

## Regaining Your Cutting Edge (Part 2)

by Bayless Conley

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Hello, thank you for joining me. Today, we are going to finish a message we began last time about regaining your cutting edge. When you lose your edge spiritually, my friend, several things happen. They're recognizable. We're going to talk about that, and we're going to talk about how to get your sharpness back spiritually. You're not going to want to miss a moment of this. Get ready.

Now, I am so glad that we have this time together, and I want to just ask you a favor. You may have a very busy life, there may be stuff going on right now, but as much as is possible for you, why don't you give me your undivided attention right now? Give God's Word your undivided attention. I believe there's going to be something that will help you in your life. I want to read to you a story from 2 Kings 6. We began this last time, and we're talking about how to regain your cutting edge. Of course, we're talking about spiritually, but this is a story that is actually loaded with insight and with thoughts. It's from 2 Kings 6:1-7 NKJV says,

<sup>1</sup> And the sons of the prophets said to Elisha, "See now, the place where we dwell with you is too small for us. <sup>2</sup> 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." <sup>3</sup> Then one said, "Please consent to go with your servants." And he answered, "I will go." <sup>4</sup> So he went with them. And when they came to the Jordan, they cut down trees. <sup>5</sup> 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." <sup>6</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup> Therefore he said, "Pick it up for yourself." So he reached out his hand and took it.

Now, these sons of the prophets, this was literally a school that began under Samuel. He was the head, had several schools in different places then Elijah became the head of these schools of the prophet.

These are men that trained for ministry, learned the history of God, learned the ways of the Spirit of God, and then now Elisha has become the head of the school of the prophets. Apparently, it was very successful under his leadership because they're needing to expand. They needed bigger facilities, and so he gives them permission to go down and to build a bigger house if you would, for them to live in and to train in.

One of the men, as they were there chopping down trees, he lost his cutting edge. Now, if you were with us last time, Jesus talked about this, the New Testament talks about it, uses this as a metaphor. In Ecclesiastes 10, it says, "If you don't keep the edge of your ax sharp, then you have to use more strength, but success comes from wisdom."

It's not that God is so interested in ax heads, but He's saying, if you stay sharp, you can get more done using less effort. But if you don't stay sharp, you can put in all sorts of effort and actually get very little done. Now, Jesus talked about people that have become dull of hearing.

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“Their hearts,” He said, “they have become dull, and they no longer see, they no longer perceive, they no longer hear. Lest they should see, lest they should hear and turn, and I should heal them.”

When we're talking about losing our cutting edge, it's our hearts that become dull. The first symptom is that is we're no longer sensitive to God's voice. We no longer see and perceive God moving in the circumstances around us. We are no longer sensitive to the Holy Spirit's promptings and woosings.

We become dull spiritually. That is a major symptom of someone that has lost their cutting edge. Second thing, we looked in the book of Revelation last time in chapter 14. Jesus is depicted as sitting on a cloud with a crown of gold on His head and, in His hand, a sharp sickle. An angel cries out, “Thrust in your sickle and reap for the harvest of the earth has come.”

Now, Jesus, He's the Lord of the harvest, but the sharp sickle, not just a sickle, but a sharp sickle in His hand. The instrument used for reaping is the church. Yes, my friend, there will be a global end-time harvest. I believe billions of people around the planet are going to find salvation in Christ, but the instrument that God will use to reach them is the church. We are the sharp sickle in His hand.

The second symptom of someone that has become dull spiritually is that they're no longer an effective instrument in the Lord's hand. They no longer have an impact in reaching others for Christ and influencing others towards salvation. Maybe those things describe you. Maybe this season of your life, you think, “Man, I've lost my fire. I've lost my first love. I can't honestly say that I'm being used by God to impact others for the sake of the Kingdom. I can't honestly say that I've been discerning and sensitive to the voice of the Holy Spirit.” Well, my friend, I've got good news for you. You can regain your cutting edge. The man in the story that we read from 2 Kings, he regained his cutting edge. Sometimes, bad things happen to good people.

Sometimes, well-meaning people, even people involved in the work of the Lord, and I may be talking to a minister or two right now, this guy that was one of the sons of the prophet, he was working by divine permission. He was in the Will of God. He was actively involved in ministry, and he lost his cutting edge. You can be a preacher, you can be a pastor to pastors and have lost your cutting edge.

I know there's some preachers; you haven't had a new thought in years, and all you're serving up to your congregation is just leftovers. I said last time; it's like Sunday afternoon dinner, nothing but leftovers and too long away from the fire. Well, God wants you to regain your cutting edge. We found out last time that if you've lost your cutting edge, don't blame somebody else.

This guy that lost his cutting edge, it was borrowed. He could have said, “Well, the guy that I borrowed it from, it's his fault because the ax head wasn't on tight.” No. Once that ax head was in his hands, it was his responsibility. I've chopped a lot of wood in my life, I actually own several axes still, and before you start, you always make sure that ax head is on tight.

If it's not, they've got little wedges, wood wedges, or metal wedges, and you'll pound them down to the top of the ax. It spreads the top of that ax head and makes it secure on the end of that ax handle. If you don't do it, you're liable to lose your ax head, like this guy did. It was his fault. We need to own up. If we've lost our cutting edge, let's not blame someone else. Let's not blame the person that failed us or this that happened to that.

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“Listen, God, if I lost my edge, I repent. I’m responsible for it.” Then this guy, he went to Elisha, he said, “Alas, master.” If we want to regain our cutting edge, we need to go to our Master, Jesus. He’s the only one that can restore it. Then an interesting thing happens when he lost his cutting edge, and in fact, let me just back up because I’ve got a point there, and it’s important.

Sometimes we look to people instead of to the Lord Himself to restore, to be our answer. God may use people, God does use people certainly, but our trust needs to be in Him and Him alone. If you’ve lost your cutting edge, God may use someone to help you. The book of Proverbs says, “As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens his friend,” keeps his friend sharp.

God does use our friends, He does use people, but we need to look past the vessel He’s using and to the one that’s holding the vessel, the one that’s pouring out from the vessel, and that is the Lord. I remember an old couple that came to me. I was doing a meeting in Yucaipa, California, like 42 years ago.

This, I say couple, was actually a brother and sister, and they were both in their 80s and they were seeking the baptism in the Holy Spirit. I gave a call for people that wanted to be baptized in Spirit, and people came forward, and I was laying hands on people. People were being filled with the Holy Spirit, speaking in other tongues. This old couple, the brother said, “Well, you know what? My sister and I, we’ve been seeking the baptism of the Holy Spirit for 40 years.”

He said, “We went to Kathryn Kuhlman’s meeting and she didn’t have it. Then we went and saw Brother Oral Roberts, but Brother Roberts didn’t have it. We saw this person.” They mentioned two or three other well-known ministers of the day. “Went to them and they didn’t have it. Well, we came here today. We heard about this meeting. We just thought, well, maybe you have it.”

I had to stop them, said, “Okay, let’s just start from ground zero. I don’t have it. The reason you didn’t get it is because you were looking to Kathryn Kuhlman, you were looking to Oral Roberts. You were looking to pastor so-and-so and this Evangelist. Listen, you got to put your eyes on Jesus. Jesus alone is the baptizer in the Holy Spirit.” John the Baptist said, “Hey, behold the Lamb of God. He takes away the sin of the world, and He will baptize you in the Holy Spirit.”

I said, “Guys, you have to put your eyes on Jesus. Take your eyes off of me. Put your eyes on Him.” They did. I led them in a simple prayer, and both of them after, 40 years of seeking, were gloriously baptized in the Holy Spirit, speaking in other tongues. Here’s the point. If you’ve lost your cutting edge, you need to go to Jesus. He alone has your answer.

Then the man of God asked a profound question. He said, “Where did it fall?” Where did you lose your cutting edge? It said, “He showed him the place.” I was fishing with a friend in Missouri one time, and we were out in this little bass boat in this lake along this shoreline. I had a brand new knife that a friend had given me. I took it out, was doing something. I got a little distracted, a little clumsy, and I dropped this beautiful new knife overboard.

The water was too deep and too murky to find it. I could take you today, and that was many, many years ago. I could take you today to that very lake, to the spot. I could stand on the shore and say, “Look right out there. That’s where I lost my cutting edge.” So the question, where did it fall? And it says, “He showed him the place.”

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People that have lost their cutting-edge spiritually that have lost that ability, that thing that allows them to make forward progress and to go forward in the things of God and in the things of the Spirit. If they've lost their edge spiritually, people can most generally take you to the place where it happened.

If you've lost your cutting edge, I bet you can go to the place. If you'll ask God to help you, you can go right to the place where you lost it. If you want to regain it, you've got to go to the place where you lost it. I had a friend that was an amazing preacher. I mean amazing. Like the kind of guy, he'd be preaching and the hair would stand up on the back of your neck. I remember several times I was absolutely in awe, not only at his ability to communicate, which was marvelous but the depth of his teaching and the richness of what he shared. I remember several times I just was stunned at what he was delivering to the people and the way he was delivering it. Just amazing.

I heard him quite often. Then I remember I sat in a few meetings where he was preaching, and that thing that he had was gone. It was gone. He just rambled on and shared a verse or two here and there, but that sharpness that just cut into the atmosphere and changed people's lives and had you on the edge of their seat, it was just, was gone. He'd lost his edge, and he was a good friend.

So I got together with him afterwards and said, "Look, I'm just talking to you as a friend right now." I said, "When you used to preach, man, oh man, there was just something there. The atmosphere was tangible. There was just this revelation you were bringing forth. It seems to me that the last few times I've heard you preach, that sort of X factor, it's gone. That anointing of the Spirit, it's not present." He put his head down and said, "Bayless, I know you're right. I know you're right."

I said, "I'm going to pray." He went his way. I didn't see him for a while. A few days later, he contacted me. He said, "Bayless, thank you so much for talking to me." He said, "I'd known for a while that I wasn't in a good place. Basically, I'd lost my edge." He said, "I prayed about it, and God showed me." He mentioned a couple in church, and I knew them casually. He said, "They'd been in church for a while, and I gave him a position of authority. Behind my back, he started going around and recruiting people.

He was planning to start his own church. He was in this process of stealing sheep behind my back. He was telling people that I wasn't even really called. Then actually, he said some things publicly, and it hurt me really deeply. He took a number of the members from our church, and he left. These were people that I loved. People that I'd won them to Christ, that I'd baptized them. I'd baptized their kids, and they left. The things that he said about me and inferred about me and having those people leave is, I was wounded so deeply." He said, "I asked God, and I went back to that place." He said, "That's where I lost my edge."

He said, "When I was wounded so deeply, I didn't go to God and get healed of that." He said, "Listen, Bayless, it's been taken care of. God and I had a powwow. I sat down with God, and he washed me clean of that. I forgave them." You know what? I heard him preach again after that, and he was changed. He had that edge back again.

Where did you lose your cutting edge? I remember a couple that came into our church many years ago. I didn't even think they were saved. They had no signs of spiritual life about them at all. They sat their eyes glazed over, had the spiritual temperature of an icicle.

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I'm just thinking, "Man, God help me reach these people. I want to get them saved because they looked like the walking dead. Well, I found out after a while that they were Christians. In fact, they came from a Pentecostal background. They were both spirit-filled Christians.

After a few months, they came to life and began to volunteer and serve in other areas of the church, and then there's a smile on their face. Then where they were just sitting there like a couple of corpses in the services, now, they've got their hands lifted and they're worshipping God, and they're greeting people, and they're praying, and just day and night. One day I was talking to the lady after service, and she was much older than me.

She said, "What did you think of my husband and I when we first came to church?" I said, "Well, truth, I didn't think either one of you were saved. There was no signs of spiritual life about you whatsoever." She said, "Yes." She said, "We'd been like that for a long time." Says, "But after sitting under the teaching here, God got a hold of us." Said, "My husband and I prayed," and said, "We realized where we lost that connection, and that vibrancy, and that fire we had with God."

She said, "Some years back, we got offended, and we stopped honoring God with a tithe. We stopped giving God the first part of our income because of an offense over something somebody in the church said or did." Says, "We both talked to one another." She said, "You know what? That's where we lost our edge. When we stopped honoring God with the first part of our income." Says, "We started tithing again. We started giving God the first 10th of every dollar we made. We said, 'God, we're putting You first. We're honoring You first.'" She said, "Pastor when we did that, our spiritual sharpness, our spiritual life came back to us."

Now, I don't know. It could be different with different people, but ask yourself if you've lost your cutting edge. Was it when you started hanging around with certain people? Maybe their attitude and influence has affected you. Maybe it was a particular act of disobedience. God told you to do something. You knew He wanted you to do something, and you didn't do it, and it's never been taken care of. You've never repented of it. You've never sorted that out with God. Is that when it happened?

Maybe you got in strife with someone. Maybe you got mad at God. I don't know. Maybe you feel like he failed you. The prayer went unanswered. Whatever it is, you're going to have to go back to that place to recover your edge. It may be painful, but He will go with you to that place. Thank God, thank God. Then the next thing that happened in the story is it's really interesting. It said, Elisha, he cut down a stick, cut a stick off, threw it in the water. This is a stick. What does a stick have to do with anything? What does that even mean?

Well, it means something. It points to something even greater. When the children of Israel came to the waters of Marah, which is a Hebrew word for bitterness, they couldn't drink the waters. They were bitter, they were poisoned, and Moses cried out to God. The Bible says, "God showed Moses a stick. He cut down a stick, threw it into the waters, and the bitter waters of Marah became sweet, and the people could drink it."

All right, so you got these bitter waters, and what does God do? He shows Moses a stick, a stick. What does that have to do with anything? It has a lot to do with everything because that stick it's a type and a shadow. It's a metaphor. It points forward to another piece of wood, Calvary, upon which the Son of God died. When what happened on the cross is applied to the bitter waters of life, they are made sweet.

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That was what the symbology that God was getting across through Moses when he threw that stick into the water. Here, my friend, the stick that Elisha threw into the water, again, it's a symbol of Calvary. I just want to tell you; you don't need anything new. Calvary is enough. Jesus did enough on Calvary. He restored our broken relationship with God. It's where life intersected the road of death. It's where joy intersects sadness. It's where purpose intersects purposelessness.

It's where love intersected hate. Everything that we need, including having our cutting-edge restored, man, it's found at Calvary through the finished work of Jesus. I just want to tell you, my friend, Calvary is enough. What Jesus did for you on the cross is enough. You don't need anything else. It is sufficient. All of the blessing we need comes through Calvary.

Now, once you cry out to God and you go to Him, you recognize you've lost your cutting edge. You cry out to God, saying, "God, I need to get my edge back. I don't want to live in this spiritual dullness where I'm not sensitive to Your Spirit, where I'm not gleaning truth from Your Word, where I'm not being used by You to impact other people." Man, that's a terrible way to live as a Christian; to live in spiritual dullness.

If you're there and you want to get it back, okay, we cry out to God. We recognize we've lost it. We don't blame anybody else. Say, "God help me." Then we go to Jesus, and the finished work on Calvary. My friend, His shed blood is enough. We go to that place maybe where we took on an offense or started hanging around with the wrong people, whatever, wherever we lost that cutting edge.

We go, and we say, "Lord, I thank You. What You did is enough. I'm trusting You, and I'm trusting You alone to restore that spiritual edge that I've lost." That's all we can do. If we'll do that, God will do His part. Once the stick was applied, once Calvary was applied, once faith in the Cross was applied, it said the iron floated. I happen to like the old King James version.

It said that the Iron ax head began to swim. Yes, a miracle took place. A miracle took place. My friend, I'm telling you even right now, if in your heart of hearts, you're crying out, "God, restore my sharpness, restore my cutting edge." Listen, a miracle's taking place; that edge it's right there. It's right in the atmosphere. The Holy Spirit is there where you are. I'm telling you, it's there. The man of God said, "Hey, there it is. Take it up to yourself." He reached out, and he took it.

God is the only one that can restore that edge to you, but we have to reach out by faith and take it. I just want to encourage you pick it up for yourself. Reach out and take it and say, "God, I receive that. I receive my spiritual sharpness again. I thank You for working in me. I'm taking it by faith. I'm receiving it by faith in the mighty name of Jesus."

You can regain your cutting edge. You can become sharp again spiritually, my friend. It's a wonderful way to live in touch with the Holy Spirit. Hearing the words of Jesus in our hearts, being led by the Spirit. What a glorious life that is. It's certainly not trial-free, it's certainly not trouble-free, but oh, to live sharp for God, to be growing, to be going forward, to being used by God, it's what every child of God wants.

I just want to end by saying this. God can take a heart, which is what that ax head represents, that's sunk down into the filthy, dirty, muddy waters of this life, sunk deep into sin. He can raise

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it up, and He can restore it. God says He'll take the heart of stone out of us and give us a new heart. He'll give us a heart of flesh. He'll put a new heart and a new spirit within us.

Listen, if you're watching me right now and you've never accepted Jesus, it's not a coincidence that you haven't changed the channel or turned me off. God is reaching out to you, my friend. He wants to give you a new life. The Son of God is real. He lived, He worked miracles. He raised the dead. He cleansed lepers. He taught like no one had ever taught before. He showed people what God was like, that He wasn't aloof, distant, unconcerned, and uncaring, but He was close.

He was caring; He was a loving Father. Jesus then was taken by wicked hands jealous hands, put through a mock trial, beaten without mercy, and crucified. There on that cross, on that piece of wood, the just punishment of God against the sin of the world fell upon Jesus. He became our substitute. He died in our place. He died in your place. He bore the punishment of your sin. He was cut off from God. He said, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?" He was forsaken so that you could be taken in. He paid the ultimate prize on Calvary.

After three days and three nights, once the claims of God's eternal justice were satisfied, the Holy Spirit reached down and raised Jesus from the dead. The Bible says, "Now the way is open into a relationship with God." Jesus said, "I am the way, I am the truth, and I am the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." The Bible says if you believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, if you'll confess Him with your mouth as Lord, you will be saved. Now that word saved means you come into a relationship with God.

That God washes you clean, He changes you on the inside. He gives you that new heart. He puts a new spirit within you, and you become His child. Friend, this isn't like some New Year's resolution that you make out and say, "Okay, I'm going to try and be better next year." No, this is an inward change of heart, and it results in an outward change of direction. Call on the name of Jesus today. In fact, pray with me right now. Tie your heart around these words. Say, "Dear Jesus," just say it out loud wherever you are; say,

"Dear Jesus, I come to You now." Go ahead and say it. "I come to You, Jesus. I believe You died on the cross for me. I believe You spilled Your blood and gave up Your life, and You did it for me. I believe You were raised from the dead. I put my trust in You, Jesus. I ask You to be my Lord and my Savior." Go ahead and call Him Lord. "Jesus, You're my Lord. Wash me clean. Give me a fresh start, and I pray in Your name. Amen." Amen, amen.

We would love to hear from you. In fact, if you watch regularly, if the broadcasts are a blessing to you, please let us know. Maybe even help us so we can help someone else, but until next time, I pray that God would richly bless you, my sharp friend.

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