

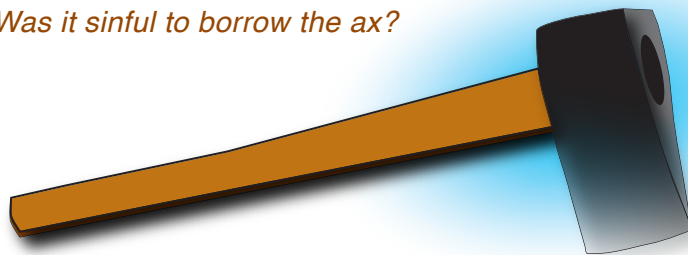
Opening comments overheard in a Counseling class at imaginary Quest Bible College

Mr. Alfred (on using an ax and borrowing from others)

As a child growing up in Maine, my brother and I played in the woods a lot, cutting down small trees and building crude shelters. There were no folding camp saws like we have today, and, of course, Dad did not let us use the chainsaw. So we became quite good with an old ax and a hatchet, even though they were not very sharp.

The sons of the prophets, however, may not have been very good with axes, since most of them were probably poor (4:1-7) and did not own one of their own. At least that was likely the case with the man who lost the ax head in the Jordan. Maybe he should not have borrowed it in the first place. Do you think Solomon's negative view of borrowing in Prov. 22:7 applies to the man and the situation in 2 Kgs. 6:1-7?

Was it sinful to borrow the ax?



Red (on lending and borrowing in the Bible)

Not necessarily. Reading through the Bible as a whole shows that borrowing and lending are not forbidden. So Prov. 22:7 simply seems to say that borrowing should be avoided if possible. Yet, Jesus said that lending to those who ask is generally speaking the loving thing to do (Mat. 5:42-44). Personally, I think Prov. 22:7 is mostly about greedy, unloving lenders. So it tells me to be careful about whom I borrow from.

Indy (on staying independent by not borrowing)

Oh, come on; that's not it! Solomon told us to remain independent by **not** borrowing. That's all there is to it! The man should not have borrowed the expensive iron ax. He pretty much said so himself in 2 Kgs. 6:5. I don't borrow anything from anyone!

Mr. Alfred (on the importance of loving cooperation)

What settles the question for me is the fact that Elisha did not criticize the man for borrowing or losing the ax head. Moreover, if everyone had been as independent as Indy is, there would not have been a godly group called the sons of the prophets in the first place. Today's passage shows that lovingly working together is very important.

Make concise notes on the negatives and positives in the passage. Then make personal applications based on the most important points.

Negative Points

What was bad, difficult, strenuous, or questionable about the situation of the sons of the prophets, the loss of the ax head, and how Elisha performed the miracle? What about the brevity of the passage?

Positive Points

What was good about the initial problem (6:1), Elisha's assistance, and the miracle? What was commendable or wise about the actions of the group and / or the man who lost the ax head? - Where is the Lord in the passage?

[illegible]

APPLICATIONS

Caution: this is the answer sheet or study leader's note page. Use the blank worksheet for personal and group studies.

NEGATIVES	POSITIVES
<i>bad, dangerous, difficult, evil, inadequate, sad, sinful, ugly, etc.</i>	<i>good, blessings, clean, healthy, joyful, safe, well done, wise, etc.</i>
(6:1) inadequate housing for the sons of the prophets	(6:1) Needing more space was a good problem.
(6:2) the need to build	(6:2) having a good plan of action
Was it a DIY project because of poverty?	plenty of trees (for free?)
the work: travel, cut, carry (<i>no chainsaws or trucks</i>)	numerous workers, strong enough
(6:3) Was it ok to take Elisha with them? (Acts 6:1-4)	(6:3) good that someone asking Elisha to go.
Only one man asked Elisha to go. Why only one?	good that Elisha agreed to go
Did this man anticipate trouble? (maybe)	Why did Elisha go with them? (led by God)
(6:4) Cutting river-bank trees is usually illegal today.	(6:4) The many workers worked willingly.
How was this justified? (not cutting all trees, etc.)	Do you think Elisha helped cut down trees?
(6:5) losing the ax head	(6:5) The man cried out for help.
Was the man careless or inexperience with ax?	This was like the young man in 2 Kgs. 6:15,
It was borrowed and expensive (iron).	and Joshua in Josh. 7:7,
This shows that the man was poor.	and Jeremiah in Jer. 1:6.
the man's despair, "alas"	This shows us how to overcome despair.
What kind of 'alas'? (like in 2 Kgs. 6:15, Josh. 7:7)	This was not as much like Jeremiah in Jer. 32:17-25,
He was unable to retrieve it or pay for it.	or Ezekiel in Eze. 9:8,
Was the water deep, dangerous, muddy?	or Joel in Joel 1:15.
(6:6) Elisha not knowing where the ax head fell	(6:6) the miracle of God
man of God needing to cut tree part & throw it	The man of God was present and acted.
How big a stick/tree? (small enough to throw)	Throwing the tree/stick was good. Why?
We are unable to explain the miracle.	It is good that we can not explain everything.
(6:7) The man had to pick up the ax head.	(6:7) It was good for the man to pick up what he had lost.
He had to take it and later return it.	How was the man like Peter in Mat. 17:27?
What is the biggest negative in the passage?	What is the biggest positive in the passage?
the situation and despair of the man	God met the man's need, removed his despair.
because of his inability to do anything	Why is the building never mentioned? (less important)

APPLICATIONS

Do not despair; take it to the Lord in prayer! (*like Joshua did in Josh. 7:7*)

Commentary from various perspectives as overheard in a Counseling class at imaginary Quest Bible College

Mr. Alfred (on the biggest positive in the passage)

The biggest positive in the floating ax head passage may not be the miraculous recovery of the ax head itself. Perhaps it was God delivering the man who had lost it from a state of despair. (Of course, these two things are related.) The little word “*alas*” in 6:5 reveals the man’s state of mind. (Notice that it is also used in 6:15.) Why was the man so upset about the ax head falling into the water?

Red (on feeling trapped because of inability)

After reading the next story in the chapter, I think the woodcutter in 6:5 and Elisha’s servant in 6:15 were probably both upset because there was nothing that they could do to overcome their problem. The army of Syrian’s had totally surrounded the city in the second story, and apparently the place where the ax head fell was totally inaccessible for some reason in the first story. They probably both felt trapped with no natural way out.

Mr. Alfred (on various reasons for feeling trapped)

Good point, Red, feeling trapped leads to despair, but there can be various thought processes involved. Elisha and his servant were literally trapped in the city of Dothan, but the man who lost the ax head may have felt trapped in various ways. If the spot where the ax head fell was deep, dangerous, or extremely muddy, then none of the group would be able to safely dive down and retrieve it. That was probably the case, but that is not the problem which the man actually mentioned, is it, Socie?

Socie (on feeling trapped socially and financially)

No, it’s not! The man had a social obligation to return the borrowed ax to its owner or to pay for it if he was unable to return it. He was probably quite poor, like the widow in 4:1-7, which explains why he borrowed the ax in the first place. So like the poor widow in chapter four, the man was trapped socially and financially.

Mr. Alfred (on repentance and counseling those who feel trapped)

Exactly, but there was a way out in each case we have talked about. The poor widow in chapter four, the woodcutter in 6:5, and the servant in 6:15 all took their problem to the man of God. That was like us praying to our heavenly Father in Jesus’ name. The man of God was available, for them, and the Lord Jesus is even more so for us.

In counseling, we often deal with people who feel trapped relationally, financially, and in other ways. In order to help these folks, we need to begin by gathering data. (Notice Elisha’s questions in 4:2 and 6:6.) Is the person saved? Is there a sin problem? etc.

The man who lost the ax head was a believer and wise to take his problem to God. (We need to encourage those we counsel to do the same.) Moreover, if borrowing the ax was a mistake, I think he had already repented of doing so (6:5). Personally, I think the man’s mistake was not the borrowing, but not being more careful with the ax due to inexperience. — What do you think? Did the man need to repent? Did he?