



# BE BRAVER!

*Gavin Calver*

## CEO OF THE EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE GAVIN CALVER SHARES WHAT IT MEANS FOR HIM TO BE BRAVER, AND WHAT IT MEANS FOR US AS EVANGELICALS.

Two years ago I was travelling and speaking at a number of summer conferences. There was one specific meeting where I was not ministering and so could sit there and receive. The preacher spoke powerfully and passionately about the need for the church in our day to rise up without compromise and be all that it needed to be in the UK. At the end of the talk the speaker gave a call for anyone feeling challenged about the need to be distinct for Christ in our secular landscape to make their way to the front. I knew immediately that I should go and found myself shooting out of my seat to go forward. This call was so clearly for me and, as I stood at the front of this large tent, I felt the Lord challenge me deeply to be braver for him in the next chapter of my life.

As I stood there at the front, I felt myself slowly facing up to the reality of what it might actually mean to be brave. What might it cost? Where might it take me? How would I keep going? What would it mean for my family? As these thoughts flooded through my mind I felt myself begin to weep - not cry a little, but really weep. The tears poured freely as I surrendered fully to what the Lord might be calling me into. So often we assume that bravery involves no fear and is easy for some. It is not. It was the great man, Nelson Mandela, who said, 'I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear.' I wiped my face and went to tell my wife Anne about this encounter.

Some weeks later, on the last night of the summer holidays, we were sitting around having a family meal. Once we had finished eating we reflected on the great memories made and prepared ourselves for a return to normality. Our conversation

turned into prayer followed by a time of silence to see if the Lord wanted to say anything to us. We try and 'wait' regularly because we are desperate for our two kids to learn that prayer is a conversation and not a monologue. After a minute or so in silence, our daughter Amelie spoke up, knowing nothing of my encounter at the front of that tent. A little tentatively she said, 'Dad, it's a bit weird but I think Jesus wants you to be braver going forward.' Understandably, I was somewhat taken aback, but I was prepared to hear what the Lord was saying loud and clear to me. In Joshua chapter 1, he is told three times by the Lord to be 'strong and courageous' in verses that are close to each other: 6, 7 and 9. Why does he tell him that? Because he knows that what is ahead will need bravery.

Fast forward to today and I now find myself leading the Evangelical Alliance. This role is certainly a real privilege but it also explains why the Lord has been showing me that I need to be braver. There are so many challenges around us, not least when it comes to issues of marriage and sexuality and the need to remain orthodox on these matters. It is so important that we are able to stand firmly on biblical teaching and yet also reach out to those around us with a message of hope that can only be found in the gospel.

For us evangelicals, this next decade is going to be really significant as we face up to the increasingly choppy waters ahead of us. We must stand firm on God's Word in a time of incredible challenge, both culturally and spirituality. We need to be prepared to be distinct, despite the overwhelming pressure to conform to the secular tsunami taking place in culture. We at the Evangelical Alliance need to play our part in helping to strengthen the evangelical church at this challenging time. We are here for you. We have an opportunity to extend our prophetic imaginations as to what is possible, and be clear on what we believe, without missing the chance to share our message with others.



*We must stand firm on God's Word in a time of incredible challenge, both culturally and spirituality.*



As well as being braver, we must make sure that we are also kinder. We must be courageous and loving, biblical and compassionate, not treating people as objects, but instead disagreeing well and without prejudice. We must not be foolhardy in our bravery but treat everyone with the dignity that they deserve and as someone for whom Jesus died. So as we look out on an increasingly challenging landscape, let's be praying for one another, standing together, remaining hopeful, as we long to see many people come to faith in Jesus.

*Gavin Calver is the CEO of the Evangelical Alliance. He has a burning passion to see the church working together to share the gospel throughout the UK. Formerly the leader of Youth for Christ and chair of Spring Harvest, he's an ordained evangelist and regular public speaker, and has authored six books. Married to Anne, they have two children, Amelie and Daniel. He loves new challenges, is a passionate AFC Wimbledon supporter and was part of the team that broke the World Record for the longest 5-a-side football match.*

