

WHERE ARE ALL THE MEN?

A review of *'Wild at Heart'* by John Eldredge and *'Why men hate going to church'* by David Murrow, and a call to battle.

By Stephen Green

A quick analysis of the membership of *Christian Voice* shows 56% are men and 44% women. Now, most of our members are married to someone of the opposite sex and we have a lot of married couples ('Mr & Mrs'). However, we still send our newsletter to considerably more people styling themselves 'Mr' than to those who are 'Miss' or 'Mrs'. Now, it goes without saying that the efforts of our women members are greatly valued. They are obviously just as good as men at prayer, writing letters, sending emails, coming out to witness and evangelising.

TOO MUCH OESTROGEN

However, the then leader of the Lydia Prayer Groups, Olga Marshall, once told this author, 'There is too much oestrogen in the Church'. She and the Lydias had been praying, she said, for Christian men to take up their responsibility and lead.

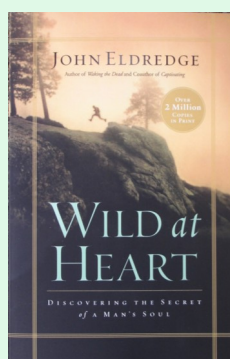
And Olga Marshall is sadly right about the Church. In contrast to the membership of *Christian Voice*, the figures show there are many more women than men in today's western congregations. Tearfund have worked it out at 65% women to 35% men. This gender-gap is not present in any other religion. It isn't even present in the Eastern Orthodox Church. And it is getting worse. In fact the gap has widened from 43/57 to 35/65 in just twenty-five years.

This has implications for future church growth, as American research shows a family is more likely to follow the father than the mother to faith in Christ, with notable exceptions, of course. It also has a terrible impact on those young women looking for a Christian husband. What are they expected to do with so few eligible young men? And it has implications for a society in crisis.

WHY SO FEW MEN?

Books are beginning to be written on this subject, including David Murrow's *Why men hate going to church* and *Wild at Heart* by John Eldredge. Eldredge explains that a man needs a battle to fight, an adventure to live, and a beauty to win. He says men thrive on danger, and even from an early age a boy, like the Lord, is 'a man of war'. 'God designed men to be dangerous', he says. Murrow suggests that what today's church provides, qualities of security, safety, love and relationship are qualities more prized by women than by men. Men, in contrast, seek risk-taking, competition, ambition and achievement.

But these natural desires and qualities of men are not appreciated in Christian circles. Much of the Church, as John Eldredge puts it, would rather men were more like Mother Theresa than William Wallace. (He must have just seen the film 'Braveheart'.) So, in many churches in our land, the most masculine thing a man will be asked to do is make the drainpipe for the cuddly rat at the summer fair. Eldredge now runs 'Boot Camps' to help men 'find and recover your masculine heart'.



Wild at Heart is a glorious book with hundreds of memorable lines, such as this: 'From ancient fables to the latest blockbuster, the theme of a strong man coming to rescue a beautiful woman is universal to human nature. It is written in our hearts, one of the core desires of every man and every woman.' (p160). One liberal male seminary professor reacted to it by saying: 'The basic premise that men need a princess to rescue

has set back the male-female relationship in the church by 30 years'. Hallelujah! Let's pray it does more.

LAYING DOWN HIS LIFE FOR HIS FRIENDS

While a mother will die for her children, says Eldredge, men are willing to lay down their lives for friends and even for strangers. It is a theme that runs through history and literature, let alone the New Testament. 'What makes Maximus or William Wallace so heroic is simply this: they are willing to die to set others free,' writes Eldredge (p186).

Looking at the book of Nehemiah, he says: 'You see, it's not just that a man needs a battle to fight; he needs someone to fight for...' 'Don't be afraid ... fight for your brothers, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes.' ... Yes, there is something passionate in the heart of every man. ... Every woman yearns to be fought for - she wants to be wanted. She wants to be pursued. ... Every woman also wants an adventure to share. ... A woman doesn't want to be the adventure, she wants to be caught up into something greater than herself. ... The world kills a woman's heart when it tells her to be tough, efficient and independent.' (pp15-17)

God is wild and He takes risks, says Eldredge, while Jesus is always picking a fight. 'And when Christ returns, he is at the head of dreadful company, mounted on a white horse....Now that sounds a lot more like William Wallace than it does Mother Teresa. ...- there is something fierce in the heart of God.' (p29)

GOD HAS AN ENEMY, AND SO DO WE

God took a risk when He created man, observes Eldredge, and then Adam let God down, and he let Eve down. He gave in to paralysis, said nothing, failed to fight and failed to rescue her. 'Why don't men play the man?' he asks. In the book of Genesis, writes Eldredge, 'God now has an enemy... and so do we. Man is not born into a sitcom or a soap opera; he is born into a world of war. This is not *Home Improvement*; it's *Saving Private Ryan*.' (p49)

In such a battle, says Eldredge, men need to support each other, like warriors in an army. The Church is waking up to the needs of men, he says, but in a feminine way, with accountability groups or partners. 'We don't need accountability groups,' rages Eldredge, 'We need fellow warriors, someone to fight alongside, someone to watch our back. ... We don't need a meeting of Really Nice Guys; we need a gathering of Really Dangerous Men.' (p.175)

Masculinity has come under attack in the Church for a

reason, says Eldredge. 'Do you know why there's been such an assault? The Enemy fears you. You are dangerous big-time. If you ever really got your heart back, lived from it with courage, you would be a huge problem to him. You would do a lot of damage...on the side of good. Remember how valiant and effective God has been in the history of the world? You are a stem of that victorious stalk'. (p87)

If God is with us, he writes, we shall win, but only if we fight. 'The children of Israel weren't just going to waltz in and pick up the Promised Land like a quart of milk; they were going to have to fight for it'. (p167)

NOTHING EVER HAPPENS

Turning to the Church, sadly, many pastors have the feminine spirit which drives away the men. They won't take risks. They would rather the people were communing in the bedroom rather than fighting on the battle-field. They prefer, as Murrow says: 'safety over risk, stability over change, preservation over expansion, and predictability over adventure.' We may have a little coffee-shop which we hope will attract people, but it is often designed to bring them into a comfortable and safe environment, not a challenging one. In church, as even a female friend said to me recently, 'nothing ever happens.'

In the opening prayers of many Pentecostal churches, the Lord, or the Holy Spirit, may be invited to come in, take control, do something new, have His way that morning, and so on. Putting aside the theology of all that, and whether it is right or wrong, if the Holy Spirit actually did come in, take control and do something He wanted to do in most churches of all denominations today, the pastor and people would have a collective heart-attack.

When the gender imbalance reaches a certain point, which is probably the point it is at now, it becomes self-perpetuating. If the 'market' for any given church, or ministry, or Christian broadcaster, is women, then the 'product' will end up being geared for that market.

CHURCH IS A FEMININE PLACE

As Murrow puts it: 'Almost everything in today's church - its teaching style, its ministries, the way people are expected to behave, even today's popular images of Jesus - is designed to meet the needs of a largely female audience. Church is sweet and sentimental, nurturing and nice. In modern parlance, women are the target audience of today's church.'

Someone once said, 'Any organisation will achieve the results it is designed to achieve.' So, because the Church in general is designed as a feminine place, it attracts twice as many women as men. It is interesting that, in contrast, the *Christian Voice* membership is tilted towards men. Plainly, we are doing something which attracts men, and that must be our emphasis on action, campaigns, battle, righteousness and challenge. Also, say these authors, women are fascinated by a man's world just as much as men are repelled by things appertaining to women.

If a church, or ministry, is made male-friendly, Godly women love it as well. Murrow tells of the church which had a prayer room the men rarely used. The pastor asked the men why. They said it was too feminine. The decor was all lavender, with silk flowers, lace, candles and boxes of tissues everywhere. He challenged them to redecorate it.

'They stripped the place and put up swords, shields, Celtic banners and tomahawks,' says Murrow. 'Now the guys go in there. Not surprisingly, the young women also love it.' (Murrow p190)

WORSHIP SONGS - THE GREAT PUT-OFF

David Murrow suggests that church worship discourages men, on two levels. Firstly, he says, singing comes easier to women than to men. But more important are the words churches sing. Songs which emphasise brokenness, unworthiness or weakness put men off. They want songs of victory. But by far the worst offenders in modern worship songs, says Murrow, are those where the Lord Jesus is viewed as a romantic replacement. You don't have to look far for 'Jesus is my boyfriend' songs. Even today's male Christian songwriters can fall into the trap of writing music with words which appeal more to women than men. For example:



*By Your side I would stay; In Your arms I would lay.
Jesus, lover of my soul, Nothing from You I withhold.
Lord, I love You, and adore You; What more can I say?
You cause my love to grow stronger, With every passing day.*

Women and children lie in men's arms, not men. Men do not say 'I love you' or 'I adore you' when talking to other men, unless they are homosexual. Whether they should or not 'get in touch with their feminine side' is not the point, says Murrow. His is a book about how men are, not how some politically-correct women would like them to be.

Christian songwriter Matt Redman now wishes he had ended his song 'Let my words be few' with the line: 'Jesus, I am so in awe of you' rather than 'in love with'. He agrees that words like 'beautiful' carry inappropriate baggage. No-one in the New Testament ever told the Lord Jesus He was 'beautiful', said Redman in an interview on Premier TV. Murrow lists other culprits: 'I'm desperate for you, I'm lost without you,' 'You're altogether lovely, altogether wonderful,' 'Hold me close', and so on.

ROMANTIC IMAGERY IS NOTHING NEW

My own personal favourite (so to speak!) is the one - I don't know who wrote it and I don't want to - with the line to Jesus: 'I want to feel your breath upon my face.' That is simply not how men talk to each other. The Apostle Paul compares us to soldiers in warfare. What soldier says to his commanding officer, 'I want to feel your breath upon my face, Sir'. For that matter, young women should not be thinking of the Lord in such romantic terms either. One might say, with such a frustrating gender imbalance in church, who can blame them? But paradoxically, the love songs they are singing to Jesus are putting off the actual men they need.

Murrow says the use of such toe-curling material in modern church singing is why so many men stand tight-lipped during 'worship' or come to the service late, deliberately to miss the embarrassing pour-out of songs which they view, frankly, as gay.

Romantic imagery may be overwhelming in the church

now, but it is certainly nothing new. Like Matt Redman, Charles Wesley probably knew what he meant when he wrote *Jesus, lover of my soul, let me to thy bosom fly* in 1740, but his brother John still thought it 'too intimate' for a mixed congregation. Nine years later, of course, Wesley would pen *Soldiers of Christ arise*, which is rather more masculine. The 19th century saw a flurry of militaristic hymns. George Duffield's *Stand up, stand up for Jesus* dates from 1858, while in 1865 Baring-Gould wrote *Onward Christian Soldiers*. It opens:

*Onward, Christian Soldiers, Marching as to war,
With the cross of Jesus Going on before!
Christ, the royal Master, Leads against the foe;
Forward into battle, See, His banners go!*

JESUS PICKS UP A DAISY

Murrow observes a change around the turn of the last century. In 1913, C Austin Miles penned *In the Garden*. The difference in tone could not be more marked:

*And He walks with me, and He talks with me,
And he tells me I am His own,
And the joy we share as we tarry there,
None other has ever known.*

'Christ has put down His sword and picked up a daisy', Murrow observes drily, 'He is no longer a warrior; He is a lover. The very image of Christ taking up arms (as He does in Revelation 19) is simply unacceptable in a lot of churches today.'

Couple that with the modern idea that Christianity should be all about love and grace and never about law and judgment, and we end up with wishy-washy lovey-dovey worship music with which men cannot readily identify. Even hymns and songs of pure praise are, for want of a better word, safe. They don't spur us to action.

Yes, the Lord is awesome and mighty in power, a great God and worthy of all our praise and worship; but what does he want us to do? Just stand around and praise Him? Even in heaven we are called to rule over cities and judge angels. No, he calls us into service, or as Eldredge puts it, into battle. And no-one in evangelical circles today is writing songs of battle with the notable exception of Godfrey Birtle.

THE MASCULINE SPIRIT

Wild at Heart and *Why men hate going to church* should be required reading for anyone who wants the church to grow, redress its gender imbalance and make an impact in the world today. As to positive suggestions, both authors recommend making the Church a place where men feel welcome - as men. The masculine spirit will set high standards and goals, take risks, prize achievement, ditch unproductive areas of ministry and eliminate girl-friendly worship. Outdoor events attract and enthuse men as much as feminine decor in churches puts them off. Both books have more valuable suggestions than it is possible to list in a short review.

There is heartfelt advice for Christian women as well. One suggestion is that wives should let their husbands choose which church they go to. If a woman is attached to her church, but her husband hates it, and she so wants him to go to church, she will have to sacrifice her comfort for her greater goal. A woman's natural devotional spirit may

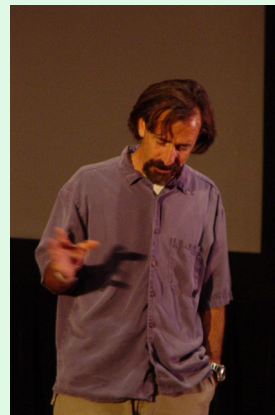
also put a husband off if he sees it directed more at Jesus than at him. Some women could be a bit less saintly, Murrow suggests. Such an approach honours the Biblical injunction for the wife to submit to her husband, and allows him to lead. But if there is still no man-friendly church in the area, the Christian wife still has a problem, of course.

AN EXTERNAL BATTLE

I believe we can use our experience in *Christian Voice* to add something to the advice given in both these books. Wisely perhaps, neither Eldredge nor Murrow venture into the spiritual battleground of the political, or the public sphere. Without that, the battle Eldredge identifies as a male need can become internalised. It is too easily viewed just as a battle against 'the sin that doth so easily beset us' as

the Prayer Book puts it. True, Satan is prowling around, looking for whom he may devour, but he is also waging war on Jesus Christ in our institutions, and the inevitable resultant persecution against the Church is now beginning.

If men need a battle to fight, and they do, it is as much out there as in here, and that is where *Christian Voice* comes in. We all need to live lives of holiness but after bolting on our spiritual armour we can enter the battle for the soul of our nation, our city, and our street.



John Eldredge

Over the last few months, we have been showing in these pages that the Reformers were never content to have their own lives in order. They were not even content with evangelism, vital as that is. When they read that every thought had to be brought into captivity, that meant not just the thoughts in their head, but the thoughts of the society around them. That meant a reformation of manners (as Wilberforce put it) and of legislation. The same need is evident today, and the same God who brought them victory can do the same for us.

PARTNER CHURCHES WITH PROPHETIC MODEL

If the Church is in a spiritual war, which this author believes we are, then warfare is for men, and the best way to lose a war is to give all your soldiers the day off just when the enemy offensive begins. Which it has, a while ago. Scripture reminds us that no soldier is discharged in a war. The challenge of *Wild at Heart* and *Why men hate going to church* needs to be taken up and built on and I believe we can do that in *Christian Voice*.

To that end we shall be looking for partner churches to develop a prophetic ministry reaching out into society, doing what the Lord Jesus did, looking for battles to fight and taking on the enemy in his various local strongholds. They won't be hard to find.

The idea is to integrate prophetic outreach into a church or denomination. It can dovetail with existing evangelism and social action, or stand alone. It begins with seeking the Lord and doing research to reveal the local issues and where evil is being done in the area. Some call that 'spiritual mapping,' but I don't want to sound charismatic

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about it. It is very down to earth. In short, wherever evil is being done is a stronghold of Satan. That done, the Lord will show us what should be the first target.

If we think about Nazi-occupied France, we get a picture of what Britain is like today. The enemy has taken control of virtually all the levers of power. But Satan is a usurper ruler and our rightful King is looking for those who will stand up for Him on the ground at this time. The French could not mount an all-out offensive, so they opted for a guerilla war, and formed numerous cells, which collectively became known as the Maquis or the French Resistance.

That encouragement should lead us to harrying the enemy with the Commandments of God and the Testimony of Jesus Christ, damaging, God willing even taking out, each of Satan's installations in the area as the Lord directs, doing what we can as the Lord shows us, and then relying on Him to honour us with miracles, the things we cannot do.

YE THAT ARE MEN

The introduction of the *Christian Voice* prophetic model (forthtelling, not foretelling!) into a church immediately gives the men battles to fight, risks to take and a cause greater than themselves to believe in. Not that women can't do that, but men love it. They feel valued, and their faith is enhanced along the way. And although women prize their relationships over their achievements, they love to admire the achievements of their men. So all ways up, it is a win-win scenario. Our model honours both men and women by thrusting the church into the public arena, up against the powers that be, powers that need to be held accountable to the Divine source of all power. And it draws men in. This becomes a church where a wife can safely invite her non-churched husband and a father his son. Things are going on. It's exciting, and faith-building.

As John Eldredge says: 'Every man wants to play the hero. Every man needs to know that he is powerful ... Like it or not, there is something fierce in the heart of every man.' (*Wild at Heart*, p11) '...most men have a hard time sustaining any sort of devotional life...But if you saw your life as a great battle and you knew you needed time with God for your survival, you would do it.' (p171)

ARROWS IN THE HAND OF A WARRIOR

There is a lot here for church youth as well. Whoever first said, 'We have taught our youth to feast and play; now it is time to teach them to fast and pray', put his finger on a lot of the problems with church youth groups. Yes, we want Christian young people to bond and enjoy fellowship, but when that becomes all there is, they are about as much use to the Kingdom of God and to a Church under siege as a swimsuit in a blizzard.

The Apostle Paul set out a model for young Christian singles when he wrote about them having time to be involved in the things of the Lord. The fire and energy of youth, he seems to be saying, can be and needs to be focused on the cause of righteousness. Put that with what Psalm 127 says about young people, and we begin to see something encouraging.

The Psalmist says they are like arrows in the hand of a mighty man. Two important features of a good arrow are its tip and its fletch. The fletch gives it direction. The tip

gives it penetrative power. So we need to sharpen up the church youth and fire them at things.

In other words, by integrating the youth fully into the prophetic mission of a church, they can be fully utilised in the Lord's service, confronting evil, spreading the kingdom, deepening their faith and enjoying themselves at the same time.

FORWARD INTO BATTLE, SEE, HIS BANNERS GO!

In the modern age, the personal is political, and the local is national, and vice versa. Similar issues are popping up all over Britain, and all over the world. In one city, for example, diversity policies may need opposing, a gay pride march might need resisting. A sex shop or lap-dancing club could be mooted, or a mosque proposed. Perhaps a secondary school is starting a sex clinic to give out condoms, or a primary school is running LGBT month. It could be that a store is selling blasphemous Christmas cards. Once a group of battle-hungry men is in position, the Lord will reveal the opportunities. They will need to be alert, and if the enemy appears to be flooding in, that is where the discernment comes in. And if all seems negative, just opposing things, well, the day of setting the agenda will come, if the Lord has mercy on our nation.

A lot of the time we shall be interacting with local councillors. It may be that a local church, fed up with the existing lot, decides to put up its own candidates. Again, we can help with this. There are two levels on which that can be done, as well. The lower level is simply to field candidates at an election on local issues to draw attention to those issues - and to get what amounts to a Gospel tract into every home! The higher level is to work hard for four years helping people complain about cracked paving stones, sorting out their housing benefit, getting street lights fixed, with the intention of actually getting elected. 'And whosoever of you will be chief among you, let him be your servant' (Matt 20:27).

But whatever battles a church decides to fight, and however it decides to implement the prophetic model, *Christian Voice* will help set it up and sustain it. Forward into battle, See, His banners go!

READ: Exod 15:3; Neh 4:14; Psalm 127:4; Eccl 8:8; 1Cor 7:32-24; 2Tim 2:3-4; 1John 5:4; Rev 19:15

ALSO READ: *Wild at Heart* and *Why men hate going to church*. We have both these books on our resources list at a price which even beats Amazon. There is a further discount if you buy both of them.

PRAY: That Christian people, both lay people and in the ministry, will realise the depth and seriousness of the spiritual war we are in and the need to take up arms. Not just that, but that they will begin to honour the masculine spirit, made in the image of God.

ALSO PRAY: That *Christian Voice* will be able to develop better contacts with churches and help them take the fight to the enemy. Thank the Lord that we do, as a ministry, appeal to men and pray He will allow us to build on that, for His glory.

CONTACT: The *Christian Voice* office to arrange a meeting or to discuss with Stephen how to become a Partner Church of Christian Voice and the benefits that will bring. Contact details are on the back of this newsletter.