

Consistency is Key

Have you ever split firewood the “old fashioned” way? You know, the way where the “splitter” has a handle that is **not** attached to a hydraulic cylinder and gasoline motor, but an ax or maul head? Although I have sometimes used the gasoline/hydraulic kind, I’ve split much more firewood with the other kind of handles. When the boys were younger, they would see me bursting open the blocks and want to give it try. Typically, they would swing as hard as they could, and also just as typically miss the spot they needed to hit to get the wood to split. Such is not uncommon. I did the exact same thing when I was just learning. But the key is not how hard you hit the block of wood, but hitting “the right spot” with consistency; that is, hitting the same place multiple times. Otherwise, you wind up making more kindling splinters than firewood!

It occurs to me that many of us approach Christianity and our service to God the same way. We want to “hit it as hard as we can” once or twice a year, and expect great results. That’s why we make sure to “go to church” on Thanksgiving and Christmas (and Easter), and are generally much better people during November and December than we are in July and August.

This isn’t a new phenomenon by any means. Peter and the other eleven disciples proudly proclaimed, “... *‘Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You.’ All the disciples said the same thing too,*” [Matthew 26:35](#). In their minds, they were ready to make the great and grand sacrifice of their very lives for Christ. And yet, in the Garden of Gethsemane, on the same night (of Jesus’ betrayal), when He asked them to “*keep watch with Me,*” He returned to find them sleeping not once, not twice, but three times, [Matthew 26:36-45](#). At the most pivotal time of His life, they slept. They thought they were ready to make the “big” sacrifice and die for Him, but in reality couldn’t even stay awake and lend whatever support they could offer for a few hours.

Naaman also had this “big thing” mentality with regard to being cleansed from his leprosy. He was a “big” man- captain of the Syrian army, and as such expected Elisha (God’s prophet) to make some appropriately grand gesture to heal him. [2Kings 5:11](#) records his words, “*I thought, ‘He will surely come out to me, and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and wave his hand over the place, and cure the leper.’*” Probably because he knew Naaman’s heart and expectations, Elisha didn’t even come out of his house. Instead, he sent a messenger to Naaman telling him to go and dip himself seven times in the Jordan River to be cleansed. Naaman was furious, at least until his servants questioned him, “...*had the prophet told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much more then, when he says, ‘Wash, and be clean?’*” [2Kings 5:13](#). That’s good, insightful logic, and a great question. And it worked. Naaman went to the Jordan, dipped himself seven times as commanded, and came up cleansed. It wasn’t a “big” or “grand” gesture that God required of him, just simple obedience.

The same is true for us. While being faithful to God might require the sacrifice of our lives through persecution- and we should certainly be willing to die for Him ([Matthew 16:25](#)), given *when* and *where* we live, this is thankfully unlikely. But faithfulness does require the simple, consistent, day-to-day obedience to God’s words. In this way we become a “*living and holy sacrifice*” (cf. [Heb.12:1](#)) by **living for Him daily**, rather than dying for Him once. This isn’t the “big” and “grand” gesture Peter or Naaman had in mind. It is the simple, consistent life of obedience to God. What about you? Are you looking and waiting for the one “big” hit, or are you consistently and patiently “hitting the mark” of obedience every day?

See? We can even learn valuable lessons about godly living from splitting firewood, if we know and are willing to apply God’s word. (Philip C. Strong; Southport Church of Christ; 7202 Madison Ave, Indianapolis, IN 46227; online at southportcofc.org; email to mrpcstrong@hotmail.com)