

## STAY SHARP

I walked around with a dull knife in my pocket. When I was young, I had no idea or urgency about sharpening my knife in my pocket. No one had ever properly taught me the importance of the craft or the necessity of keeping it sharp. More than once, I sawed and sawed on something like trying to cut down a tree with a butter knife. After the numbness in my arms wore off and the blisters on my hands healed, I learned that keeping a sharp knife is essential. Then, I had to learn how. I can name the person who taught me how to sharpen a knife.

It is fascinating that Proverbs compares life to a knife or a sword. Clearly, our existence was not created for bluntness but instead has a God-given purpose that requires an edge. However, this cannot be accomplished alone. It only happens in spiritual relationships and community. We would do well to know that these words contain one of the most painful but amazing spiritual blessings.

### **Proverbs 27:17**

*Iron sharpens iron,  
and one man sharpens another.*

If there is to be sharpness, there must be frequent, repeated contact and friction in order to achieve it. It's not contact that produces gratifying sparks, offering the appearance of doing something productive; the bevel must be the goal. It is intentional, for it doesn't happen by accident, and it is hard work. We should never be satisfied with a dull heart or life (Matthew 13:15, Hebrews 5:11). Being ineffective and unfruitful should scare us (2 Peter 1:8).

There is a solution. The New Testament Church is repeatedly instructed on how our Christian relationships should work. It comes as no surprise that the contact described is one of friction. Both positive and feel-good things like love and prayer are mentioned. But it also describes things like confession and rebuke.

- exhort and rebuke - Titus 2:15
- restore - Galatians 6:1
- encourage and build up - 1 Thessalonians 5:11
- confess and pray - James 5:16
- love one another and show honor- Romans 12:10
- comfort, agree, live in peace - 2 Corinthians 13:11
- admonishing in all wisdom - Colossians 3:16
- encourage and build up - 1 Thessalonians 5:11
- exhort one another - Hebrews 3:13
- stir up one another - Hebrews 10:24

Timothy was told to sharpen the church in Ephesus because a time of dullness was on the horizon.

### **2 Timothy 4:2-4**

*2 preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. 3 For the time is coming when people will not endure sound[a] teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, 4 and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.*

If we only participate in the Christian community when it is convenient for us or that participation solely serves our own interests, we slowly become spiritually dull. If we are closed and remain at a safe spiritual

distance from one another, we will become dull. If we don't expect sharpness from our own lives or the lives of those within the community, we collectively become dull. Let's not lead a dull existence! Stay sharp.

Eyes up!

Ryan