

Sharpening the Axe

Brett Petrillo

A young man approached the foreman of a logging crew and asked for a job. "That depends," replied the foreman. "Let's see you fell this tree." The young man stepped forward and skillfully felled a great tree. Impressed, the foreman exclaimed, "You can start Monday!"

Several days rolled by. On Thursday afternoon the foreman approached the young man and said, "You can pick up your paycheck on the way out today." Startled, he replied, "I thought you paid on Friday." "Normally we do," answered the foreman, "but we're letting you go today because you've fallen behind. Our daily felling charts show that you've dropped from first place on Monday to last on Wednesday."

"But I'm a hard worker," the young man objected. "I arrive first, leave last, and even have worked through my coffee breaks!" The foreman, sensing the boy's integrity, thought for a minute and then asked, "Have you been sharpening your axe?" The young man replied, "I've been working too hard to take the time" (William D. Boyd, *Liberating Ministry from the Success Syndrome*).

There is great value in keeping our tools sharp. In his wisdom, Solomon talked about the futility of working with a dulled tool: "If the axe is dull and he does not sharpen its edge, then he must exert more strength. Wisdom has the advantage of giving success" (Ecclesiastes 10:10).

At some point, we need to take time for ourselves to sharpen, strengthen, and improve. Sometimes in the church, we can get so focused on just being busy, that we've forgotten to keep ourselves sharp. We do many things, but few make a significant impact. Let's not forget to take time to continue to learn, read, listen, and soak in spiritual knowledge.

It's so important to sharpen our spiritual axes. The impact will always be greater than before.