

BIBLE BRIEFING

“Random Ax of Kindness”

Second Kings 6:1-7

2 Kings 6:1 And the sons of the prophets said to Elisha, "See now, the place where we dwell with you is too small for us.

2 Kings 6:2 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."

2 Kings 6:3 Then one said, "Please consent to go with your servants." And he answered, "I will go."

2 Kings 6:4 So he went with them. And when they came to the Jordan, they cut down trees.

2 Kings 6:5 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."

2 Kings 6:6 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.

2 Kings 6:7 Therefore he said, "Pick *it* up for yourself." So he reached out his hand and took it.

God was doing a work among the **sons of the prophets**; they were fruitful and growing. They needed a larger, or at least a more adequate, facility.

So they set out to build. God relates their building project, and an incident during it, to teach us something about building for Him. How they built is more important than what they built.

God's emphasis is always on you. You will spend eternity with Him; not the things you do for Him, or build for Him. They only reveal what kind of builder you are. Better yet: They reveal what you think about the Person you are building for.

There *are* different kinds of spiritual builders. In First Corinthians 3:10-15 you read of two very different kinds of builders:

1 Corinthians 3:10 According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it.

1 Corinthians 3:11 For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 3:12 Now if anyone builds on this foundation *with* gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw,

1 Corinthians 3:13 each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is.

1 Corinthians 3:14 If anyone's work which he has built on *it* endures, he will receive a reward.

1 Corinthians 3:15 If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

There is a great deal of speculation and disagreement on exactly what these materials represent. Here are the four most popular views:

1. The **gold, silver, costly stones** refer to the enduring quality of the builder's work; and the **wood, hay, or straw** suggest work that is temporary and valueless.
2. The three expensive materials suggest sound doctrine which the builder "builds" into people's lives, and the three valueless materials are false doctrines.
3. The first three materials refer to the worker's worthy motives, and the other three point to his unworthy motives.
4. The **gold, silver, costly stones** refer to believers who constitute the church and the **wood, hay, or straw** represent unregenerate people present in the church.

All of those views are proper in application. The proper interpretation, I think, is that the superior materials represent the Word of God and its wisdom while the inferior materials represent the world and its wisdom.

Just because you have superior materials doesn't insure an excellent structure. Building still requires a faithfulness in the task on the part of the builder.

The **sons of the prophets** were good builders. We can learn from them how to be good builders.

2 Kings 6:1 And the sons of the prophets said to Elisha, "See now, the place where we dwell with you is too small for us.

They weren't the literal offspring of prophets. The name **sons of the prophets** was used to describe the nature of their calling rather than their ancestry. They were a group of young men who gathered together to hear the preaching and teaching of Elisha to be equipped to carry-out spiritual ministry in Israel. They were a called-out people who ministered to one another and others according to the Word of God.

So are you!! Believers are a called-out people who minister to one another and others according to the Word of God. You gather together to hear the preaching and teaching of the Word in order to be equipped to carry-out spiritual ministry in Hanford, Lemoore, Armona, Riverdale, and anywhere else you find yourself.

The **sons of the prophets** were good builders. They were good builders for at least these three reasons: They worked *together*, they worked *thoroughly*, and they worked *thoughtfully*.

They worked **together**:

2 Kings 6:2 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."

Every man of them had a part to play, represented by each having a **beam** to take. If anything was to be built, they would all have to work together to build it.

They weren't looking for someone else to do the work. Though we are gifted differently, much that needs to be done can be done by any one of us. If you see the need, you might be the one God wants to gift and bless to meet the need.

They knew it would be hard. But they also knew that "many hands make light work," and were encouraged to press forward by the participation of the others.

Whatever we are doing as a church, you have a **beam** in it; you are a part of the superstructure:

1. Maybe you don't attend a ministry, but you ought to hold it up in prayer.
2. Maybe you don't serve in a particular ministry, but when you attend you are holding it up.
3. Maybe you do attend and serve. You are part of the larger structure and you contribute to the building in so far as you build according to the master plan.

Speaking of the master plan... That (obviously) comes from the Lord. The overall master plan is set. We are to bring glory to Jesus in and through His Church. We are to teach the Word, emphasizing the Lord's grace, and thereby edifying His saints.

Within that overall master plan there is freedom. Each local Church leadership tweaks it with their own philosophy of ministry; their own vision; and their own mission to carry-out their vision.

The **sons of the prophets** worked together with their leadership:

2 Kings 6:3 Then one said, "Please consent to go with your servants." And he answered, "I will go."

This wouldn't work without Elisha. They were willing to submit to his leadership - not counting their zeal as something that superseded God's leading.

- being changed to bring change -

Often there are problems in churches at just this point - when individuals or groups press forward without the leading of the leadership. People can have their own agenda. It may not be evil - just different. Better to wait.

Next we see that they worked **thoroughly**:

2 Kings 6:4 So he went with them. And when they came to the Jordan, they cut down trees.

There were trees to cut down. But that was just the beginning! They had to be trimmed and planed and cut. Only then could they begin to build.

The very nature of prepping the wood was that they had to be thoroughly attentive to accuracy and detail. I don't know if they used 2x4's or 6x8's... But each of the boards they manufactured was done with thoroughness.

Are you thorough when involved in an area of ministry? Do you do it as unto the Lord, with excellence, to the best of your ability and resources? Do you do it the way you've been asked – by the Lord, through your leaders? That's the idea here. That's the kind of builder you want to be.

They worked **thoughtfully**:

2 Kings 6:5 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."

This was a big deal. In Exodus 22:14 you read,

Exodus 22:14 "And if a man borrows *anything* from his neighbor, and it becomes injured or dies, the owner of it not *being* with it, he shall surely make *it* good.

Be careful when you ask to borrow - knowing you are obligated to **make it good**. Personally, I try not to borrow too many things. *I don't want to have to make good when I ruin them!*

Thoughtfulness is one of the things being illustrated here. This builder was concerned about offending the neighbor he had borrowed the ax head from. He wasn't going to go to him and say, *Well, you should have considered the ax might be lost; that's the risk you took!* No, it was the risk the borrower took!

You must determine to be thoughtful as you minister to others if you are to be a good builder. It's not what you are building that matters most; it's Who you are building for, and how you are building. It's easy to lose sight of people within your project – no matter how small the task you are engaged in.

That, then, is the profile of a good builder - working together, thoroughly, and thoughtfully.

Our story isn't over; there is still the miraculous recovery of the ax head:

2 Kings 6:6 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.

2 Kings 6:7 Therefore he said, "Pick *it* up for yourself." So he reached out his hand and took it.

There are some spiritual applications in this incident:

1. Whatever we have has been **borrowed**. Paul asked, **And what do you have that you did not receive?** (1Corinthians. 4:7), and John the Baptist said, **A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven** (John 3:27). Whatever gifts, abilities, possessions, and opportunities we have are from God, and we will have to give an account of them when we see the Lord. Treat your gifts, abilities, possessions, and opportunities as on-loan from the Lord and you will take much better care with them!
2. The builder lost his valuable tool while he hard at work serving the Lord. That ax head came loose from many ax strokes! Work hard for Jesus!
3. You might lose something valuable as you work. Ministry is tough; it's not for the faint-hearted. There is a cost – of time, talent, and treasure. But you don't really have a choice! You cannot hold back. The work must proceed. You can be worldly-wise with regard to your time, talent, and treasure; but you don't want to be caught hoarding the Lord's resources; or hiding them; when He returns.
4. *Ax heads aren't magnetically attracted to sticks!* This one was *miraculously* attracted to the stick. The idea here seems to be that this builder's work would cease, and he would be left in discouragement and debt. There may be times your work for the Lord seems to sink and cease! You are left spiritually, and even literally, discouraged and in debt. Take it to the Lord – as this young prophet took it to Elisha. The Lord can recover the zeal and joy you've lost. Reach out to Him and receive it back.

Conclusion

Chopping wood is a universally recognized image of hard but hearty and healthy labor. It's just you and a simple, but effective, tool.

You and I are to work hard for the Lord. It will make us spiritually hearty; it will make us spiritually healthy.

Jesus has given us simple, but effective, tools. They are borrowed; they are on loan from Him. Use them! If it seems they've been lost... Appeal to Him to restore them. Go on building until you give an account.

And remember: Who you are building for, and how you are building, is more important than the project itself.

