

Men of Courage
Genesis 1-3
November 9th 2025 MHC & MPC

With many of our sisters away, we are granted a rare opportunity, this morning, to speak mainly to the brothers. I take my cue and authority to do so from those passages in the Bible where just one section of the congregation is addressed. For example in Ephesians 5:22 Paul speaks just to wives, in verse 25, just to Husbands.

Straight away, let me say that the Scriptures make it clear, both by command and by example that men are given the responsibility to lead, first themselves, then their wives and families if they are married, and then the church.

But we have come to such a sorry state of affairs that the very idea of men leading is now labelled **old-fashioned** at the kindest, **patriarchal** by others, and **right-wing**—by some. (God's truth rises infinitely above the petty squabbles of human politics, left or right wing).

As a direct result of these trends, men are confused about their role in the home, in marriage and in wider society. They inwardly sense they should be men of courage, they should lead, but the world plays down that role and many are losing heart.

Young men in particular are turning to social media influencers in an attempt to find role models. Earlier this year Gareth Southgate expressed his concern that disillusioned young men are turning:

"to callous, manipulative and toxic influencers, whose sole drive is for their own gain..." who "...willingly trick young men into believing that success is measured by money or dominance, that strength means never showing emotion, and that the world, including women, is against them."

What young men need, Southgate argued are good role models: with that we can agree - and there is no greater role model than the Lord Jesus Christ, the true and perfect Man. This morning, using the failed example of the first Adam and the perfect example of the Last Adam, I want to urge brothers to be the Men of Courage God has called every one of us to be.

This issue, gender confusion, role confusion, between men and women out there in the world, but now entering the church, is, my opinion, one of the greatest threats to the well-being of the Western church. Fewer and fewer men are taking their God-given responsibility to lead, both in the home and the church, they're uncertain, they're stepping back, and therefore more and more women are taking their place—perhaps we should say *having* to take their place:

- In Methodism and CofE churches the number of ministers has now risen to 30%
- More than 50% of the candidates going into the ministry in the CofE are women
- And on the mission field the ratio is even higher, 2:1 missionaries are women.

We need to recover a Christ-like biblical perspective that will put steel in the backbone of Christian men and fill them with Holy Spirit courage.

In case sisters feel left out, let me say this:

- If you are looking for a husband, this morning you will learn what to look for
- If you are married you will discover how you can help your husband be the leader he is called by God to be
- And if you, dear sister are concerned about the well-being the church, and the glory of God, you should be concerned that God's divine order is maintained

1. Brothers don't make Adam's mistake

In Genesis chapter 1 and 2 we learn that God made Adam to be the head, the leader, of Eve:

- He did this by creating Adam first
- By giving his Word, you know the command about the fruit of the trees, to Adam, which Adam had to pass it on to Eve
- He made Eve out of Adam
- He made Eve for Adam
- Adam gave her the name Eve

None of these facts make Adam greater than Eve; both are made in God's image, both blessed, both given rule over his creatures. There is no hierarchy between them, but there is an order, just like there is a divine order in the Trinity, though all three Persons

of the Godhead are equal: God the Father is the first Person, God the Son is the second Person and God the Holy Spirit is the third Person. They are all equally God, but the father sends the Son not the other way round. And the Father and the Son send the Spirit.

In a similar way, there is a divine order between men and women, and men are called to lead.

- So in marriage, Paul urges wives to recognise this divine order, this is Ephesians chapter 5, *“Wives submit to your husbands as to the Lord.”* That word submit, “hypotasso” literally means “recognise the divine order.”

- And in the church, men must lead, Paul instructs, *“I do not permit a woman to teach or have authority over a man... For Adam was formed first and then Eve.”* (1 Timothy 2:12-13)

The divine order between men and women must be clear whenever Christians gather: by men preaching and men leading.

Back to Genesis 3, our first point, brothers don't make Adam's mistake.

One day Adam and Eve were together in the garden when they chanced upon the Serpent—who we know from Revelation chapter 12 is the evil one, Satan, the tempter. The serpent deliberately spoke to the woman. That in itself would have raised all kinds of alarm bells to Adam. As the conversation unfolds, both Eve and Adam make fatal mistakes:

Eve fails, she should have said something like “Speak to my husband, he's my head.”

Adam failed, because he refused to step up, protect his wife from error, “Excuse me, speak to me, not to my wife” Let's tune in:

“Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, ‘Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’” The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’” You will not

certainly die,” the serpent said to the woman. “For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some [why didn’t Adam step in here, “We can’t do this Eve, for God has forbidden it,” “But he’s such a clever animal!” “I know my love, but he’s the devil, let’s get out of here”] and [Eve] ate it. She also gave some to her husband who was with her and he ate it.”

Eve was deceived, but with Adam, it was straight up and down disobedience: he had heard God with his own ears God say don’t eat the fruit yet he did it! And since Adam was the head, he gets the main blame: “Through one man sin came into the world.” (Romans 5:12)

Where did Adam go wrong? Genesis 3:17; *“because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, You shall not eat of it.”*

Surely its not wrong to listen to your wife, someone protests! Scripture is not saying that men shouldn’t listen to their wives—a wise husband will always listen to his wife. But a godly husband will never allow his wife to lead him led away from truth, away from God’s Word; Adam refused to question her and to step in, when she was wrong, he remained *completely silent*, he failed to stand up to her, to protect her; he failed to love her.

Brothers, whenever we lack the courage to question our wives in the light of God’s Word, whenever we “just let it happen,” we make Adam’s fatal mistake. (And no doubt every married brother listening to me can think of occasions when he has made that mistake).

And whenever, in the church, men refuse to lead, for example, when they refuse to rise up in a prayer meeting to pray they make Adam’s mistake.

So, brothers, appeal 1: by God’s grace, let’s not make Adam’s mistake. You say, “I can see where Adam went wrong but how exactly should I lead?” We need an alternative example. And this is the problem out there in the world— young men sense that they should be leading, they should be raising their game, but since they don’t know who to follow, they’re turning to dangerous advisors. You & I have the answer! The Scriptures provide us with the perfect example of the Lord Jesus!

2. Brothers, lead like Jesus led

The alternative to Adam's failure is not a bossy sort of leadership. The world is filled with that variety. Perhaps some men are put off the responsibility of leading because they have in their mind a *wrong kind* of leadership model... perhaps like Steve Jobs, of Apple fame, who had a reputation for being "ruthless, impatient and prone to firing people abruptly."

1. Jesus led by example

Jesus did not say "Do this" but then did something else.

- He preached love for enemies and exemplified it in the way he was prepared to meet up with one of them—at night by their request!
- He preached humility and he exemplified humility when he washed the feet of his disciples

Men you are asking—how can I lead my wife, my family, my church. Christ-like leadership begins when a Christian man gets his own house in order and leads by example. Go and work it out!

2. Jesus led by sacrificial love

The second key to leading like Jesus, is sacrificial love.

"Husbands love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her..."(Ephesians 5:25)

The kind of love Jesus showed towards his church, his "wife" his "bride" - you and I, the Church, was sacrificial love—giving up something we value, something we love, something that is ours by right, for another—whether it's a wife or our fellow believers.

"Christ Jesus, Who, being in very nature God (Philippians 2) did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing

*by taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.*

*And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
by becoming obedient to death—*

even death on a cross!

*Lord, you were rich beyond all splendour,
yet, for love's sake, became so poor;
thrones for a manger did surrender,
sapphire-paved courts for stable floor:
Lord, you were rich beyond all splendour,
yet, for love's sake, became so poor*

One reason we reflect today on those who have fought in past wars, is we stand in awe of the magnitude of the ultimate sacrifice they made. *"Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends."* (John 15)

A Christian husband has never loved his wife, as Christ loved the church, not yet, until he gives up something he wants, even that is his by right, for her sake.

It's a Saturday, wife is exhausted from looking after little ones all week, she needs a break. But Saturday is husbands day off and perhaps to wind down he goes off and plays sport: it's something he loves, something one might say within his right, but he sacrifices his desires for her well-being.

And a Christian brother has not yet loved his fellow brothers and sisters as Christ loves, not yet, until he gives up what is his by right for their sakes:

It's home group evening, but it's your birthday, or your favourite sport is live on TV. If you stay home you will discourage your brothers and sisters, if you go you will encourage them. What should you do? A godly Christian man will love sacrificially and move his birthday celebration to another night—or skip it altogether that year; he will record his sport and watch it later. These are tiny sacrifices compared to the sacrifice Christ made for us. Our forbears would turn in their graves if they heard the low levels of personal sacrifices Christians are prepared to make these days for one another!

Can I give you a personal example? At the start of this year, Yvonne and I decided that we would be away from Worcester only two Sundays in 2025, when we were in the US, serving one Sunday and then resting the second. Why? Because the Gospel invades our personal priorities! (It means we won't get to see our two grandchildren as much as we would like to. We serve the Lord like this with joy, not reluctantly)

“I know I should lead, I want to lead, but how do I do that?”

- Brothers, lead, like Jesus, by example
- Brothers, lead by sacrificial love, like Jesus

3. *Jesus led with courageous action*

..and lead with courage. When the need demanded it, Jesus was prepared to offend:

- When his mother was interfering too much—her motives were no doubt noble, she wanted to kick-start Jesus’ ministry—at the wedding of Cana, John 2, Jesus says gently rebukes her “Woman (not mother, to put some distance in there), my time has not come.”
- When he turned the moneychangers table upside down (Matthew 21) because they were making God’s house a den of thieves
- He disregarded the wishes of his family when thinking he was out of his mind, they sought to correct him, Mark 3
- When he rebuked the apostle Peter, “Get behind me Satan” (Mark 8)
- When he rebuked the church at Laodicea, “you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were one or the other. So because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold I am going to spit you out of my mouth!” (Rev 3)

Jesus was not always “meek and mild!” Do not think that courageous leadership is incompatible with godly example and sacrificial love! There are times when a leader must, should, put his foot down!

I heard recently of a pastor in the US chastising his whole congregation—in public, on a Sunday—for cases of sexual immorality in their midst—couples shacking up together without being married, having kids and church members were congratulating the couples on social media! I believe that pastor did exactly what Jesus would do! Or his apostle Paul would have in 1 Corinthians chapter 5.

Adam should have been courageous and said to Eve —whatever the collateral cost - “Get lost snake!” “ Eve, we’re off!”

Husbands, fathers, church leaders, there are times when we will say, This is the hill we are climbing, not that one! Thank God when your elders, your pastor says courageous things.

Brothers, let's not make Adam's mistake, let's lead like Jesus led, and finally,

3. Brothers let's lead for the glory of God

God is glorified when the order that he has placed within creation, between men and women—which reflects his very being— is upheld and seen to be upheld in Christian marriages and in the church. When Christian men lead themselves, lead their families if they are married and lead in the church.

Not by making Adam's do-nothing mistake, but by following the example of the Lord Jesus and leading by example, with sacrificial love and by courageous acts.

May the Lord help us and may he alone be glorified in the church.