

Find Your Axe – 9/10/23

2 Kings 6:1-4 - An Axhead Floats - ¹The company of the prophets said to Elisha, “Look, the place where we meet with you is too small for us. ² Let us go to the Jordan, where each of us can get a pole; and let us build a place there for us to meet.”

And he said, “Go.”

³ Then one of them said, “Won’t you please come with your servants?”

“I will,” Elisha replied. ⁴ And he went with them.

They went to the Jordan and began to cut down trees.

In this story, the prophets are looking to do a little remodeling.

- Their house is too small for them; so, they want to make a bigger house.
- So, each prophet pitched in to help build *the new house*.
- The idea, *each prophet* would contribute one beam for this new house.
- Each went into the woods and used an axe to chop down a tree.
- Once the tree was down, they used the axe to fashion the log into a beam.

Chopping down a tree is something that used to be a standard activity in America. The **East and Midwest** were covered in trees.

- It’s said a squirrel could climb a tree in Connecticut then hop from branch to branch and not come down again until he reached Ohio.

People chopped down trees to make a cabin.

- Then they chopped down trees to clear the land for farming.
- The trees they cut down were further chopped up into firewood.

The trick to chopping wood is to first pick the right type of axe.

I have a pick that I use for digging around the house.

- It has a long spike at one end, good for digging into the ground.
- The curve of the spike, is for breaking up the ground and pulling up rocks.
- If you try to dig with a shovel or a spade, you will wind up hitting a rock.
- A pick is good for pulling up the smaller rocks and roots.
- It breaks up the soil so the shovel can lift the loose dirt out of the hole.

On the other side of the pick is a **flat axe-like piece** like an adze.

It can be used to chop off tree roots as you encounter them in the ground.

- If you sharpen it, you can use the **adze** to **shape the log**.
- The **adze** end is used to **remove bark** off a log.
- The **adze** is used for **finishing a log**, *not* for chopping it down.
- I will show you how to use this **adze** in a few minutes.

I also have a hatchet.

- I will **never** chop down a tree with it.
- It's for cutting up small branches, but probably too small for felling a tree.
- You see **the axe head** is too small.
- There is **not enough mass** when I swing it.
- You see **the axe head** is what does most of the work.
- **I swing the axe** and my muscles get the axe head moving fast enough to penetrate the wood.
- The **axe handle** gives my muscles a mechanical advantage when moving the axe head.
- **The longer the axe's handle**, the more leverage I get against the axe head.
- **The longer the handle**, the faster the axe head is moving.

The axe handle is also how I control the axe head. Control is key when handling an axe.

- You don't just swing the axe at the log randomly; **you need to control the axe head** so that it hits the log in a specific rhythm.
- **You strike the log** in one direction, then the other.
- **You drive the sharpened head of the axe** into the wood, then attack it from a different angle to cut away the block.
- You remove the block of wood, and then start again.

Remember that the axe head is what is doing the work.

All the motion of the lumberjack is to get the axe head into the spot where it needs to do its work.

- Chopping a piece of wood is not about hacking away randomly at the log; **the secret is finesse**.
- **You don't hack**; you slice, **you control the axe**.
- **You don't hack**; you slice, then slice, then slice, and slice.

First, let me say that the church's lawyers would like me to remind you to never swing an axe towards your feet while standing on a log.

- This man is a trained professional.
- If you do swing an axe towards your feet while standing on a log, don't do it while wearing skate boarding shoes; wear steel-toed boots.

As you can see, **Doug** is taking careful **deliberate strokes with the axe.**

- He is hitting the log in one direction, then the other.
- He pulls out the wood then starts again.
- Slice, slice, slice, slice.
- Note how smooth the edges of the cut are.
- He almost makes the cuts perfectly smooth on each side. He isn't hacking away at the log; he is slicing away at it.

The axe head does the work in the fraction of a second after it hits the wood.

- **The axe head** hits the wood and slices deep into the log.
- **Doug guides the axe, but it is the axe head** that does the work.

So, if we try again with our log. You can see that we should take the axe and gently slice... **(Axe head flies off.)**

Oh no! What has happened?

- I had planned a message for all of you **about teamwork and working together** to build a house.
- I had planned to show you **how to chop down a tree.**
- Then I was going to show you how to **take the adze and trim the log** into a beam.
- I had all these plans about how we should all **work as a team to build a new house** because our current house was too small.

I was going to talk about how we need to work as a team, but each of you needs to pick up your ax and use it.

I had plans, but now those plans are gone because my axe head is lost.

What do I do now?

Ecclesiastes 10:10 NKJV - ¹⁰ If the ax is dull, And one does not sharpen the edge,
Then he must use more strength; But wisdom brings success.

Ecclesiastes 10:10 CEV - ¹⁰ If you don't sharpen your ax, it will be harder to use;
if you are wise, you'll know what to do.

I suppose I can just try to use the axe handle.

- It is a bit dull, but if I do as *Solomon says and just use more strength...*
- (**Doug hacks away to no effect**).
- This is never going to work.
- I guess my sermon is over.

It is not your fault.

In the story that I opened with; the prophets are trying to build a new house.

- Each one brings an axe and uses that axe to chop down at least one tree.
- **Things are going exactly per plan until:**

2 Kings 6:5 - ⁵ As one of them was cutting down a tree, the iron axe head fell into the water. "Oh no, my lord!" he cried out. "It was borrowed!"

He was doing everything he was supposed to do.

- He was there with the other prophets chopping down trees.
- When **suddenly his axe head went flying off** and landed into the water.
- Then it immediately sank out of sight.
- **This man had a plan**.
- He was thinking about the big new house that he would soon be living in.
- In an instant, all his plans were destroyed.

This person was doing nothing wrong.

- He was not living in sin.
- **The axe head flying off was not** a divine punishment for some wrong that he had committed.
- Far as we know this man was doing everything just as he was supposed to.
- **He had a plan, but in an instant the plan was destroyed** when his axe head went flying off the handle.

Sometimes through no fault of our own, our axe head goes flying off!

- All the plans that **we have made**.
- All the joy **we had planned** for our future!
- **Dashed in an instant** through **no fault of our own**.

Job loses his axe head.

Job 1:8-11 - ⁸Then the Lord said to Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil.”

⁸Then the Lord said to Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil.”

⁹“Does Job fear God for nothing?” Satan replied. ¹⁰“Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. ¹¹But now stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face.”

The story of Job and **the story of the lost axe head** have quite a few parallels.

If you allow me to take **the story of Job** and **tell it in the manner of the lost axe head**, you might see what I mean:

Job 1:8-11 (REVISED)

8 Then the LORD said to Satan, “Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a great lumberjack who cuts down trees like nobody’s business.” 9 So, Satan answered the LORD and said, “Does Job fear God for nothing? 10 Have You not made a sharp axe for him to wield? You have blessed the work of his hands. 11 But now, stretch out Your hand and cause his axe head to go flying off the handle, and he will surely curse You to Your face!”

I realize that there is a great danger in making up new verses to the Bible.

- I think that while **the words are not in these verses**,
- ***The sentiment is*** and I have only **tried to change the words to highlight a sentiment that is already there**.

Namely: Satan wants to separate you from your axe head.

If you have been filled with the Holy Spirit, then the Holy Spirit is your axe head. The Holy Spirit is what performs the spiritual work in your life.

- As you go through your day, **you are the axe handle**; you **guide the Holy Spirit** to where it needs to go.

If you try to hack away at a log using the handle, not much will happen.

- You get tired and frustrated and the log doesn't get cut.
- That's the same process that happens when you try to attack a spiritual problem using your own **human intellect** or **strength**:
- You wear yourself out and the problem remains.
- When you **attack** a spiritual problem,
- You need to use the axe of the Holy Spirit.

Matthew 16:19 - I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

CEV - *I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven, and God in heaven will allow whatever you allow on earth. But he will not allow anything you don't allow.*

You live in this world and as such **you see where the axe of the Holy Spirit** needs to be applied.

You get on your knees, and **you guide the Holy Spirit** to slice, slice, and slice away at the problem. You direct it, but it is the Holy Spirit that does the work.

But remember that just like Job, Satan wants to take away your axe head.

- Satan tells God that you only come to church and praise Him because you have the Holy Spirit in your life doing all the hard work.
- Satan tells the Lord that if He will just cause that axe handle to go flying off then you will curse Him.
- If he can just cause you to get that dreaded call from your doctor, or from the sheriff, or from the IRS.
- Satan wants to **separate you** from your axe head.
- To separate you from the Holy Spirit and the joy that is in your life.

Admit You Have a Problem

The first thing that the men do in 2 Kings is admit they have a problem.

They did not try to do what so many try to do and simply pretend that everything is fine.

- So many people just go on **pretending** that their axe head is still attached.
- **Just like it always was** and **if they can just try harder** everything will be OK.
- They might throw themselves into life and try to **pretend** that it is all OK.
- They might **ignore their spouse** and become a workaholic.
- Some might try to **self-medicate** using alcohol or pain killers.
- Some **pretend** that everything is still the same.
- They are **hacking away at a log with nothing but the axe handle.**
- They **don't or won't admit** that they have lost the axe head.

Ask for Help

First the man admits that he has a problem; he cries out.

Secondly, he goes to his spiritual leader and asks for help.

Each of us has or will go through a time when it feels like all is lost.

During those times, **we need to go to our spiritual leaders,** those to whom we submit ourselves and **ask for help.**

I remember when my life seem to fall apart and I could do nothing to stop it, no matter how hard I tried.

This is how and when I found Jesus. I tried everything I could do...

This is when I found that my dependance must be in Christ and Him alone.

I had to learn to: Float the Axe Head. And I had to learn to do it Ministry as well!

Float the Axe

- I lost my axe handle.....
- I had plans for my life, And then suddenly all my hopes and dreams were dashed.
- It took me a long time to admit that I had lost it and begin to look for it again.

2 Kings 6:6 - "Where did it fall in?" Elisha asked. The prophet pointed to the place, and Elisha cut a stick and threw it into the water at that spot. The ax head floated to the top of the water.

Where did it fall?

- **Where were you** the last time you remember having it?
- These are questions that will **help you find your Holy Spirit** again.
- **Were you at church?** If so, then let's start there.

- Where in the church were you?
- **Were you at the altar** the last time you remember having the Holy Spirit, your axe head?

Who else was there?

- **Were you surrounded by** your friends or your family?
- **Were they praying** with you?
- **Are they helping you** find your axe head?

When he showed him the place, Elisha cut a stick and threw it there, and made the iron float.

When you are surrounded by good spiritual leadership, you won't need to go looking for the axe head; it will find you.

- Your Holy Spirit wants to fill you for once and for always.
- Remember that **we are the axe handle**;
- The stick **that holds the axe head and guides it**.

All the man had to do was throw a stick into the water; throw himself into the place where he thought the axe head might be and the iron floated.

All we need to do is **throw ourselves into that spiritual place** where we know **the Holy Spirit was on us once before** and **the Holy Spirit will find us**.

2 Kings 6:7 - ⁷"Lift it out," he said. Then the man reached out his hand and took it.

CLOSE:

The tree has little to fear from an axe head that has been separated from its handle.

The axe handle can do very little damage to a strong tree.

But an axe head on the end of an axe handle that is being wielded by a skilled lumberjack can bring down a tree in a matter of minutes.

That is why Satan wants nothing more than to find a way to separate us from our axe head: the Holy Spirit.

Jeremiah 51:20 - “You *are* My battle-ax *and* weapons of war: For with you I will break the nation in pieces; With you I will destroy kingdoms.

We are the weapon of war that the Lord uses to tear down strongholds and break ideologies to pieces.

We are His battle-ax and weapon of war as long as, we the handle stand firmly attached to the axe-head!