

Having a Cutting Edge



Gary Wilkerson September 21, 2020

Regaining Your Passion for a Time Such as This

When I was a teenager, being “on the edge” meant losing your cool. It was being nervous, anxious, about to plunge over an emotional precipice.

Today, being “on the edge” means something very positive. It suggests breaking boundaries, thinking outside of the box, living on the cutting edge of hopeful change.

I think both definitions of “on the edge” apply today. There has never been a time in my adult life when society seemed so anxious, nervous and afraid of going over the edge. At the same time, there has never been a generation more “on the edge” in its confidence that Jesus is on the move.

So, how’s your edge? Is yours dulled by Fear, anxiety, not knowing how to move forward in faith? Or is your edge sharpened by faith, cutting through fear to speak hope in a season of uncertainty?

The challenges pushing us to the edge today—a global pandemic, a shattered economy, anguished racial protests—are like none we’ve seen for half a century and more. Do you have the edge needed to speak as a voice for Jesus in these times?

In the church’s early centuries, leaders referred often to seven deadly sins. One of these was laziness or “sloth,” from the Latin word “acedia.” That word actually means something slightly different; it speaks of being passionless. For a Christian to live without fire in their soul was to waste the life God gave them. Lacking a gospel edge meant settling for less than God designed for you.

A story in 2 Kings 6 speaks to this issue. The prophet Elisha was mentoring a school of young prophets to become trusted spiritual voices in the nation. Obviously, to have such a voice, these young men had to have a spiritual edge. Studying under Elisha would ensure they did. The chapter opens on a seemingly mundane note, yet it holds a spiritual lesson that applies to every Christian alive today.

“One day the group of prophets came to Elisha and told him, ‘As you can see, this place where we meet with you is too small. Let’s go down to the Jordan River, where there are plenty of logs. There we can build a new place for us to meet.’ ‘All right,’ he told them, ‘go ahead!’” (2 Kings 6:1-2, NLT).

This group of young leaders were looking to improve how they did the work God had given them. Almost immediately, they faced an obstacle. “When they arrived at the Jordan, they began cutting down trees. But as one of them was cutting a tree, his ax head fell into the river. ‘Oh, sir!’ he cried. ‘It was a borrowed ax!’” (6:4-5).

The writer of this passage wants us to know that the young prophet who lost the ax head was a man of passion. The Hebrew meaning of the phrase “one of them” actually means “*the* one.” The implication is that he exceeded others with extraordinary passion. First, he opened his eyes to the need God showed him, seeing the *insufficiency of the present condition*. Second, he acted with a God-inspired vision to make something happen. In short, he

envisioned the preferred future.

These two things—seeing the need and acting with vision—are essential for any person to minister.

When a church gets a vision for assisting people who face homelessness, vulnerable people no longer live endangered on the streets. The care given to them and their transformed lives show the world what happens when God's kingdom in heaven is manifested on earth. It's a glorious thing to behold.

Now, he ran into what looked like an insurmountable obstacle. Remember that the Jordan River was a large body of water. Early in the Israelites' history, God had to miraculously part its waves so they could safely cross. As this young man's ax head disappeared into the deep, he despaired that it had sunk forever.

The sunken ax head represents all things concerning the passion God gives to us.

Picture it as your own anointed gifting. It's a Spirit-implanted passion, an equipping to help you accomplish all that God has planned for you. It's the opposite of "acedia," which cripples any calling to kingdom service.

This gift has great value. That's why the young prophet cried out in horror as the ax head he was given sank into the waves. He anguished over its loss.

Do we have the same protective passion for God's anointing? We all have a life's calling, no matter our age or season of life. We are of precious value to God, and our calling is no small thing to him. Our response should be, "Lord, may my edge never become dull or lost. May I keep this ax you gave me so sharp that it accomplishes all you've called me to do."

Life's issues and demands can cause us to neglect our ax and let its blade grow dull. This is when "acedia," the deadly sin, enters. Moderation is never an option, however, for anyone who picks up their cross to follow Jesus.

When we get a God-inspired vision, the Lord often meets us with a surprising response.

Isaiah had a powerful vision of stubborn Judah being restored, and yet it seemed impossible while Israel constantly drifted away from God. When the prophet brought this to the Lord, surprisingly, he was told that his desires were too small. God gave Isaiah a vision of the future Messiah. "It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; *I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, that You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth*" (*Isaiah 49:6, NKJV, my emphasis*).

God told Isaiah, "The restoration of Judah is just the start of what I have planned." The Lord has a much wider vision for the world when he gives us a ministry anointing. The point where we think a work ends is often just its beginning.

Anyone given a commission from the Lord will have their edge tested. Was it any surprise the young prophet's ax-head flew off into the Jordan and sank? There was no chance of recovering it. That should have signaled the end of the young prophet's dream. So, where was his faith in that moment?

This is the point where we're most tempted to rely on our own strength to see God's vision through. Paul tells us how foolish that is: "After starting your new lives in the Spirit, why are you now trying to become perfect by your own human effort?" (*Galatians 3:3, NLT*). Operating in the flesh only makes things harder and can never fulfill God's purposes. "Using a dull ax [our own strength] requires great strength, so sharpen the blade" (*Ecclesiastes 10:10*).

Some Christians know their faith has grown dull. They feel so useless and guilty they think they can never recover the passion they once had. They resign themselves to living without any vision whatsoever. If that describes you, I have written this message straight to your heart.

We cannot remain in this condition any longer, especially at this moment in history. The world is in such despair that it's literally crying out for hope. Yet the enemy has deceived a lot of Christians into thinking they have nothing

to offer.

Consider the panicked young man who lost his ax-head in the Jordan. He might have cried, “What will I do now? I’ve just seen my dream sink like a stone to the river bottom.” Fear and worry are never the final words for a Christian. No matter how deep your sharp edge has sunk, God looks to restore it in you. In fact, despairing moments like these are exactly when he seeks to resurrect our faith.

Thankfully, Elisha was on the scene when the ax-head was lost. “‘Where did it fall?’ the man of God asked” (2 *Kings* 6:6). Today, the Lord might be asking any of us, “Where exactly did your faith sink?” God wants to take you back to that place, to show you his power to resurrect any faith that has been buried underneath waves of pain, disappointment or doubt.

“When he showed him the place, Elisha cut a stick and threw it into the water at that spot. Then the ax head floated to the surface” (6:6). What an incredible miracle. The heavy, metal ax-head appeared on the river’s surface, floating like a lifejacket.

What happened then? “‘Grab it,’ Elisha said. And the man reached out and grabbed it” (6:7). The elder prophet called on the young man to step out in faith to recover his tool. Friend, the Lord will do the same with you. He’ll point you to the gift he’s resurrecting, and he’ll ask you to grab it, taking it back by faith. This is God’s mercy to us. He provides resurrection power, and he invites us to step forward in faith to claim it.

Don’t let this heavy moment in time drain you of the passion gifted to you.

As the Lord himself moves amid our waters of doubt, working to restore our edge of passion, it’s up to us to wade out in faith, believing, “Yes, my ax-head is returning. What was lost in my life has resurfaced. The Holy Spirit is lifting my faith from the depths, and I’ll heed his calling. God is bringing it all back so that I can speak the hope of his glory at such a moment.” What an incredible, holy calling!

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