

THE SILENCE OF ADAM

Genesis 3:1-6

In modern times there has been a massive shirking of responsibility on the part of fathers in our society.

In some cases this takes the form of them simply refusing to take responsibility for the children they have helped to create.

They abandon the mothers of their children to enjoy themselves elsewhere.

Sociologists and social workers tell us that the children who grow up in these fatherless homes are susceptible to all kinds of social pathologies—including teenage pregnancy, drugs, running with gangs, depression and suicide.

But physical desertion is not the only way fathers fail their families.

Many fathers who are good providers and who are willing to spend hours helping their children with homework or sports are hard-pressed to find five or ten minutes to lead a family devotion—or even to consult the Lord in prayer when family decisions are to be made.

The result of this, of course, is that their children learn to take sports and homework and business a lot more seriously than they do their faith, since those are the things they see their fathers taking seriously.

Fathers like that may be paragons of virtue in other respects, but they have defaulted on the most important part of their job, which is providing spiritual leadership to their families.

This is nothing new—in fact it started in the Garden of Eden.

So let's go back and take a look at *Chapter Three* in the *Book of Genesis* and see what it tells us about our original father: Adam.

We've all heard jokes about Eve and there's no question but that throughout history, Eve has borne the brunt of the blame for bringing sin into the world.

But let's ask a question: what was Adam doing in the Garden of Eden while Eve was being tempted?

Before we do, however, I'd like to share with you the results of a little experiment I conducted several years ago to find out how most people think the story goes.

I asked ten people in the congregation I was serving at the time to describe what they think happened in the Garden of Eden, and they all said something like

this: the serpent tempted Eve by promising her that if she ate the forbidden fruit, something wonderful would happen, so she ate the fruit and then she went and found Adam and gave some to him and he ate it too.

Does that fit your mental picture of what happened?

It fit mine until I looked carefully at what the Bible actually says: **[READ GEN. 3:1-6]**

Did you hear that?

“She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.”

Eve didn't have to go find Adam—***he was there with her when it all happened!***

What's more, he knew exactly what was going on, because *1 Tim. 2:14*, Paul clearly says: ***“Adam was not deceived.”***

That means that he knew that the serpent was lying—yet he said nothing.

He heard Eve misquote God and he said nothing.

He saw Eve weaken as she stared at the fruit and began to long for it—and he said nothing.

Finally, he watched her eat it and *he didn't do a thing to stop her!*

Like a man who would allow his blind wife to walk off the edge of a cliff, Adam didn't do a thing to keep Eve from destroying herself.

And he knew what the penalty was!

He was the one to whom God had said: "*On the day you eat of it you will surely die.*"

Adam **knew** that eating the fruit would result in Eve's death and he let her go right ahead and eat it anyway.

Adam participated in the first assisted suicide in history.

Dr. Larry Crabb calls this "the silence of Adam" and suggests that it is the root sin of every husband and father since Adam: the failure to speak God's word to his family.

In other words, the refusal to exercise spiritual leadership.

Why did Adam remain silent?

Why didn't he speak up?

He could have said: *“The serpent is lying, Eve, that’s not what God said.”*

“God said that if we ate it we would die.”

Adam could have said that, but he remained silent.

Why he remained silent, we can only guess.

My guess is that like every husband since, he didn’t want to get between his wife and something that she wanted.

Here was this gorgeous creature God had given him, who brought him joy and pleasure and love.

If he got between her and the object of her desire, he might make her angry and she would turn on him.

He might even lose her—and then he would be alone.

And Adam knew what it meant to be alone.

The pity of it is—she probably would have accepted his leadership if he had offered it.

Put yourself in Eve’s shoes (bad figure of speech)—put yourself in her feet.

You suddenly arrive on the scene one day with no clue as to where you came from and there is already someone there who is almost exactly like you.

Someone who is bigger and stronger and has been there longer and knows how everything works.

Your new friend explains everything to you: *“God created us and he made this beautiful garden for us to live in together. He wants us to tend it and also to be fruitful and multiply. But there is one thing he has forbidden us to do...”*

There is no doubt in my mind that Eve accepted those instructions—just as any of us would have—because she was hearing God’s word through Adam.

He had been there first, he had personal knowledge of God, and he was sharing vital information with her.

She accepted his spiritual leadership without question because his leadership and his knowledge came from God.

But then, when she needed him most, he failed her.

He allowed her to lead them both into destruction.

He was willing to die with her, but he wasn’t willing to speak up to save them both!

And so the curse that fell on both of them is a logical consequence of the sin they committed.

To the woman, God says: *“Your desire shall be for him”*—which translates: *“You will strive to control him.”*

And she probably thought, *“Why shouldn’t I? If he can’t do his job, I’ll have to do it for both of us.”*

Does that sound familiar?

“Since he won’t exercise the spiritual leadership God gave him, what right does he have to any leadership in this family?”

And to Adam he said: *“You will lord it over her.”*

Separated from God by his sin and blaming Eve in his heart for the whole mess, Adam’s leadership becomes a caricature of what God intended it to be.

Instead of God’s word, Adam begins to speak his own word and Eve becomes *“this woman whom you put here with me.”*

Instead of providing spiritual leadership which comes from God, he turns into a despot, a “master of the house” whose only rationale for being the boss is that he is bigger than she is.

What a horrible perversion of God's original design!

And that's pretty much where we've been ever since.

But, thank God, He has provided a way out. Not a way *back*, but a way *forward*.

The way out of this mess is the way of respect and love that Paul describes in his *Letter to the Ephesians*.

God's way, as usual, is the exact opposite of our sinful way.

He says to husbands and fathers: instead of trying to control your wife (which you haven't got a snowball's chance in you-know-where of doing anyway), ***love her as Christ loved the church***.

In other words, serve her with self-sacrificing love.

Place her needs above your own.

Forgive her every sin.

Crucify your own desires and love your wife in truth and action.

And He says to wives: instead of seeking to usurp your husband's God-given leadership by tearing him down, respect him as an image-bearer of God.

That is God's way *forward*.

In Gospel language it's the way of Christ.

As Paul writes in *Galatians*: “*There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*”

The way to a blessed marriage, a marriage which begins to resonate with the harmony of God's original design, where the husband and wife work together as the parts of a body rather than engage in ongoing civil war—that is the way of Christ.

Where a man and a woman have learned to deny their own selfish longings and, instead, offer love and respect to each other as gifts.

Not as a reward for good performance or as wages earned, but as gifts.

And the greatest give of love the husband and father can give his family is to speak God's word to them—to exercise spiritual leadership.

If he fails, in many cases the woman will try to take up the slack, because she knows that if it's going to get done, she will have to do it.

But the responsibility is his—to meet or to fail to meet.

God help all fathers to speak the word of God to their families.

And God help all wives to encourage their husbands to offer spiritual leadership to their families.

Amen

Father in heaven,

We pray that you will encourage all fathers to accept the responsibility you have given them—the responsibility to be spiritual leaders to their families. To joyfully step up to the task of saying a word of thanks before all family meals, to lead daily devotions for their families, to turn to Your Word when there are family decisions to be made, and to bring their families to church on the Sabbath. Help us all to remember Your promise that if we train up our children in the way they should go—the way of Christ—they will not depart from it when they are old.