

The man who left everything behind by Timothee Paton

It was just another day. The young man went out to the field as he had probably been doing for years. He was plowing his field with a pair of oxen. Elisha was a farmer and one day he would eventually take over the family business.

Elisha had no idea that on that day, his life would never be the same again. A whole new chapter was about to unfold. A chapter that had not been planned at all. It all happened when an old man, with a similar name as the young farmer came across onto the field that day. Elijah, an anointed prophet of God threw his cloak over Elisha's shoulders. That very same day, the young farmer killed his oxen and invited his friends for a farewell BBQ. He kissed his Mum and Dad good bye and followed the old man into a whole new world.

Elisha could have stayed on his farm for the rest of his life. Peter, Andrew, James and John could have stayed on the shore of Galilee for the rest of their lives. Instead they left their nets and followed Jesus. David Wilkerson could have stayed in the comfort of his home. Instead he brought the Gospel to some of the worst gangs in New York. Jackie Pullinger could have stayed her whole life in England. Instead she traveled on a ship that took her all the way to Hong Kong. 40 years later she is still there ministering to men caught in the web of drug addiction.

The Bible says that '*Elisha returned to his oxen and killed them*'.

What is the name of *your* oxen?

What is it that is holding you back from following Him? A relationship? A comfortable life? An addiction? Bitterness?

If you don't put your oxen on the altar as a sacrifice you can never fully serve God. Don't even hide the oxen in a small barn somewhere, because when the ride gets rough, you will run back to it.

The old prophet has now taken Elisha as his young disciple.

In 2 Kings Ch. 2 you find them traveling together.

At a place called Guilgal, the old mentor tells the young man: 'Stay in Guilgal, The Lord is calling me to Bethel'. Elisha turns around and says: 'No way, as surely as you live, I will never leave you!'

They both then head off for Bethel where the very same scenario happens. Elisha will not stay in Bethel; he will follow his teacher to Jericho.

In Jericho, the same thing.

Elisha is not settling in Jericho. He is heading for the Jordan because that's where God's anointing is.

Burning your oxen and saying good bye to your farm is good.

But as you walk with the Great mentor Jesus, you can end up stuck in Guilgal.

You feel the Lord is blessing you, you have brought some souls to Christ, you attend a good church but after some time you reach a plateau. Some Christians have been stuck in the 'Guilgal Christian life' for years. Don't stop half way. Don't die in Guilgal, or in Jericho. Head for the Jordan!

I have met many believers, even missionaries who though they had left the comfort of their farm got stuck somewhere between Guilgal and the Jordan. They never made it to the River!

In his book '*Don't waste your life*', John Piper tells the story of a couple who took early retirement, he at 59 years of age, she at 51, so they could go to Florida, collect seashells, play softball and cruise on their 30 foot luxury boat. Piper writes: "At first I thought it might be a joke. But it wasn't. Tragically, this was their dream: Come to the end of your life, their one and only God-given life, and let the last great work of your life, before you give an account to your Creator, be this: 'Playing softball and collecting shells.' That is a tragedy."

Between each town on his way to the Jordan, Elisha was faced with groups of prophets. They became a pain in the neck by reminding him that his mentor would soon be taken away from him.

As you move into your next level of service with God, you'll meet so called prophets who will try to slow you down.

They will tell you '*you're too old now to serve the poor in India*'.

They'll tell you '*your CV is not good enough to start a church in Paris*'

They'll tell you '*Forget about ministering to prisoners. Your own past is worse than some of those inmates*'.

Don't let anyone, whatever title or position they might have, distract you from going all the way with God. Don't compromise your vision! Don't settle for average.

Our world is in great need of the Gospel. Go where the need is the greatest.

I remember meeting a young man in New Zealand some years ago. He said '*I will soon be going out to the mission field, but not to a place already reached with the Gospel. I have gone through a whole list of countries to look for those with less than 1% believers, and I will go to one of those places.*' (Dear Kiwi friend, if you're out there and you're reading this, I hope you've made it to that place of service!)

Yesterday, I was speaking at an International Christian School in Phnom Penh (a few minutes drive from where I live). At the end of the message I gave a call for the students to dedicate their lives for God's service. Among those who responded, was a young Korean lad, '*In a few years time*' he told me, '*I will be a missionary to Saudi Arabia*'. (Here's one who's not planning to go to Florida!)

Where are you today? Still on the farm? In Guilgal? Sitting on the roadside? I encourage you to move out, in faith. Go for it! He is with you!

