

A close-up photograph of a person's hands sharpening an axe. The person is wearing a brown leather glove on their right hand, which is holding the wooden handle of the axe. Their left hand is holding a dark metal file against the metal head of the axe, which is resting on a large, rough-hewn stone block. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with more stone blocks.

Sharpening Our Axes for the Mission

Ecclesiastes 10:10

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If the axe is dull and he does not sharpen its edge,
then he must exert more strength.

Wisdom has the advantage of giving success.

Main Point

The Lord has given us work to do and axes to do the work, but we must take the time to sharpen our axes if we are to be wise in the work.

Proverbs 10:4

Poor is he who works with a negligent hand,
But the hand of the diligent makes rich.

Proverbs 21:5

The plans of the diligent lead surely to advantage,
But everyone who is hasty comes surely to poverty.

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We are tempted to haste and carelessness and are prone to dullness, so we must be diligent and careful and pay close attention to ourselves.

1 Timothy 4:16

Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you.

Deuteronomy 6:12

Watch yourself, that you do not forget the LORD who brought you from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

A close-up photograph of a person's hands sharpening an axe. The person is wearing a brown long-sleeved shirt. The axe has a wooden handle and a metal head. The person is using a piece of wood to sharpen the blade. The background is a wooden stump.

Sharpening Our Axes

What is the work to be done?

A person is shown from the side, wearing a light-colored shirt, sharpening a large axe on a stone. The axe has a wooden handle and a metal head. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with trees and a bright sky.

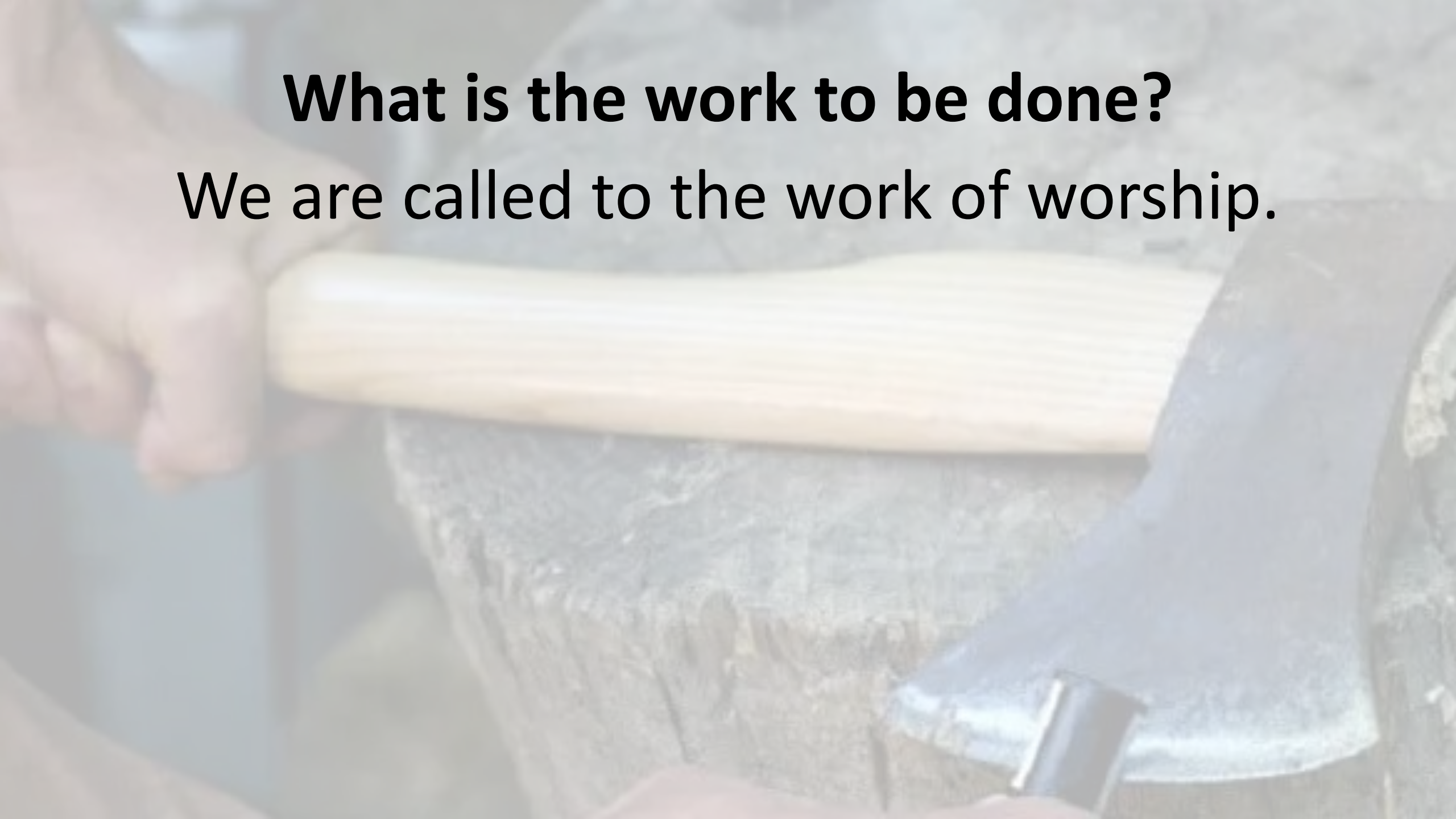
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The axe must be sharpened because
there are trees to be harvested.

There is work to be done!

A close-up, slightly blurred photograph of a person's hands using an axe to split a piece of wood. The axe has a light-colored wooden handle and a dark metal head. The wood being split is light-colored and shows a clear grain. The background is a textured, greyish surface, possibly a workbench or a piece of fabric. The overall tone is muted and focused on the action of the work.

What is the work to be done?
We are called to the work of worship.

Genesis 2:15

Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.

Adam was commissioned to sacred work, and he was charged to do it with wisdom and not brute force.

A close-up photograph of a person's hands sharpening an axe on a large, textured stone. The axe head is on the right, and the wooden handle is on the left. The person's hands are visible, one holding the handle and the other holding the stone. The background is blurred, showing more of the stone and the person's hands.

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Eden was a sanctuary of God, and the
commission to cultivate and keep it was a
commission to the everyday work of worship.
From the beginning God created us
as worshippers *for* worship.

This is the heart of our mission!

Deuteronomy 6:5

You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart
and with all your soul and with all your might.

Deuteronomy 10:20

You shall fear the LORD your God; you shall serve Him
and cling to Him, and you shall swear by His name.

Luke 4:8

Jesus answered him, “It is written,
‘You shall worship the LORD your God and serve Him only.’”

Romans 12:1

Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God,
to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice,
acceptable to God, **which is your spiritual
service of worship.**

Worship *in, with, and through* all
of your life is your calling, it is your
commission, it is your mission,
it is ***our*** mission.

A close-up, slightly blurred photograph of a person's hands using a hand plane to smooth a piece of light-colored wood. The plane is held against the wood, and the background is a textured, greyish surface. The overall tone is muted and focused on the craft.

What is the work to be done?

We are called to the work of worship.

We are called to the labor of love.

To love God is the first and foremost command.

But, “the second is like it,
‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”

Matthew 22:39

Love of neighbor is most manifest
in our love for one another...

John 13:35

“By this all men will know that you are My disciples,
if you have love for one another.”

Love for one another is an overflow of our love for God and is an integral expression of our worship.

As an act of worship, love is often costly and sacrificial...it is work.

1 Thessalonians 1:2-3

We give thanks to God always for all of you,
making mention of you in our prayers;
constantly bearing in mind your work of faith
and labor of love and steadfastness of hope
in our Lord Jesus Christ...

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making mention of you in our prayers;

constantly bearing in mind **your** work of faith
and **labor of love** and steadfastness of hope
in our Lord Jesus Christ...

But it is a worthy work!

A close-up, slightly blurred photograph of a person's hands using a mallet to shape a piece of wood on a workbench. The mallet has a light-colored wooden handle and a dark metal head. The wood being worked on is light-colored and has a rough, textured surface. The background is a dark, textured surface, possibly a workbench or a piece of fabric.

What is the work to be done?

We are called to the work of worship.

We are called to the labor of love.

We are called to the toil of testimony.

Isaiah 42:6

I am the LORD, I have called You in righteousness,
I will also hold You by the hand and watch over You,
And I will appoint You as a covenant to the people,
As a light to the nations.

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I will also hold You by the hand and watch over You,
And **I will appoint You** as a covenant to the people,
As a light to the nations.

Matthew 5:14-16

You are the light of the world.

A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.

Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

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see your good works, and glorify your
Father who is in heaven.

Acts 1:8

You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and **you shall be My witnesses** both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.

Love for the world is an overflow of our love for God and is an outward expression of genuine worship.

Because we testify to a sin-sick world, our work of witness will be toilsome and costly.

1 Corinthians 15:58

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, **knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.**

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Sharpening Our Axes

What is the work to be done?

What are the axes we've been given?

Ecclesiastes 10:10

If **the axe is dull** and he does not sharpen its edge,
then he must exert more strength.

Wisdom has the advantage of giving success.

There are trees to be cut,
so the Lord gives you an axe.

**What are the axes we've been given?
Our personal and corporate worship.**



Romans 12:1

Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God,
to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice,
acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.

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Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God,
to present your bodies **a living and holy sacrifice**,
acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.

This worship requires your bodily
engagement in daily devotion.

It is worship *in, with, and through*
all of your life.

The Lord has given you instruments of devotion to be used personally and corporately in the work of worship. These include His Word, the sacraments, prayer, song, fellowship, fasting, etc.

But the Lord has given you *every* good
gift to be enjoyed to His glory!

A close-up photograph of a hand holding the wooden handle of an axe. The axe head is positioned over a log, ready to be used. The background is slightly blurred, focusing attention on the hand and the axe.

What are the axes we've been given?

Our personal and corporate worship.

Our church community.

Romans 12:10 “Be devoted to one another in brotherly love.”

Galatians 5:13 “For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.”

1 Thessalonians 3:12 “And may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another.”

Hebrews 10:24 “And let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds.”

The Lord has given you this church, this body, this family as a shared instrument of sanctification.

The Cornerstone community is designed to be a double-sided axe swinging in both directions –you to your brother, your brother to you!

What are the axes we've been given?

Our personal and corporate worship.

Our church community.

Our knowledge and proclamation
of the gospel (our mind and tongue).

2 Corinthians 10:5

We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.

We are swinging the axe of the knowledge of God and His gospel!

1 John 1:3

What we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also,
so that you too may have fellowship with us;
and indeed our fellowship is with the Father,
and with His Son Jesus Christ.

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**What we have seen and heard
we proclaim to you** also,

so that you too may have fellowship with us;
and indeed our fellowship is with the Father,
and with His Son Jesus Christ.

You cannot proclaim what you do not know,
and you cannot speak without using your tongue.

If you are a Christian, the Lord has given you knowledge of Himself and of His gospel, and He has given you a tongue for proclamation.

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Sharpening Our Axes

What is the work to be done?

What are the axes we've been given?

How do we sharpen our axes?

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**Dull axes will require more
strength than we have.**

What will dull the edge of your axe?

Neglect or nonuse

Misuse

Faithful and steady use

**How do we sharpen our axes?
By slowing down to speed up.**



Psalm 37:7

Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for Him.

Psalm 46:10

Cease striving and know that I am God.

**What keeps you from being still
or from just slowing down?**

It may be a dullness of heart.

It may be fear.

It may be pride.

It's likely a combination.

Consider...

Luke 5:16

But Jesus Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray.

If Jesus thought it crucial to step away from His work and ministry to pray, how much more crucial is it for us!

How do we sharpen our axes?

By slowing down to speed up.

By leaning in to grow up.



Hebrews 10:24-25

Let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

Does the Lord intend to use your local church community as the key instrument for your growth and sanctification?

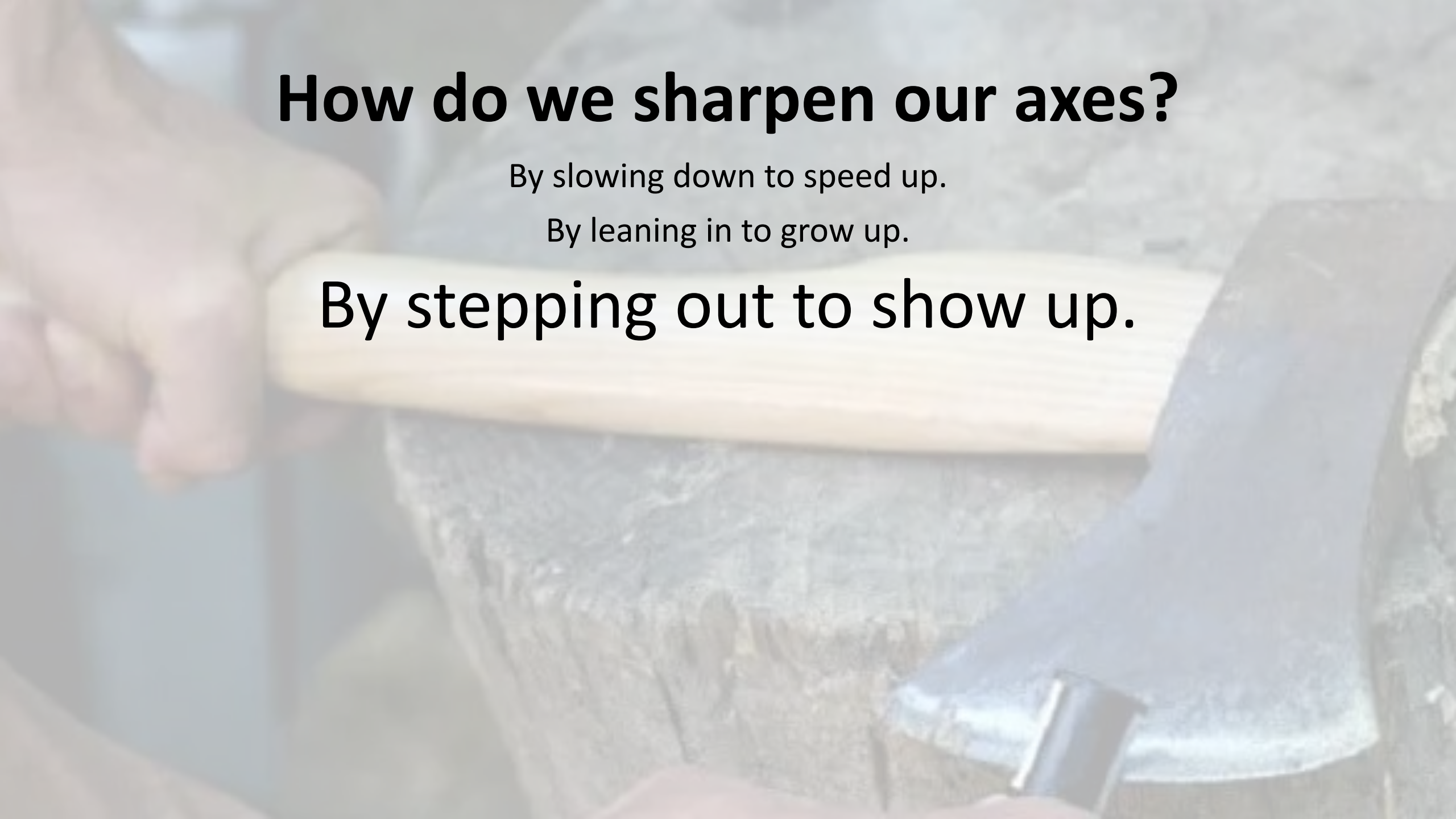
**Then you must lean in
if you are to grow up!**

How do we sharpen our axes?

By slowing down to speed up.

By leaning in to grow up.

By stepping out to show up.



Philippians 1:12-14

Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel, so that my imprisonment in the cause of Christ has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else, and that most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear.

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have **far more courage to speak** the word of God without fear.

It takes courage to show up,
but stepping out in courage will open
doors of opportunity that will
require you to sharpen your gospel
so that you can show up well.

Conclusion

Do you have an axe?

Has your axe become dull?

Do you need to slow down,
or lean in, or step up?