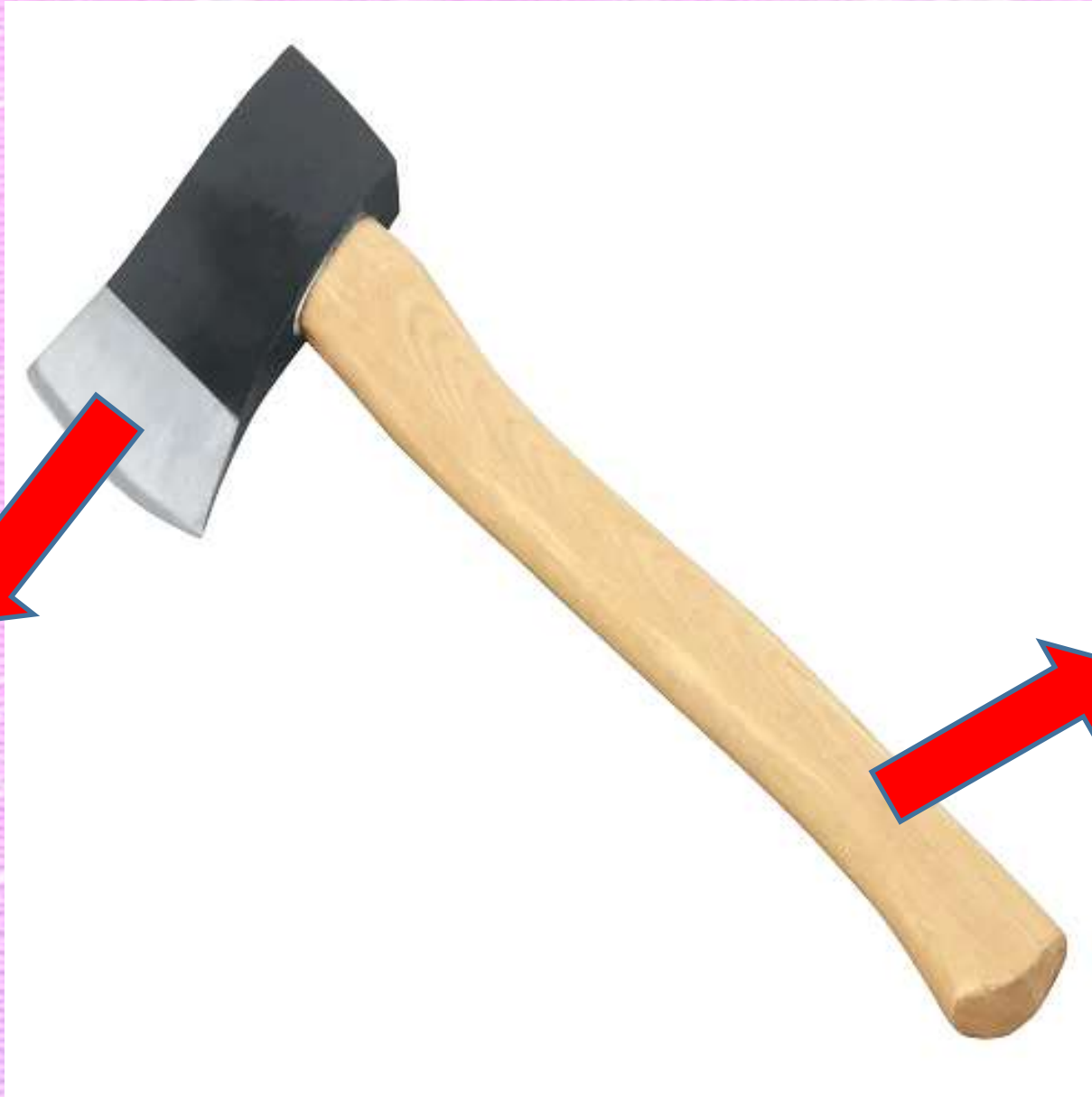
Do we fully embrace, believe, and follow God's Word?

AX HANDLE =we are the **vehicle** by which the ax (the Word) is used to push back the darkness, revealing Satan's lies and distortions.

What good is the ax head without the handle to wield it?



How can God's Word be known unless we share the Gospel? (Psalm 96:2-4; 2 Timothy 1:7-8).



Ax Head
(Jesus)

Ax Handle
(Christians)

The ax with the ax handle

All born again are the **ax handle of God**, and the ax is the **gospel**, the Good News, the Word of God that can effectively cut down the old life of sin and resurrect it unto the newness of God's kind of life.

In the case of **Ecclesiastes**, you see the scenario of Christian workers working with a blunt ax due to **overuse**.

And it expends more of your time and energy with little output. It is **WASTING** your human resources when you are working with a blunt ax.

In the case of the 2 Kings 6, you are working but you are not **WATCHING.**

Consequently, you lost the ax head and are unable to continue your work. You have lost your **cutting edge.**

The second scenario is more serious than the first scenario because you cannot work at all without the ax head. You have lost your calling; your purpose and your function.

Application: Which category of worker describes you today? Are you the worker with a blunt ax? Serving and serving with so much energy and time but with little productivity and fruitfulness? Or are you the worker whose ax head has sunk to the river bed? You are a handle without the ax head - a Christian who is born again but with no calling, direction, purpose, service and relationship with the Lord, no cutting edge in anything of your life.

(V) THE AXED-DOWN ONE

If so, look at Jesus- the **AXED-DOWN** one.

For all of our foolishness, Jesus became the one that was axed down because of our ineffective service. How so?

“And now also the axe [Word] is laid unto the root of the trees [man]: therefore, if every tree [man] does not produce good fruit, it is cut down and cast into the fire” (Matthew 3:10; Isaiah 44:3-4).

What are some of the root problems?

- **Our fallen nature**
- **Blindness**
- **Arrogance**

Psalm 10:4 The wicked are too proud to seek God. They seem to think that God is dead.

Isaiah 65:1-2 NLT “The Lord says, “I was ready to respond, but no one asked for help. I was ready to be found, but no one was looking for me. I said, said, ‘Here I am, here I am!’ to a nation that did not call on my name. All day long I opened my arms to a rebellious people. But they follow their own evil paths and their own crooked schemes.”

➤ **Misplaced Trust**

Isaiah 31:1 Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help And rely on horses, And trust in chariots because they are many And in horsemen because they are very strong, But they do not look to the Holy One of Israel, nor seek the Lord!

2 Chronicles 16:12 In the thirty-ninth year of his reign, Asa developed a serious foot disease. Yet even with the severity of his disease, he did not seek the Lord's help but turned only to his physicians.

➤ **WRONG SENSE OF VALUE AND WORTH**

For so many of us who are serving God, our identity is wrapped up in our work and activity.

We find our **value and sense of worth in the work of service.**

The danger in this is that there is a very fine line between working for God out of love for him and working for God to earn His approval.

When seeking to earn His approval, we will operate from our own efforts rather than dependence on the Holy Spirit.

We may experience some short-term success but it is unlikely we will see lasting fruit or experience exponential impact beyond our labor (1 Cor. 3:12–15).

So, Jesus, the Ax, the Living Word, was laid to the root of the trees [man] – the basic root problem of mankind.

How?

By being cut down or axed down on the cross and cast into the fire so that our spiritual ax head will not be blunt but sharpened to produce many good fruits and not just a few.

In the degree you see Jesus as the Word being axed down on the cross for our ineffective blunt ax, to that level will you allow the Spirit to crucify alongside with Jesus your fallen nature, blindness, arrogance, misplaced trust and wrong sense of value and worth and allow the Spirit to work in you faith in the Son of God to become the sharpened ax of God.

Our activity for God needs to emanate from this **revelation that God loved us unconditionally.**

Our doing is not to earn His favor, rather it is an **act of worshipful gratitude for His love and all He has done for us.**

Effortless service starts from the position of obeying the biblical instruction to **WAIT ON GOD.**

Our identity and sense of self-worth should not be wrapped up in our work and accomplishments.

It is rather intrinsically connected to our **position as sons and daughters of God (Rom. 8:15–17).**

The **posture of waiting on God is consistently presented in scripture as the appropriate **starting point** for all effective and fruitful ministry.**

Waiting on God is essential to counteract the temptation to focus on success, numbers, profit or any other metrics related to our work for Him.

The biblical counsel to wait on God does not call us to a **life of disengagement from the world.**

Instead, waiting on God provides the impetus for our work, recognizing there is a biblical mandate upon us to work hard for the cause of the Gospel.

Jesus himself instructs us; "As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me**" (John 9:4).**

"Waiting on God has its value in that it makes us strong in work for God... as waiting on God lies at the root of all true working for God, so working for God must be the fruit of all true waiting on Him." (Andrew Murray)

Waiting on God in order to work for God is the antidote to **seeking salvation by merit.**

It is also the antidote for leaders and ministry workers whose **self-worth is tied up in their productivity.**

By grace, God has chosen us for "good works which he has prepared in advance for us to do" (Eph. 2:10).

And if you have lost your ax-head, Jesus, the Baptized One in River Jordan had become the fallen ax head, chopped down at the Tree of the Calvary to become the fallen ax head at the river bed of hell.

Because Jesus became the **AXED-DOWN ONE, sinking to the river of death, God the Father sent the Holy Spirit to float the **SUNKEN AX HEAD**, the sunken dead spirit of Jesus and float Him up (**raise him up= resurrect him**) - defying gravity and death.**

Today, His Holy Spirit is here to summon your fallen ax head to rise up to the surface so that you can continue to have the ax attached to the handle of your life.

But first you have to repent for your failure and omission in waiting upon God.

Remember the sunken ax head floats up in River Jordan, symbolizing the baptism of repentance and surrender.

Remember too before the disciples could be the sharpened ax of God in the Book of Acts, they all waited for God in the upper room for ten days.

The Holy Spirit is ready to breathe the resurrection power of Jesus upon every worker of Etah so that the sharp ax head of Jesus is attached to the handle of every one of our life once again.

And the purpose is to build and expand the kingdom of God in this coming Harvest Month.

CONCLUSION

Are you in a hurry to hack away your ax in this coming Harvest Month? So eager to perform, sing, evangelize, pray and play without first sharpening your ax?

Sharpen your ax first by **waiting upon the Lord.**

While waiting upon the Lord, God will grant you a **watchful spirit so you will not drop the ax head and be rendered as useless and ineffective for the Lord and His work.**



