



Perhaps the most famous Japanese story is of Hachiko the dog (1923-39). Hachiko was the beloved pet of Hidesaburo Ueno who taught at Tokyo University. Hachiko lived with the Ueno family in Shibuya. Each day he would accompany his owner to the train station in the morning, go home during the day, and then return to the train station late afternoon to greet his master. One day the professor died of a brain hemorrhage at work.

For the next 9 years, 9 months, and 15 days Hachiko went to Shibuya station every afternoon to greet his master. Thousands of Japanese people would see Hachiko there and were impressed with his loyalty.



After Hachiko died, Japanese people honored him for his faithfulness with a statue. Today, over 3 million people go through the Shibuya station each day, and many of them rub Hachiko's nose or leg.

There is a difference between faith and faithfulness.

- Faith usually means Belief— 'This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe (Ro 3:22 NIV).'
 - Faith can be a gift that can move mountains Gift— 'I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, "move from here to there," and it will move (Mt 17:20 NIV).'
 - Faithfulness is like Hachiko's loyalty Faithfulness - 'I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me (Phil 3:12 NIV).'
- Faithfulness is saying 'I am never letting go of Jesus.'

I have known some people who had great faith – helped me move mountains - but who did not finish the race because they lacked faithfulness. Today we will see that faithfulness is most difficult when it is most necessary.

This fall, we are looking at some Biblical characters. We can learn a lot from the stories of our spiritual ancestor's success and failures. We have looked at ...

- Jabez who prayed a bold prayer and was blessed.
- Abigail was married to a fool, but God used her wisdom.
- Naaman, a foreigner who found God by losing his pride.

The takeaway from Caleb's story today is faithfulness bears fruit.

Caleb - Faithful



Caleb's life overlaps with the Exodus and wilderness wanderings of Israel. After Israel made to the edge of the Promised Land, God said to Moses, 'Send out men to explore the land of Canaan, the land I am giving to the Israelites. Send one leader from each of the twelve ancestral tribes (Nu 13:2 NLT).'

We are introduced to Caleb with these simple words: 'From the tribe of Judah, Caleb son of Jephunneh (Nu 13:6 NIV).' Don't think Caleb was a nobody. He was chosen out of the 76,500 men over 20 years old.¹

- He is not the tribal leader; he represents the next generation of leadership.²
- This task called for younger men who could blend in and move easily.

Caleb in Hebrew means dog. Yes, it has positive and negative nuances:

- For example, 'what is your servant, who is but a dog (2Ki 8:13).'
- But for Caleb's parents, it pointed to the loyalty and faithfulness of dogs like Hachiko.³

Moses gives the 12 spies a list of things to look for (Nu 13:18-20) and they examined Caanan for 40 days.

They bring back a mixed report.

1. Giants & Grasshoppers, Nu 13.

On the one hand, the land is great! 'We entered the land you sent us to explore, and it is indeed a bountiful country—a land flowing with milk and honey (Nu 13:27 NLT).'

On the other hand, there are giants. 'But the people living there are powerful, and their towns are large and fortified. We even saw giants there, the descendants of Anak (Nu 13:28 NLT)!'

Giants?! Wow. Fear spreads like a gasoline fire. The people started to talk immediately. 'But Caleb tried to quiet the people as they stood before Moses. "Let's go at once to take the land," he said. "We can certainly conquer it (Nu 13:30 NLT)!"'

¹ Nu 26:22.

² 'These men will lead the new generation into the land, beginning with the new census in ch. 26', Timothy R. Ashley, *NICOT Numbers* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1993), p. 242.

³ Mark J. Fretz and Raphael I. Panitz, in David Noel Freedman, ed., *The Anchor Bible Dictionary, Vol. 1 A-C* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1992), p. 808.

Negative voices always seem to be louder than positive voices.

- Bad news travels faster than good news, 'if it bleeds, it leads.'
- "'We can't go up against them! They are stronger than we are!"³² So they spread this bad report about the land among the Israelites: "The land we traveled through and explored will devour anyone who goes to live there. All the people we saw were huge.³³ We even saw giants there, the descendants of Anak. Next to them we felt like grasshoppers, and that's what they thought, too (Nu 13:31-33 NLT)!"

At times we face similar situations that seem like giants in the land. We do not know how we can survive the financial crisis, or health concerns, or marriage breakdown, or rebellious children.

- Were the giants real? Yes, and the Israelites were terrified of them.⁴
- Are your circumstances real? Yes, but don't be frightened.

Let's build a list of life applications we can pick up from Caleb. The first thing to finishing faithful, is to ignore negative voices.

Finishing Faithful Requires ...

- Ignore negative voices. Some people are quick to criticize, judge, and condemn. They only see the dark and negative. They are often sarcastic and seem to represent the majority. Ignore them. Ignore the negative self-talk as well. Don't let doubt creep in and steal your joy.

The night rebellion breaks out.

2. Rebellion & Faithfulness, Nu 14.

The people rebelled against Moses and wanted to choose another leader to lead them back to Egypt.

- This is a pivotal moment in Israel's history.⁵
- Can you imagine thinking 'hey, I want to be a slave again. If we move forward, we could die. It's better to go back.'
- The promises of God were just waiting for faith as small as a mustard seed. Don't be too hard on them ...

⁴ Some scholars doubt actual giants. For example, Israel 'would be familiar with the story of the Nephilim. Connecting the men of great stature with the Nephilim is an exaggeration for rhetorical effect', Ashley, *NICOT Numbers*, p. 243.

⁵ It is connected to fear, but 'it is rebellion to disbelieve what Yahweh had promised', Ashley, *NICOT Numbers*, p. 250.

- Churches sometimes try to turn back the clock. Good people think, ‘if only we returned to the way it was.’

Joshua and Caleb tore their clothing in distress.⁶ They said, ‘The land we traveled through and explored is a wonderful land! ⁸ And if the Lord is pleased with us, he will bring us safely into that land and give it to us. It is a rich land flowing with milk and honey. ⁹ Do not rebel against the Lord, and don’t be afraid of the people of the land. They are only helpless prey to us! They have no protection, but the Lord is with us! Don’t be afraid of them (Nu 14:7-9 NLT)!’

After their speech, it got worse, and the crowd wanted to stone Joshua and Caleb. The second takeaway is ...

Finishing Faithful Requires ...

- Ignore negative voices.
- Do what is right, even when it is unpopular. It is tough to stand up against the crowd to do what is right.

But just then, God showed up: ‘Then the glorious presence of the Lord appeared to all the Israelites at the Tabernacle (Nu 14:10 NLT).’ It does not describe how they knew God’s presence was there, they just knew. God wanted to put these Israelites to death and make a new nation through Moses.

- But Moses stood up for these rebellious people noting that Egyptians would say Israel’s God wasn’t strong enough to give them the Promised Land.
- He reminded God of His grace, forgiveness, and great love.

God forgave the people but says, ‘As surely as I live ... ²² not one of these people will ever enter that land. They have all seen my glorious presence and the miraculous signs I performed both in Egypt and in the wilderness, but again and again they have tested me by refusing to listen to my voice. ²³ They will never even see the land I swore to give their ancestors. None of those who have treated me with contempt will ever see it (Nu 14:21-23 NLT).’

They got to live but would not receive the promised blessing. Israel would wander through the desert for the next 40 years, until the last rebel died. There were two exceptions to the punishment Joshua and Caleb: ‘But my servant Caleb has a different attitude than the others have. He has remained loyal to me, so I will bring him into the land he explored. His descendants will possess their full share of that land (Nu 14:24 NLT).’

- Joshua’s trajectory is to become the leader (Nu 11:28). We will save him for another day.

⁶ Ashley, *NICOT Numbers*, p. 248.

- But Caleb ‘has a different spirit / attitude’ than the people. Even though Caleb stood in Joshua’s shadow he was different, he was faithful to God’s voice and plan.

Caleb was 40 years old when they left Egypt; he saw the same miracles the rebellious people saw, but his heart was drawn to the miracle maker.

- Whatever God says, Caleb really believes it. He has zero doubt.
- He is like a bulldog with a bone, he is not going to give it up or change his mind.
- He lived out ‘God said it; I believe it, and that settles it!’⁷

This gives us a third takeaway – endurance.

Finishing Faithful Requires ...

- Ignore negative voices.
- Do what is right, even when it is unpopular.
- Endure, persevere – do not give up.

One of the early church fathers wrote that ‘Faithfulness in little things is a big thing.’ – John Chrysostom One of my most faithful parishioners was Rick who refilled the offering envelopes and would make shopping runs for us. Behind the scenes, small tasks, but faithful.

God promised to reward Caleb’s faithfulness with land.

- If there is one character quality I could pass onto my girls and onto you, it is self-discipline and faithfulness.
- Life is about playing the long game, self-discipline and faithfulness always reaps rewards in the end.

Fast-forward 45 years.

- For 40 years Caleb wandered through the desert as his entire generation dies off.
- Then, for another 5 years he assists Joshua in conquering the Promised Land.
- Now the land is about to be given to the various tribes. Caleb is the first to be allotted land, he says to Joshua ...

3. Caleb’s Retelling, Josh 14:6-9.

‘Remember what the Lord said to Moses, the man of God, about you and me when we were at Kadesh-barnea. ⁷I was forty years old when Moses, the servant of the Lord, sent me from Kadesh-barnea to explore the land of Canaan.

⁷ Somewhat attributed to Evangelist Ernst Stanley, though it has been around a long time.

I returned and gave an honest report, ⁸but my brothers who went with me frightened the people from entering the Promised Land. For my part, I wholeheartedly followed the Lord my God. ⁹So that day Moses solemnly promised me, 'The land of Canaan on which you were just walking will be your grant of land and that of your descendants forever, because you wholeheartedly followed the Lord my God (Josh 14:6-9 NLT).'

We are given two additional facts:⁸

1. Caleb's motivation is 'I wholeheartedly followed the Lord (v. 8).'
2. Caleb was promised specific land, the land 'on which you were just walking (v. 9).'

This next part is why I was led to share Caleb's story.

4. Caleb's Moment, Josh 14:10-12.

Caleb asks Joshua for that land ... 'Now, as you can see, the Lord has kept me alive and well as he promised for all these forty-five years since Moses made this promise—even while Israel wandered in the wilderness. Today I am eighty-five years old. ¹¹I am as strong now as I was when Moses sent me on that journey, and I can still travel and fight as well as I could then (Josh 14:10-11 NLT).'

- Faithfulness is not glamorous; it does not stand out or get attention, but faithfulness in little things will reap rewards.
- Jesus taught: 'Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much (Lk 16:10 NIV).'

Did you catch Caleb's 'different attitude?' The Lord has ...

- Kept me alive.
- I am as strong now as then.
- I can still travel and fight as well as I could then.

For 45 years, he has waited for this moment. He bursts out like a water balloon 'So give me the hill country that the Lord promised me. You will remember that as scouts we found the descendants of Anak living there in great, walled towns. But if the Lord is with me, I will drive them out of the land, just as the Lord said (Josh 14:10-12 NLT).'

Joshua and the 12 tribes fought for 5 years and did not drive out the giants? But look at Caleb's attitude:

- Let me at them.
- God promised and 'I will drive them out ... just as the Lord said.'

He still had to drive out or kill the giants, but for 45 years he has rehearsed victory in his mind. He knew what God had promised.

⁸ His retelling 'would seem to reflect an eyewitness', Marten H. Woudstra, *NICOT Joshua* (Grand Rapids, MI: Willam B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1981), p. 228.

Caleb's story has a happy ending:⁹ 'Hebron still belongs to the descendants of Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite because he wholeheartedly followed the Lord, the God of Israel. ¹⁵ ... And the land had rest from war (Josh 14:14-15 NLT).'

- Caleb drove out or killed the giants.
- 'God used Caleb's loyalty and faith to bring about ... his promise of the land.'¹⁰
- David would be crowned king in Hebron and Judah would remain more faithful to God than the 10 northern tribes.

Conclusion.

God calls us to faithfully persevere. 'Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, ² fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith (He 12:1-2 NIV).'

I am so proud of my cousin's daughter's husband, Jeremy.

- Here is a picture of Jeremy leaving the mile 24 aid station in an ultra-marathon.
- He ran 104.5 miles through the Superior National Forest in Duluth, MN. It was rugged, and remote.
- He raised 32K to help fight human trafficking in Nepal / India.
- It took him 36:28:05 hours; he ran for two days and one night straight.



How did he do it? A lot of training, endurance, and keeping his eye on the finish line. He faithfully put one foot in front of the other even when his body screamed to stop.

How do we finish our spiritual race?

Finishing Faithful Requires ...

- Ignore negative voices.
- Do what is right, even when it is unpopular.
- Endure, persevere – do not give up.
- Keep our eyes on the goal.

⁹ It is interesting that the giants are at the beginning and end of Caleb's story. Their presence made Israel fear, but 'That is why the story of the Conquest concludes fittingly with a reference to their being driven out', Woudstra, *NICOT Joshua*, p. 229.

¹⁰ Woudstra, *NICOT Joshua*, p. 231.

Faithfulness is most difficult when it is most necessary. Don't give up; don't lose sight of the goal – let's fix our eyes on Jesus and the heavenly prize.

'Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, ²fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart (He 12:1-3 NIV).'