

## Find Your Axe

### 2 Kings 6:1-4 (KJV)

**1** And the sons of the prophets said unto Elisha, Behold now, the place where we dwell with thee is too strait for us. **2** Let us go, we pray thee, unto Jordan, and take thence every man a beam, and let us make us a place there, where we may dwell. And he answered, Go ye. **3** And one said, Be content, I pray thee, and go with thy servants. And he answered, I will go. **4** So he went with them. And when they came to Jordan, they cut down wood.

In this story, the prophets are looking to do a little remodeling. They have a house, but it is too small for them; they need to make a bigger house. So, each prophet pitched in to help build the new house. The idea was that each prophet would contribute one beam for this new house. They each went into the woods and use 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 is said that at one time 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 for farming were further chopped up into firewood. Day after day, people would go out into their farm and work on the huge pile of lumber laying there waiting to be chopped up.

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 that is good for digging into the ground. The curve of the spike is good for breaking up the ground and pulling out rocks that are in the ground. If you try to dig with a shovel or a spade, you sometimes will wind up hitting a rock. A pick it is usually able to go around the smaller rocks, get underneath them, and pull them up. It breaks up the soil so the only thing the shovel needs to do is lift the loop 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 or if you have an actual adze, you can use it to shape the log. The adze end is use to remove bark off a log and then square off the log into a shape that is more easily

used in building construction. The adze is used for finishing a log, not for chopping it down. I will show you how to use this adze to trim this log into a beam in a few minutes.

I also have a hatchet. This is a small, hand-held tool that I use for camping. It is small enough that I can carry it around in a backpack if I need to, but I will never chop down a tree with it. It is fine for cutting up small branches to make kindling but it is 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 are what 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 when it strikes the log.

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 of 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. As a lumberjack or lumberjill, 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, this person 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. The lumberjack 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 have pages and pages of notes about how each of us has a part to play and if we all work together as a team we can built a greater house. 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 (KJV)** If the iron be blunt, and he do not whet the edge, then must he put to more strength: but wisdom is profitable to direct.

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... (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 (KJV)** But as one was felling a beam, the axe head fell into the water: and he cried, and said, Alas, master! for 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 when 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 when, 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. As 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.

Scottish poet, Robert Burns, was plowing in his field one day in November 1795 when he overturned the nest of a mouse. The mouse had prepared a nice little home for itself when suddenly a steel plow came rumbling through the middle of his living room. The mouse ran away into the field to find a new place to live. Robert Burns was so taken by this that he penned the following:

That flimsy heap of leaves and stubble had cost you many a weary nibble! Now you're turned out, for all your trouble, less house and hold, to endure cold winter's icy dribble and hoarfrosts cold!

But mouse-friend, you are not alone in proving foresight may be vain: the best-laid schemes of Mice and Men go oft awry, and leave us only grief and pain, for promised joy!

In other words, "I feel for you, mouse." Sometimes through no fault of our own, our axe head goes flying off; a plow comes through the middle of our den; all the plans that we have made and all the joy we had planned for our future is dashed in an instant through no fault of our own.

Job loses his axe head.

**Job 1:8 (KJV)** And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?

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. In this case, however, 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 Ghost with evidence of speaking in tongues, the Holy Ghost is your axe head. The Holy Ghost is what performs the spiritual work in your life. As you go through your day, you are the axe handle; you guide the Holy Ghost to where it needs to go.

If you try to hack away at a log using nothing but 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 Ghost.

**Matthew 16:19 (KJV) And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.**

You live in this world and as such you see where the axe of the Holy Ghost needs to be applied. You get on your knees and you guide the Holy Ghost to slice, slice, and slice away at the problem. You direct it, but it is the Holy Ghost 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 a Holy Ghost 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 get you separate from the Holy Ghost 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 their 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. They try to use every device that the world offers to pretend that everything is still the same, but it is as though 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 have 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.

A few years ago, I was at the high point of my life. I had a good job at a company I had always wanted to work for, I was making good money, I was respected and becoming well known by others in my industry. Then suddenly I was laid off. OK, so after a few weeks I had a friend who asked me to go into business with him as a professional photographer. I loved the work, but I could not support myself. So, I found another job. A few months later that company folded too. At each occurrence, I tried to hold it all together using my own strength. I emptied out my 401K. We moved from a house to an apartment. At the end of it all I had lost 3 jobs in a year and a half and had nothing left. I knew how Job felt, because I lost everything except my own health and family. Ten years ago, this month, my wife and two kids came to this church for the first time without me, because I was in Kennewick Washington selling everything we owned at a garage sale. We declared bankruptcy and at age 40-something I had to move in with my mom in

Ohio. The bankers in this church view bankruptcy not as financial desperation, but as a moral failure. If that's true, then I know that I have no right to be here in front of you telling you how to live your lives.

### **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 (KJV)** And the man of God said, Where fell it? And he shewed him the place. And he cut down a stick, and cast it in thither; and the iron did swim.

Where did it fall? Where were you the last time you remember having it? These are questions that will help you find your Holy Ghost 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 Ghost; 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?

**...And he shewed him the place. And he cut down a stick, and cast it in thither; and the iron did swim.**

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 Ghost 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 to throw a stick into the water; to throw himself into the place where he thought the axe head might be and the iron floated. In the same way, all we need to do is throw ourselves into that spiritual place where we knew the Holy Ghost was on us once before and the Holy Ghost will find us.

**2 Kings 6:7 (KJV)** Therefore said he, Take it up to thee. And he put out his hand, and took it.

The tree has little to fear from an axe head that has been separate 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 Ghost.

**Jeremiah 51:20 (KJV)** Thou art my battle axe and weapons of war: for with thee will I break in pieces the nations, and with thee will I 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 axe so long as we remain strong with our axe handle strong and the head firmly attached.