



# Cornton Baptist Church

Demonstrating God's love in action  
in the community of Cornton

# Through the Bible

Exodus  
Nehemiah  
2Chronicles Luke  
Acts 2Timothy 2Peter  
Zephaniah  
Ecclesiastes  
1Timothy Joshua  
Psalms James  
Isaiah  
Titus  
Daniel  
Hebrews  
Zechariah  
1Samuel 2Corinthians  
Malachi  
Philemon  
Job  
1Kings  
Romans  
1Chronicles  
2Thessalonians  
1Thessalonians  
Ruth  
Jonah  
Deuteronomy  
Ephesians  
Numbers  
Mark  
1Corinthians  
Judges  
Leviticus  
Ezra  
Ezekiel  
1Peter  
John  
2Samuel  
Matthew  
Habakkuk  
Lamentations  
SongsofSongs  
Haggai  
Colossians  
Nahum  
Micah  
Jeremiah  
Amos  
2John  
Joel  
Hosea  
3John  
Jude  
Obadiah  
Esther  
Proverbs  
Revelation  
Philippians  
1John

July 2011

*He shielded him and cared for him; he guarded him as the apple of his eye, like an eagle that stirs up its nest and hovers over its young, that spreads its wings to catch them and carried them on his pinions. (v.10-11)*

A mother eagle builds a comfortable nest for her young, padding it with feathers from her own breast. But God-given instinct that builds that secure nest also forces the eaglets out of it before long. Eagles are made to fly, and love will not fail to teach them. Only then will they become what they are meant to be.

So one day the mother eagle will disturb the twigs of the nest, making it an uncomfortable place to stay. Then she will pick up a perplexed eaglet, soar into the sky, and drop it. The little bird will begin to free-fall. Where is Mum now? She is not far away. Quickly she will swoop under and catch the fledgling on one strong wing. She will repeat this exercise until each eaglet is capable of flying on its own.

God never promises to keep us away from problems, but He always promises to rescue us in the nick of time. Moses and the people of Israel have experienced God's hand of protection before and his hand of provision. They know that he cares for them and leads them. This song by Moses is the song I think of God mentioned in chapter 31 and given to Moses to recite to the people. God wants the people to always remember him and to recall that his ways.

This chapter finishes on a sad note – Moses is taken up Mount Nebo and shown the Promised Land. He sees the place to which he has been leading the people under God's guidance these past 40 years. He is also told that he is getting to see the land but he will not enter. There are consequences to our sin that are sometimes long lasting. Moses had disregarded God's holiness on an earlier occasion and this was the punishment for that.

**Pray:** thanking God for always being there for us.

**Reflect:** where recently have you experienced God's protection and provision? Thank Him for his care.

*The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.  
(v.27)*

Years ago a military officer and his wife were aboard a ship that was caught in a raging ocean storm. Seeing the frantic look in her eyes, the man tried unsuccessfully to calm her fears. Suddenly she grasped his sleeve and cried, “How can you be so calm?” He stepped back a few feet and drew his sword. Pointing it at her heart, he said, “Are you afraid of this?” Without hesitation she answered, “Of course not!” “Why not?” he inquired. “Because it’s in your hand, and you love me too much to hurt me.” To this he replied, “I know the One who holds the winds and the waters in the hollow of His hand, and He will surely care for us!” The officer was not disturbed because he had put his trust in the Lord.

Hudson Taylor, founder of China Inland Mission, in the closing months of his life said to a friend, “I am so weak. I can’t read my Bible. I can’t even pray. I can only lie still in God’s arms like a little child and trust.”

What Hudson Taylor and the military officer knew was God’s care and compassion, his love and mercy. They knew his strong presence as he upheld them in his arms. Moses shares something of that here in Deuteronomy 33. The eternal God – the one who was and is and is to come, the alpha and omega, the beginning and the end – is our refuge. The one who is the same yesterday, today and forever is with us. He made us and he knows us and importantly he loves us. He is always there for us.

Whatever challenge or opportunity we face, there is security and peace in His everlasting arms. The hymn writer got it spot on ‘*What have I to dread, what have I to fear, leaning on the everlasting arms? I have blessed peace with my Lord so near, leaning on the everlasting arms.*’

**Pray:** thanking God for being our refuge and strength, an ever present help in times of trouble. Use Psalm 46 as a basis for prayer today.

**Reflect:** what is troubling you just now? Fall into the everlasting arms and give it all over to God.

*Moses was a hundred and twenty years old when he died, yet his eyes were not weak nor his strength gone. (v.7)*

God is faithful even when we are not. Moses failed and lost the opportunity to enter the Promised Land, but God did not forget His promise to Israel. I suspect if you looked closely as Moses looked over the land, you could detect tears in his eyes. There were tears of joy at God's goodness, tears of sadness and regret that he would never step foot in that land. But God was faithful. Moses would not see the promise fulfilled, but the promise would be fulfilled. And we need to keep that in mind, when we pray for the salvation of a friend and it seems like nothing is happening. We need to remember this when we ask God to heal us but the illness lingers. We need to remember this when we pray for a relationship to be mended but it ends in divorce. People disappoint, but God remains faithful. He will see us through. He will build the nature of Christ into our hearts. He will get his children home to Heaven . . . just as He promised.

Leaders pass away but the Lord's work advances. Moses was a great man. Israel missed him when he was gone. But the work continued. No leader is irreplaceable. Whatever God is doing in your life, remember, it is God working through you. And if it were not you, He would work through someone else. We must always remember that it is the Lord who changes lives. He uses people but those people by themselves can do nothing.

Finally, we can learn that age is more a state of mind than a biological curse. Look at verse seven, '*his eyes were not weak nor his strength gone.*' You have to admire Moses. He was vital and energetic right to the end. That's the way we should want to be!

**Pray:** thanking God for the work he is doing in and around us. Thank him for using us in His service.

**Reflect:** have I or do I use age, or anything else for that matter, as an excuse not to serve God? Moses was old yet he was strong to the end and kept serving.

*Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go. (v.9)*

A child had to walk each evening past a dark, spooky house. Some adult friends tried to give him courage. One handed him a good-luck charm to ward off the ghosts. Another installed a light at a particularly dark corner near the house. A third took a more spiritual approach, saying, “It’s sinful to be afraid. Trust God and be brave!” It was good advice, but not much help. Then one friend said with compassion, “I know what it is to be afraid. I’ll walk with you past the house.” Instantly the child’s fears were gone.

In a sense that is what God does with Joshua here in Joshua 1. The chapter began with a reminder that Moses is dead. The great leader who led the people under God’s guidance out of Egypt through the Red Sea and across the wilderness to the edge of the Promised Land is dead. Joshua is the new leader. And he is petrified. He doesn’t know how he will fill Moses’ sandals. He doesn’t know how the people will respond to him. He doesn’t know what lies in front as they enter the Promised Land – well he does have a clue because some of the spies saw giants big and tall as the old children’s chorus tells us.

God comes to Joshua and says to him 3 times ‘*be strong and courageous*’. And why is he to be strong? Because God has promised to be with him. Joshua does not need any charms or fancy words – he has God’s presence with. Verse 5 ‘*I will never leave you nor forsake you.*’

I don’t know what situations you face just now, what challenges or opportunities – what I do know is this – God our heavenly Father is beside us all the way – he will not leave us nor forsake us either. Trust in Him.

**Pray:** thanking God for never leaving us nor forsaking us.

**Reflect:** what situation am I facing just now? Do I know God’s presence with me? Ask him to be by your side and trust him.

**Tuesday 5 July 2011**

**Joshua 2:1-24**

*When we heard of it, our hearts sank and everyone's courage failed because of you, for the LORD your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below. (v.11)*

Rahab was a harlot or a prostitute, or at least she had been one and still carried the reputation as being one. The key element in the story of Rahab is her choice to stand with Israel's God and not with her king and her people of Jericho. Like all who lived in Jericho, Rahab had heard the accounts the past forty years of all that Israel's God had done for them while they travelled in the wilderness. She had heard the reports of the crossing of the Red Sea; of the water which gushed from the rock; of the manna which appeared daily to feed this multitude; and of the victories over the two Amorite kings, Sihon and Og, who just happened to be the enemies of Jericho as well. These stories were all very familiar to everyone, but only Rahab acted upon those stories. Only Rahab came to have a seed-like faith in this God about whom she knew so very little. Yet, what little knowledge she did possess demanded that she give her allegiance to Him.

Rahab decided to choose God and so helped the two spies escape. Hers was a fledgling faith but we all start somewhere in learning about and trusting God. She let down a scarlet cord from her window for them to escape down and then tied that cord to the window so the Israelites knew when they took the city that she and her family were to be saved. Isn't it interesting that the cord was scarlet. Scarlet is symbolic for us in that it represents Christ's blood which was shed on the cross for us. Hebrews 9:22 reminds us that it is only through the shedding of blood that our sins are forgiven.

And Rahab's faith would indeed grow and she is blessed by God. Rahab is mentioned in the family tree in Matthew 1 '*Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab.*'

**Pray:** asking God to strengthen our faith.

**Reflect:** am I trusting in Jesus as I should? Am I choosing to live for him each and every day?

*Early in the morning Joshua and all the Israelites set out from Shittim and went to the Jordan, where they camped before crossing over. (v.1)*

During the American Revolution, it is reported that Colonel Rahl, commander of the British troops at Trenton, New Jersey, was playing cards when a courier brought an urgent message stating that General George Washington was crossing the Delaware River. Rahl put the letter in his pocket and didn't bother to read it until the game finished. Then, realising the seriousness of the situation, he hurriedly tried to rally his men to meet the coming attack. It was too late. His procrastination was his undoing. He and many of his men were killed, and the rest of the regiment was captured.

Joshua is not the kind of person to hang around. He knows what lies in front and he knows the people need to get going. He knew it would be tough and that it would be difficult but he also knew God would be with them. So there was no point waiting. So early in the morning he rallies the troops and moves them out.

When faced with tasks that are frightening or disagreeable, many people choose to put them off as long as possible. They find excuses to avoid unpleasant situations or make difficult decisions. But what a mistake that is. Often it only makes matters worse.

This is also the beginning for Joshua's leadership. God has promised him in chapter 1 that he will always be with him and now he says I will exalt you before the people and they will know that I am with you as I was with Moses. The official seal is about to be placed on his leadership and ministry. So Joshua does as Moses before him did – he hears from God and obeys.

**Pray:** asking God for the courage to deal with the task in front of us.

**Reflect:** what am I putting off doing? Place the matter in God's hands and get on with it quickly.

*These stones are to be a memorial to the people of Israel for ever. (v.7)*

I wonder what items from your past you still have around you to remind you of certain events and times. Morag has an old Bible that is getting a little tatty now but it is full of stickers reminding her of God's goodness and faithfulness and love. There are notes written in the front and back reminding her of the gospel message.

The Israelites of Joshua's day placed "stones of remembrance" by the Jordan River. They were to remind their children of the remarkable providence of God as He guided His chosen people into the land of promise. Just as God had stopped the waters of the Red Sea to allow the Israelites to escape Pharaoh and his army, now God stops the flow of the River Jordan to allow the people to cross into the Promised Land. This is harvest season we are told and the river flows hard and fast at this time hence it needing to slow and stop to allow the people over.

Two notes about this memorial: the memorial was solid and visible. It was made of stone, something real and solid. The faith of the Israelites was to be based upon solid facts. Not only was the crossing of the Jordan an historical fact, but the solidity of the rocks was a permanent testimony. Our faith is also to be built upon a solid foundation. There are real, solid, historical facts behind what we believe. The resurrection of Jesus from the dead is the very cornerstone of our faith. And the historical evidence of the resurrection is mind blowing. Once you've looked into the facts, there is no denying that Jesus rose from the dead.

The memorial was visible. The kids saw something that made them ask questions. (v.21) Do our kids see anything in our lives that make them want to know more about the Lord? Or are we so busy complaining about the things of God, especially the church, that all they see is the junk? Let's build our kids a memorial that is good and will point them to the Saviour.

**Pray:** thanking God for the symbol of the cross and the elements of bread and wine which are a reminder to us of God's grace and mercy.

**Reflect:** what memorial am I building for the next generation?



*“Neither”, he replied, “but as commander of the army of the LORD I have now come.” Then Joshua fell face down to the ground in reverence, and asked him, “What message does my Lord have for his servant?” (v.14)*

After demonstrating his brilliance as a military commander in the early years of the Civil War, Ulysses Grant was called back to Washington in March 1864 to be made a lieutenant general and put in command of all Union forces in the field. When Grant checked into his hotel in Washington, the clerk failed to recognise the general, who was rather shabbily dressed. The clerk was about to give his guest a back room on an upper floor of the hotel when someone saw Grant in the lobby and called out his name in greeting. The startled clerk quickly reassigned Grant to a better room.

Joshua does not immediately recognise the person before him either. He sees a man with a drawn sword and wonders whether he is friend or foe. The commander then announces from whence he has come. Most scholars agree this is a pre-incarnation appearance of Jesus in the Old Testament – a theophany. Joshua meets the pre-incarnate Christ as captain of the Lord’s armies. Our Lord always comes to us when we need Him and in the way we need him.

And notice how Joshua responds. He immediately falls face down – no-one in the Bible falls backwards before a holy and awesome God, only ever forwards and face down. Joshua knows who this is and is full of reverence. He then asks what message the Lord has for Joshua his servant. Joshua is a servant of God. He knows this and is comfortable with this.

I wonder how we react when we come into the presence of the Lord. Do we come in reverence and worship? Do we come expecting to receive from him? Do we ask him to reveal that to us? Joshua is a wonderful example here.

**Pray:** thanking God for his presence with us at all times.

**Reflect:** when I come into church or to reading God’s Word at home do I come expecting to receive from God?

*Then the LORD said to Joshua, “See, I have delivered Jericho into your hands, along with its king and its fighting men.” (v.2)*

In speaking of things beyond our understanding, the famous orator and statesman William Jennings Bryan declared, “I have observed the power of the watermelon seed. It has the power of drawing from the ground and through itself 200,000 times its weight. When you can tell me how it takes this material and out of it colours an outside surface beyond the imitation of art, and then forms inside of it a white rind and within that again a red heart, thickly inlaid with black seeds . . . when you can explain to me the mystery of a watermelon, you can ask me to explain the mystery of God.”

Joshua was faced with the mystery of God as well. God’s battle plan for the defeat of Jericho was unconventional, to say the least. Joshua would command seven priests, bearing seven trumpets of ram’s horns before the ark of the Lord, to march around the city walls in silence for seven days, once each day until the seventh. On the seventh day they would march seven times around the wall. Then amid the blast of the seven jubilee trumpets and the war cry of the people of God, the destruction of the stronghold at Jericho would take place.

Someone must have asked what this was all about. They people must have felt a bit strange following these instructions. And the guards within the city standing on the city walls must have looked down and thought how foolish. And yet we read that Joshua commanded the people to do exactly as the Lord had told him. He and they responded in faith to God. They may have been fearful of the walls of the city but they had a deeper fear of God and did as he said.

Sometimes God’s ways are not our ways. All he calls us to do is obey and follow.

**Pray:** asking God to help you follow Him more faithfully.

**Reflect:** what is God calling me to do today that I do not understand? What will you do? Commit to following His leading even when you do not understand.

*The LORD said to Joshua, “Stand up! What are you doing down on your face? Israel has sinned; they have violated my covenant, which I commanded them to keep.” (v.10-11)*

Victory was complete in Jericho but Achan took some of the spoils for himself. He sinned against God and disobeyed him. It was hidden from others though. No-one else knew except perhaps his close family. Sin always destroys – it destroys a person and it affects others around as well.

Joshua sends spies into Ai and they come back saying victory will be easy. Only a small number of men are sent into battle – 36 are killed and the rest flee back to camp. Joshua is distraught. He falls face down to the ground and prays. And as he prays he complains to God – why did you bring us here? Why were we not content to stay where we had been? What will you do for your great name? When things don't work out we often tend to blame God.

The problem here is not God's – it is the people's. There is sin in the camp. And sin always needs dealt with. Sin affects others and in this case caused a major problem in battle. Joshua as Israel's leader has a responsibility to deal with sin. God instructs him to deal with it.

Since this is a public sin it has to be dealt with publicly. Many of our sins are private and we should deal with them ourselves before a Holy and Righteous God. Achan is brought out and he confesses his sin and is punished for it. Sin always needs to be brought into the open and dealt with. 1 John 1:9 is a great reminder that God is faithful to forgive if we confess our sins. To confess means to bring into the open and to deal with.

Difficulties aren't always a result of sin. But when you're having hard times, it doesn't hurt to ask, “Is there something I've done wrong here?”

**Pray:** asking God to reveal any sin in your life and then confessing it before him asking for his forgiveness.

**Reflect:** is there sin in my life – my thoughts, my words, my deeds? Confess them before God.

**Monday 11 July 2011**

**Joshua 8:1-35**

*Then the LORD said to Joshua, “Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Take the whole army with you, and go up and attack Ai. For I have delivered into your hands the king of Ai, his people, his city and his land.”*  
(v.1)

Put yourself in the people’s and Joshua’s shoes. Here they are in the Promised Land. They had one great victory. But what they really remember is the last battle, the one where they were humiliated in defeat. What’s our usual tendency under those kinds of circumstances? We’re usually a little scared to try anything new for a while. Don’t be discouraged, get back in the saddle! In Joshua’s circumstance, their defeat was because they had a problem they had to deal with. But once you’ve solved the problem, get going again. One defeat doesn’t make you useless to the Lord.

And so they go and attack Ai and this time God is with them and they conquer. Interestingly and ironically this time they get to keep the plunder for themselves – Achan was punished for having kept some of the plunder the last time. This time God’s says they can have it.

After the success of battle Joshua builds the altar to God just as Moses had left instructions for them to do. The people come willingly and give their offerings as well. Joshua then carved onto stone the words of the law of Moses. And here’s the interesting bit – he then read all the words of the law to them – every one - beginning to end. And notice he read it to the whole family as well – everyone heard.

We are to read the whole of God’s Word too – not simply the New Testament or the bits we like; we are to read the entire book from cover to cover – just as we are doing now with the *Through the Bible* devotional.

**Pray:** remembering to always give thanks to God for his leading and guiding.

**Reflect:** what is it in my life that I have stepped back from and need to get ‘back in the saddle’ and do?

*The men of Israel sampled their provisions but did not enquire of the LORD. (v.14)*

Decisions, decisions, decisions. We make them every day in life – sometimes hundreds of them. We decide what to wear when we get up in the morning. We decide what to eat and when to eat it. We decide what to watch on TV or listen to on the radio. We make lots of less earth-shattering decisions each and every day. Sometimes we face major decisions though that affect our life – who to marry, what job to take, where we will live. These decisions may be big or they may be small but the important thing is that we make God honouring decisions.

Joshua is faced with a major decision here in chapter 9. He has previously been told by the Lord that he was not to make treaties with any of the neighbouring people in the Promised Land. The people of Gibeon came and claimed to be from a land far off. Joshua had to decide whether to accept their plea for peace or whether to reject it. He looked on their mouldy, stale food and worn out clothing as did his advisors. But look what he did not do – verse 14 he did not enquire of the Lord. He didn't stop and pray. He didn't stop and ask for God's help and guidance.

How often we are like Joshua and the people here – we rush in and think we can handle it ourselves. Joshua was deceived and so often we can be in life too. The pushy salesman at the door, the luring advert on the TV, the promise of a better job and life. It is often best to pause and wait and weigh it all up. The lesson for us here is to pray to God and ask for his wisdom and guiding – and to have the patience to wait for an answer. We would do well to test everything against His Word and see what we learn there. And it is always wise to seek counsel from godly people we know and trust.

**Pray:** asking God to guide you in life.

**Reflect:** what decision(s) do I face currently? Have I prayed and asked God?

*The sun stopped in the middle of the sky and delayed going down about a full day. (v.13)*

An anonymous wit reminds us that a dentist's mistake is pulled out, a lawyer's mistake is imprisoned, a teacher's mistake is failed, a printer's mistake is corrected, a pharmacist's mistake is buried, a postman's mistake is forwarded and an electrician's mistake could be shocking. The novelist Joseph Conrad wrote "it's only those who do nothing that make no mistakes."

Joshua's mistake had been doing nothing. He had listened to the Gibeonites and not taken time to pray to God. And now it would come back to bite. Our mistakes are always uncovered. Joshua made an agreement with an enemy and had promised them a peace treaty. To be fair when he realised his mistake he did put them to work for the people of Israel.

When you make agreements with the enemy, expect to end up paying a price and having to defend them in order to protect yourself. The other kings in the area come together and prepare to attack Gibeon. Gibeon sends word to Joshua for help. And Joshua, with the Lord's help, comes to the rescue. The Lord tells Joshua once again not to be afraid for he is with them and will give the enemy into his hand. And that's what happens.

But not before an amazing miracle the like of which has never been seen again. Joshua dares to pray for the impossible. He asks God to stop the sun from setting so it stays shining and they can destroy the enemy in one day. It was a long day but they did succeed. And all because God heard the cry of Joshua and answered. People have tried to dispute this event but quite simply it is a miracle of God. Our God is the creator and sustainer of the earth. He is all powerful. He is the God of the impossible. Never forget that.

**Pray:** thanking God for being the God of the impossible.

**Reflect:** what mistake have you made recently? Turn it over to God seeking his forgiveness if necessary and asking him to help you correct it.

*Then the land had rest from war. (v.23)*

Robert Frost is best remembered for his poem “The Road Less Travelled,” and he pinpoints the thrust of Joshua’s campaign in Chapter 11 with the words, “The best way out is always through.” For Joshua, there was no avoiding the grim realities of war if he was to obey God. City after city, king after king, every living thing had to be destroyed. We don’t get strategic details like the ones disclosed about the battles of Jericho and Ai, just a montage of utter domination of the armies inhabiting the land God promised to Israel. Israel ploughed through the opposition, and it was all by God’s command. That phrase, “the Lord commanded,” appears repeatedly throughout this passage, a reminder that God ruled this people, not Joshua or Moses.

Reliance on God was of ultimate importance, which is likely why God instructs Joshua to hamstring the horses and burn the chariots. Moses had prophetically commanded Israel that, once they pleaded for a human king in the Promised Land, the king must not multiply horses (Deut. 17:16). Horses and chariots were among the most powerful assets in battle, and Israel easily could have put their faith in the strength of a cavalry. By destroying the chariots and rendering the horses unfit for use in battle, Joshua depended on God for victory.

And Joshua took the whole land. He followed the Lord’s instructions and obeyed his commands. And the Lord gave them the land as an inheritance. Finally, verse 23 records that the land had rest from war. What a great thought - rest from battle. The Lord knows how weary the battle can become so He planned for a time of rest for Israel. The land was not totally conquered yet, but the big battles were over.

The challenge for us is to fully rely on God and obey him even when we do not fully understand. And also to enjoy the times of rest he gives.

**Pray:** asking God for the courage to fully obey him.

**Reflect:** what is the Lord asking me to do just now that I do not fully understand? Ask for the courage to follow and obey.

*These are the kings of the land that Joshua and the Israelites conquered on the west side of the Jordan. (v.7)*

Chapter 12 lists the defeated kings. It begins with the 2 Moses defeated with the Lord's help and then goes on to list all those conquered under Joshua's leadership – 31 in all we read in verse 24. This chapter is a record of God's faithfulness to His promises made to Israel and of Israel's obedience to the will of God. One by one the great kings and cities of Canaan fell before God and Israel. It was a long process, but in God's time the land was conquered.

So it is with our problems. We may not resolve all of them immediately. In fact, haven't you found as I have, that most of our problems take time to resolve. I find that my greatest danger is in losing heart in the process. You see, I am one of those people whose patience is very thin. I want instant resolutions.

The resolution of everyday problems is very similar to Israel's conquering of the Promised Land. Each day that Israel followed carefully God's plan, they came closer to conquering that city or that king. And, after many years of carefully following God's plans, the list of thirty-three kings and cities was completed. The king of Jericho - one; the king of Ai - one; the king of Jerusalem - one, etc.

If I am going to experience victories over my problems, I, too, must carefully follow those instructions which have been given to me within God's Word. It is vital that we keep reading and learning from God's Word and that we keep following what it says and depending on God for his help and guidance through life. Soon I can then add the name of that particular problem to the list of those which God has given victory over: the king of pride - one; the king of sibling rivalry - one; the king of hatred - one; the king of impatience - one. And the list can go on and on.

**Pray:** asking God to help you with one particular problem you face at the moment.

**Reflect:** what problems has God helped me overcome recently? Thank him for his faithfulness and help.



*When Joshua was old and well advanced in years, the LORD said to him, “You are very old, and there are still very large areas of land to be taken over.” (v.1)*

Joshua had successfully completed the first half of his divine commission: he had conquered the enemy and was in control of the land and the cities. Now he had to fulfil the second part and divide the land so that each tribe could claim its inheritance and enjoy what God had given them. We see this being done over the next few chapters. Let me bring out 3 key points from this chapter though that we might otherwise miss.

Firstly there remained much land still to be possessed. There is still much in our Christian lives for us to possess and understand. I wonder how many pages of our bibles are still like new, even sticking together still. This happens because we read the familiar and skip over the bits that look hard. Let's resolve to read the entire bible.

Secondly we are reminded that the Levites received no inheritance in the land. They were to receive the offerings and ultimately their inheritance is God. I wonder how they felt looking at the other tribes around them receiving land. It is often difficult for us to look at others and see all that they have and how little we have. And yet we have the best gift there is in the world – we have faith in Jesus. Let's commit to concentrating on knowing him fully and not desiring all that others have.

And thirdly we are reminded of the tribes who asked for land east of the Jordan. It wasn't even in the Promised Land. Yet, these people were willing to settle for God's second best because it was a place of convenience and ease. The battles had been won there already. Yet, as one studies the history of these tribes, they suffered one defeat after another because they were living outside the boundaries of God's inheritance. How often do we settle for God's second best because it seems easy? Let's commit to wanting his best and striving for it with his help.

**Pray:** asking God for courage to follow him completely.

**Reflect:** on the area above which challenged you the most. Commit it to God.

*He followed the LORD, the God of Israel, wholeheartedly. (v.14)*

Was Pete Sampras too old to win a major tennis tournament? Should he retire and leave the field to younger stars? Critics said he was finished. After two years and 33 tournaments without a title, it certainly looked that way...to everyone but Sampras. And he proved his point at the 2002 U.S. Open, beating rival Andre Agassi in four sets to win his fourteenth career Grand Slam championship, a record. Taking the tournament for the fifth time, he then became the oldest man to win in more than thirty years. Of course, we're talking about a man who was 31 years old at the time. If he can do it again at age 85, then he might qualify to be in Caleb's league!

Caleb lived a life characterised by faith and wisdom. In the original spy mission, he brought a report according to his convictions, not according to the obstacles he saw. He trusted the promises of God, followed Him wholeheartedly, and was publicly commended for doing so.

The conversation between Joshua and Caleb must have been a sight to behold. Joshua was probably about one hundred years old. No one else in the entire country would have been within twenty years of those two venerable leaders. And Caleb brings us back in time to when he and Joshua were the lone voices of courage among the spies. That courage hadn't dwindled in either of them, and it's so refreshing to hear confident words of faith from men who had walked with God for decades.

Notice that Caleb doesn't want his portion to be any of the lands conquered thus far. He specifically requests an inheritance in the land that is protected by fortified cities. He wasn't content just to have faith in God, he wanted to put his faith in action. And he does just that.

Are you still trusting God regardless of your age? Are you ready to keep serving him and putting your faith into action?

**Pray:** asking God to increase your faith.

**Reflect:** what am I facing at the moment which requires me to put my faith into action? Will I do it?

**Monday 18 July 2011**

**Joshua 15:1-63**

*From Hebron Caleb drove out the three Anakites— Sheshai, Ahiman and Talmai— descendants of Anak. (v.14)*

Rosa Parks didn't set out to change a nation or start a revolution. When she courageously refused to move to the back of the bus fifty years ago, her reasoning was simple. As she put it, "All I was doing was trying to get home from work." It was an eventful trip home that helped bring rest, not just to Rosa Parks, but to entire generations of Americans as well.

The trek home for the tribe of Judah was not without incident either, although today's reading simply describes the landscape to which they arrived. Chapter 15 is all about the land allotted to the tribe of Judah. In the midst of all of this there are stories though – stories of God at work. God's is always faithful and true to his people.

Verse 14 is a great example of this. Caleb is given Hebron as his inheritance. He wanted it. Remember yesterday that he did not simply have faith in God but he wanted to put that faith into action. And so verse 14 here tells us that he drove out the kings on Anak and took the land just as God had promised. God was with him. Now driving out three kings maybe doesn't sound that big a deal...but we need to remember these guys are big – they are giants. Look back to Numbers 13:33 – '*we seemed like grasshoppers*'.

The sons of Anak were giants and Caleb is 85 years old. Yet he battles and wins. Giants are only scary if you have a small God. Our God is not small. He is the creator and sustainer of the world. He is omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient. He is all powerful. You can be an old, old man like Caleb, or you can be a young kid like David - all it takes to be a giant killer is to have a God that's bigger than the giants. Rosa Parks faced her giants too and overcame. We can too.

**Pray:** thanking God for who He is.

**Reflect:** what 'giant' am I facing just now? Take courage and rely on God.

*Though the Canaanites have iron chariots and though they are strong, you can drive them out. (v.18)*

We have read of Judah getting their allotment of the land now comes the turn of Ephraim. Ever wondered why these two are the first mentioned? They were the tribes of the two faithful spies, Joshua and Caleb. The time has come to give out the land, and the two guys in the front of the line are Caleb and Joshua. They know what's there. They want it. How hungry are you for a place in the line for God's promises?

Next comes Manasseh and there are some issues here. After receiving their allotment, the tribal leaders go to Joshua and complain that they needed more land (see verse 14). Joshua agreed with them, but he did not go back and redistribute the lands already conquered. Instead, he told them to go into the surrounding forested hillsides and conquer the cities there (see verse 15).

But the families of Manasseh replied that it would be too much work as the cities were well fortified. The task was too hard. Their attitude was "We can't do it!" And so, they did not proceed into the hill country even after Joshua reassured them that God would enable them to drive out the enemy.

"I can't do it. We can't do it. It is too hard. We have not done it before." How many times do we respond to ministry opportunities with those words, the very same words which the leaders of Manasseh used with Joshua? Why are we always looking for the easy road? Why do we always want everything to be quick and simple? If anything of significance is to be accomplished for God, then it will take lots of work.

But, as Joshua encouraged the families of Manasseh, so God encourages us. With His help and His promises, let us press forward to seize each opportunity for Him.

**Pray:** asking God for the strength to press on.

**Reflect:** what situation is before me in which I am saying 'I can't do it'? Turn it over to God and ask for his help.

*So Joshua said to the Israelites: “How long will you wait before you begin to take possession of the land that the LORD, the God of your fathers, has given you?” (v.3)*

Some people refuse to wait. On June 22, 1997, Thomas and Corilee McClurkin peacefully celebrated their golden anniversary. But it wasn't that way 50 years ago. The month of June in 1947 was exceptionally soggy in Nebraska. The Loup River flooded its banks and stranded the bride-to-be in her hometown of Poole. Undaunted, Thomas set out in knee-deep water in an old Chevy. Upon reaching a flimsy railroad bridge that had been nearly washed away, he abandoned his car, crawled across the bridge and walked to Ravenna. Once there he persuaded the owner of a two-seat airplane to fly him to Poole to pick up his bride. The marriage took place only 13 hours late.

This kind of eagerness, however, seemed to be lacking among the Israelites. Seven of the tribes had yet to make any headway in possessing their inheritance. Even though God promised that He would give them the land, they failed to move forward aggressively. Joshua's accusation implies that the problem was not with availability but with motivation. How long, he wondered, were they going to wait?

The same question could be asked of many Christians. How long will it be before we avail ourselves of the vast spiritual riches God has made possible? He has given us the privilege of life-changing prayer. He has made it possible for us to study His Word in any number of translations. We are new creatures in Christ, with all the potential that can be found in such a position. When will we possess these riches?

And what of the ministry opportunities before us – why are we waiting? What is our excuse? Joshua encouraged the leaders to press on and take that which God had prepared for them. Let's do the same.

**Pray:** thanking God for the riches he has given us in Christ.

**Reflect:** what opportunity is before me which I am waiting to take? Stop waiting and press on with God's help.

*When they had finished dividing the land into its allotted portions, the Israelites gave Joshua son of Nun an inheritance among them, as the LORD had commanded. (v.48)*

In the last chapter we saw that a new system for allocating the land had come in to play. After each of the seven tribes appointed three men, all twenty one men went through the remaining territories and listed the cities and landmarks, describing each part of the land. They brought this information back to Joshua who then assigned the various portions to the remaining seven tribes by casting lots before the Lord. We are told the allotments made and the division of the land per tribe.

The last few verses remind me of the type of leader Joshua was. He was selfless in every way. Caleb the giant killer was allotted his portion in the land first. The last person to receive any land was Joshua. These were the two original spies who came back and said they could indeed take the land God was giving them. Joshua has ensured every tribe has their share in the land and as it comes to a close someone recognises that Joshua has nowhere yet and so suggests that Joshua ought to have his own special portion.

Joshua got the portion that he asked for. But it actually wasn't the choicest part of Canaan. It was actually located up in the mountains, in a rugged, infertile area. But in his selflessness, that's what Joshua asks for. And God grants him his request.

I wonder how we are when it comes to being a leader or a team player. Is it always about getting what I want regardless of the cost? Is it about helping others and ensuring they have what they need? Is it about putting others before myself? Joshua's example is one of selflessness.

**Pray:** asking God to help us follow Christ's example set out in Philippians 2:1-11.

**Reflect:** do I act in a selfless way or am I selfish in my thoughts and actions?

*Then the LORD said to Joshua: “Tell the Israelites to designate the cities of refuge, as I instructed you through Moses”. (v.1-2)*

The cities of refuge, three located on the east side of the Jordan River and three on the west side, were designated havens or safe places for those who had taken another person’s life accidentally. They would always carry within themselves the guilt pangs associated with the accident. There would be those flashback episodes, those thoughts of “if I could do it over again.” But within the walls of those cities they would not have to live in fear of the revenge from the family members of the deceased.

Because God looks upon the heart, He knows the motivations for our every action. And because He knows those motivations He can provide a shelter of protection when we are falsely accused. Many times I return to that powerful truth recorded for us in Proverbs 18:10, *‘The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous (that is you and me) run into it and are safe’*.

But these cities of refuge also remind me of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the only place where I can go to find forgiveness and to be set free from my sin. He is my great High Priest. He is my refuge. Remember these words of encouragement from the psalmist: *‘God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.’* (Psalm 46:1). *‘I will say of the Lord, “He is my refuge and my fortress, My God, in whom I trust”’* (Psalm 91:2). One of my favourite texts describing our safety in God is Deuteronomy 33:27 which reads, *‘The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.’*

The cities of refuge picture a person who has killed someone. “Where shall I go? How shall I escape?” are the cries from that person’s lips. But is this not the picture of a person when he sees himself as a sinner. Remember Isaiah’s words when he saw the living God, *‘Woe is me, for I am ruined!’* (Isaiah 6:5). Our hope and our refuge is in Jesus. Turn to him.

**Pray:** thanking God for being our refuge and strength.

**Reflect:** confess your sin before God and rest in his forgiveness.

*Not one of all the LORD's good promises to the house of Israel failed; every one was fulfilled. (v.45)*

The last portion of Joshua 21 is an amazing statement, given all that Israel was up against. They were a people prone to disobedience. Physically, they were dwarfed by the Canaanites. But nothing stood in the way of God's promise to Israel during the reign of Joshua; neither physical enemies nor spiritual failures could prevent God from showing His love.

Think for a moment about how improbable it was for Israel to enter Canaan. Consider everything that happened in between God's covenant with Abraham and today's reading. Israel had started as a nation of one, and that one wasn't even born until after Abraham and Sarah were well beyond childbearing years. But that one became a multitude - through sacrifices and substitutions; stolen birthrights and switched brides; a coat of many colours and the plotting of many brothers; imprisonment and empowerment; captivity and deliverance; plagues and a Passover; grumbling and wandering; and finally, strength and courage - the nation of Israel had their land, and they had their rest.

Everything we've learned of Israel to this point in their history shows that they were a nation prone to wander, contentious and disobedient. There was nothing in their character as a people that set them apart as decidedly godly or sanctified - nothing, that is, except for a constant thread of faith. There was always someone in Israel who showed faith in God.

When we read that not one of the Lord's promises failed, we know who deserves the glory. God is faithful above anything Israel deserved. He held on to Israel by a lifeline of faith, and no matter what happened after Israel claimed their land, they had ample evidence that God reigns supreme. Our God is still faithful to his children. He loves us and cares for us and he keeps his promises. He does not fail – even when we fail him. Let's trust him more and rely fully on him.

**Pray:** thanking God for his faithfulness.

**Reflect:** list the many ways you have experienced God's faithfulness in your life. Praise him for each one.



*Now that the LORD your God has given your brothers rest as he promised, return to your homes in the land that Moses the servant of the LORD gave you on the other side of the Jordan. (v.4)*

William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army, received a letter from his wife while he was on a long trip. She wrote in part, “Your Tuesday’s notes arrived safe, and I was rejoiced to hear of the continued prosperity of the work, though sorry you were so worn out. I fear the effect of all this excitement and exertion upon your health, and though I would not hinder your usefulness, I would caution you against an injudicious prodigality of your strength. Remember a long life of steady, consistent, holy labour will produce twice as much fruit as one shortened and destroyed by spasmodic and extravagant exertions; be careful and sparing of your strength when and where exertion is unnecessary.”

God also is aware of this truth. After five years of battles, Joshua declared, “God has given rest.” It was not that the land had been completely conquered, but it was time for the people to rest anyway.

Some Christians are quick to remind us that “Satan never takes a vacation.” That may be true, but Satan is not the example we want to follow. One scholar who studied the Gospels claims that during the three years of Jesus’ ministry, ten periods of resting are mentioned. If Jesus felt it necessary to punctuate His ministry with seasons of rest, how much more so should we.

Being alone and resting for a while is not selfish; it’s Christ-like. Taking a vacation is not fleshly; it’s spiritual. God’s kingdom is not advanced by those who work themselves into a coronary or nervous breakdown. God gives rest to the weary, so don’t be too proud to take it. Come apart for rest or you may come apart forever.

**Pray:** thanking God for times of rest.

**Reflect:** do I take ample periods of rest or do I push myself on? Commit to resting in God.

*Now I am about to go the way of all the earth. You know with all your heart and soul that not one of all the good promises the LORD your God gave you has failed. Every promise has been fulfilled; not one has failed. (v.14)*

Sometimes we wonder why God allows certain things to happen to us. “Why did God allow my child to die?” “Why was I stricken with cancer?” “Why do I have to face such a struggle with finances?” There’s no one answer that fits every situation. But sometimes God allows us to undergo certain experiences so we can pass along the things we learn to those following us.

As he assumed the leadership of Israel, Joshua faced times of great fear and uncertainty. In the midst of those difficulties, God encouraged him with the exhortation, ‘*be strong and very courageous*’ (Joshua 1:7). Furthermore, the Lord commanded him, ‘*Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth...that you may be careful to everything written in it.*’ (Joshua 1:8). Joshua had learned a great deal from the hardships he suffered and, as he approached the latter years of his life, he shared this wisdom with the ones who would be leaders after he was gone. He encouraged the people to keep obeying the book of the law and he reminded them that God’s promises never fail.

As God’s people, we have a responsibility to pass on to the younger generation those truths God has taught us. Some call this “mentoring.” The apostle Paul exhorted both Timothy and Titus to encourage the older generation to be teachers and encouragers of those who are younger (2 Timothy 2:2; Titus 2:3; 2:4; 2:5).

Don’t waste the wisdom God has shared with you. Sometimes younger people don’t seem to want to listen, so be creative in your mentoring. Learn to pass on truth in the form of stories or even write them in a notebook. Don’t let the truths God has taught you go to waste.

**Pray:** thanking God for those who have mentored and encouraged you in your Christian life.

**Reflect:** who could I mentor? What truths should I pass on?

*As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord. (v.15)*

Sometime ago many newspapers carried a story about a woman who was divorcing her husband after discovering he had two other wives and several children by each of them. His explanation? He couldn't bear the thought of hurting any of them, so he had married all three. He was a travelling salesman, so he was able to carry out the farce for several years. Rather than facing a hard choice, he took the easy way out.

Once established in the Promised Land, the Israelites also were confronted with a multitude of choices. And the choices weren't necessarily easy. They could worship the gods of Egypt. These were gods that their parents had known from their long years of servitude. Familiarity made that tempting. On the other hand, the gods of the Amorites, the nation they had conquered, offered opportunities to indulge the flesh, which many likely found attractive. Some may have stood betwixt and between, but Joshua was not afraid to make the hard decision. Boldly he declared, '*As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.*'

Choosing to serve the Lord is not always an easy decision. Sometimes it means going against the religious beliefs of your family. Other times peer pressure and the desire to "fit in" make us hesitant to declare openly our commitment to the Lord. Many people find it easiest to behave like a chameleon, changing colours to fit whatever group they happen to be with. But that only temporarily avoids making the hard decision.

Today, decide to take a stand. Whom will you serve? Will it be yourself? Will it be the gods of pleasure or wealth or ease? Or will you choose the God who loves you? Making a decision for Christ may be hard, but it's a choice you will never regret.

**Pray:** committing your life to serve Christ.

**Reflect:** who am I serving? Have I chosen Christ or am I flitting between several options? Choose only Jesus today.

*When Israel became strong, they pressed the Canaanites into forced labour but never drove them out completely. (v.28)*

Joshua is dead and the people are wondering what comes next. The first thing they do after the death of their leader is to turn to God and ask who will go up for them – who will lead them into battle. At this stage they are dependent on God. They trust him and are following him. The Lord tells them Judah is the one and into that tribe he will deliver the land of their enemies. And all goes well initially. They obey God and follow his leading and all is well.

But things soon go wrong. The people of Israel do not follow the complete plan – they stop short. Instead of destroying the Canaanites or driving them out as God had commanded, the Israelites in many areas allowed them to live in their midst. It was not a complete victory for God's people. Time after time we are told how they failed to go all the way to accomplish God's purpose. Passage after passage tells us the same story.

This is the story of the seven tribes of Israel that did not completely dispossess the inhabitants and thus possess the land for themselves. God said to drive out these Canaanites, for their cup of sin was full. Israel was to get rid of them and then to dwell where they had dwelt.

There are things that God has told us to get rid of in our lives. And there is no need for us to protest that we cannot, because Christ died and rose again to make it possible for us to do so. Furthermore, we have the Holy Spirit indwelling us so that Christ now indwells us through the Holy Spirit to live out His life in us. Thus day by day we can, by faith, overcome in the spiritual warfare and be victors through Christ.

The question is – will you carry through and follow God's complete plan or will you let compromise slip in and take over.

**Pray:** asking for the strength and courage to follow Christ completely.

**Reflect:** are there things in my life that I need to get rid of? What is stopping me?

*Unlike their fathers, they quickly turned from the way in which their fathers had walked, the way of obedience to the LORD's commands. (v.17)*

We concluded yesterday by thinking on sinful things in our life that we hold on to. The children on Israel have not followed the Lord's command fully – they have allowed the peoples of the land to remain in the land with them. God told them to drive them out in order that they would remain pure and holy and would not be tempted to become like them and do what they do in rebellion against God. And so an angel of the Lord comes and challenges them and ends up by warning them in verse 3 that these people *'will be thorns in your sides and their gods will be a snare to you.'* And thus it would be for time to come.

The remainder of the chapter summarises the theme of the book. Judges covers about 400 years of Israel's history, a time spanning from Joshua to Samuel. There is an unfortunate cycle which repeats seven times in the book: the people are devoted to God; the people delve into sin; the people are defeated by their enemies; the people deplore their situation and repent; the people are delivered by judges. This pattern repeats itself over and over again. It is a very real representation of the proverb which says, Proverbs 14:34 *'Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people.'*

This picture of the nation of Israel is actually similar to the picture of all sinners. For you see we sin, we get lost in our sin and feel guilty for it, for we repent and turn to God accepting the forgiveness he offers, and then we go right back out and sin again. Think about that in real terms in your own life. What is that habitual sin that has a hold over you? Do you not repeat this very cycle? Seek to turn from it and turn to the one who can transform our lives and remove our sin as far as the East is from the West.

**Pray:** confessing your habitual sin to God.

**Reflect:** what is the habitual sin in my life? Confess it to God and seek to sin no more. Consider sharing it with a trusted friend and having them pray with you and encourage you to sin no more.

**Friday 29 July 2011**

**Judges 3:1-31**

*The Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD; They forgot the LORD their God and served the Baals and Asherahs. (v.7)*

The cycle of rebellion begins in chapter 3 and the judge to save the people is Othniel and then we read of Ehud. Verse 7 tells us the people ‘*forgot the LORD their God and served the Baals and Asherahs.*’ How easy it was for them to forget God. They saw the worship of the nations and people around them and joined in. We think to ourselves how silly that is and yet we do it ourselves.

If you were to spend 26 hours a week staring at the same object, what would you call that? If you were so mesmerised by what you saw that you couldn’t tear yourself away from it, what would it become to you? If you let it change the way you think and act, would it be too powerful? If you let this object show and tell you things that you knew were wrong and that God didn’t want you to be involved with, would it be replacing Him? Wouldn’t that be called an idol?

The average family spends 26 hours a week watching television. It certainly isn’t the only idol we have in our society, but it’s one of the most powerful. Other things that might be displacing our devotion to God are sports, money, work, hobbies, or even other people. Perhaps music or movies or the Facebook has captured our devotion.

Idols come in various forms, and they can control our lives. When they do, we need to look again at God’s anger with the Israelites to see what He thinks of idols. They served Baals and Asherahs and ‘*the anger of the Lord burned against*’ them (v.8).

Keep your eyes fixed on Jesus, the author and perfecter of your faith.

**Pray:** focusing your attention on God and his character – praise him for being the one true God.

**Reflect:** what takes up my life? What are my idols? Deal with them in light of this passage today.

*Barak said to her, "If you go with me, I will go; but if you don't go with me, I won't go." (v.8)*

This was a time in Israel's history where no man seemed brave enough or available enough to stand up and judge Israel. But God is not limited to waiting for brave men in order to do His work. He used women, children, and even animals to accomplish His plans. In this case, He used Deborah, who was no wimp. The name Deborah means "bee." I imagine that she must have had a temper and a sting!

She is a prophetess - the second mentioned in the Bible. The first prophetess mentioned was Moses and Aaron's sister Miriam, and there are at least seven more listed in Scripture. A prophetess is a prophet who is a woman. Prophets were people that heard from God directly and told the people. Deborah was also a judge. So Deborah needed to have wisdom and a knowledge of the Word of God to judge.

Deborah got a word from God that He was going to give deliverance to Israel from King Jabin. So she called Barak and told him that God was calling him to battle and to victory. The Lord had promised that Commander Sisera would be defeated. Barak shows the big yellow streak running down his back by saying, "I'm not going unless you go with me." Now I'm sure that he wasn't thinking that Deborah's strength would be needed, but her relationship with God.

He was revealing the same tendency many today have – I'll trust in someone else's relationship with God. Too often, husbands trust their wife's relationship with God will carry him through. Kids trust that their parents' relationship with God will carry them through. People in the church trust that the pastor's relationship with God will carry them through. Friends we have to come and trust in God ourselves. No-one else can do it for us. Yes they can lead the way and point us in the right direction but there comes a point we need to trust in God ourselves.

**Pray:** thanking God for faithful people who pointed us to him.

**Reflect:** do I trust God myself or am I relying on someone else's relationship with God?

*When the princes in Israel take the lead, when the people willingly offer themselves— praise the LORD! (v.2)*

Deborah and Barak are quick to praise the Lord for their victory against the Canaanite king. They write a song of praise detailing the victory for years to come. They want their successors to be able to look back and recall God's goodness and faithfulness.

I find it interesting what they record in verse 2 '*When the princes in Israel take the lead, when the people willingly offer themselves— praise the LORD!*' This is the key to these chapters I think and their success in battle. Israel praises God because the leaders actually lead, after years of little or no leadership at all. And because the leaders led, the people (at least some of them) followed. Many volunteered to join their Israelite brethren in going to war against the Canaanites. Leaders have been called, appointed and equipped to lead. When godly leaders lead, others will follow.

And just a quick word on Reuben who is mentioned in verse 15-16. There was '*much searching of heart*' said Deborah; but, she noted with dismay, they were content to sit '*among the campfires*'. They had not turned their plans into action.

The tribe of Reuben was like the boy who sat at his mother's desk, carefully drawing a picture. Soon he laid down his pen and proudly showed his mother his sketch of the family dog. She commented on the fine likeness, then noticed that something was missing. "Where is Rover's tail?" she asked. "It's still in the bottle," the boy explained.

Many important things in the Christian life are left undone because we don't put our plans into action. We decide to devote more time to the reading and studying of the Word of God, then get sidetracked by other activities. We resolve to be more faithful in praying for others. And for a while we do just that. Then, gradually, other things take priority.

**Pray:** thanking God for the godly leaders in your church.

**Reflect:** what is left undone in my life? What takes priority?