

Aim Small, Miss Small

There is a principle in all shooting sports summarized by the phrase “Aim small, miss small.” In hunting it is sometimes referred to as “picking your spot.” Both phrases speak to the importance of aiming at a particular spot rather than the whole target. In target shooting it refers to aiming at the bull’s-eye, not just the paper. In hunting it means to aim at the spot right behind the shoulder of a deer rather than at the whole deer, or at one quail rather than the entire covey. The bottom line behind this principle is that the more concentrated the focus, the more accurate the shot.

In target shooting this principle will help you tighten your groups and hit more clays. In hunting it is even more critical as it will help you make a quick, clean kill—an ethical responsibility we owe the game we are hunting. This is a lesson I learned when I first began to shoot archery. I practiced all the time and became very proficient at hitting a paper plate, which I had been told was the size of a deer’s vitals. A friend of mine came over to shoot with me, and his arrows were always in a tighter group closer to the center of the plate. I practiced even more, several days a week, with basically the same results as I had before.

I took my bow into the shop to have it tuned better. Still I shot the same. The next time I was with my friend, he again shot really tight groups. I told him that I was going to sell my bow and get a new one that shot as good as his. He laughed at me and said that my problem was not my bow but rather my target. Thinking he had lost his mind, I asked him how in the world the target could affect my shooting. He said simply, “Your target is too big. Don’t aim at the paper plate, aim at a dime-sized dot in the middle of the plate.” As soon as I started aiming at the small dot, my groupings became a lot tighter.

God has asked each of us to aim at a small target. He said, Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy (Lev. 19:2), which means he wants us to be perfect. He could have given us a bigger target—to be good. He could have told us to be nice. Of course, some of the best and nicest people on earth are not even believers. God said that we should be like him—holy and perfect. You might be saying to yourself, But that is too small a target; no one can ever hit it. You are absolutely correct. No one can, but by aiming at this smaller target we will be a lot more like him than if we just try to be good or nice.

The apostle Paul was aiming small when he wrote in Philippians 3:12–14: *Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.* Too many believers don’t become all that God wants them to be because their target is too big. Aim small and you will miss small. Pick your spot—focus on Christ—and you will become a lot more like him.