



WOW: Word Of the Week

Progress

November 23, 2022

This week's WOW provides a second reminder of an important Bible principle: Christians must stay spiritually sharp. With a little over a month left in 2022, it is also a good time to begin to think ahead to 2023.

Last week I talked about felling trees and cutting firewood—and the importance of keeping the axe sharp (and of keeping the chain sharp on the chainsaw). When we lived in Michigan, we burned eight to ten face cords of firewood every heating season. Our primary source of heat in our home was wood. My boys and I personally learned the truth of the adage, "Heating with wood will warm you twice—when you cut the wood and when you burn the wood."

Progress. One of the reasons many people don't make progress in their spiritual lives, in their ministries, and all other aspects of their lives (for example, in health, diet, weight, relationships, career, or finances) is because they do not focus on keeping the chain sharp so they can accomplish necessary tasks and reach their goals. The principle of sharpening the axe is about living smarter instead of working harder.

I mention five essential factors for Christians who wish to be used by God to accomplish God's purpose in their lives and the lives of those they influence.

MENTORING. Receiving mentoring is an example of sharpening the axe. Essential: not just any mentor, the right mentor. You need to find a mentor, but not just any mentor. One who will constantly sharpen you for effective kingdom work that fulfills God's purpose in this world.

BOOKS. Another way to sharpen the axe is to read books. Not just random books, but game-changing books that unveil the Lord (remember that you're reading for spiritual progress).

TRAINING. Another way to sharpen the axe is by investing in training and courses.

SERIOUS BIBLE STUDY. One of the most important factors in sharpening the axe for Christians – and especially for Christian leaders who are charged with guiding God's people by their actions, teachings, and leadership – is regular, in-depth Bible study.

PRAYER. If we can accomplish nothing apart from Jesus, then maintaining our Jesus connection is essential. Dwelling in Him, He in us, His Word in us, praying about eternal matters and his eternal purpose.

Very soon, it will be 2023. We'll turn our heads and another year will be upon us.

I challenge you to make a concrete plan that includes at least two ways you'll sharpen your axe in 2023. Write them down. Pray about them.

Do it now so that when January arrives, you will immediately be on the path of spiritual progress.