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We Need to Talk

Neal DeRoo
Dordt College, neal.deroo@dordt.edu

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We Need to Talk

Abstract

Posting about gender issues and Yik Yak from *In All Things* - an online hub committed to the claim that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ has implications for the entire world.

<http://inallthings.org/we-need-to-talk/>

Keywords

In All Things, gender issues, dialogue, God's image, Yik Yak, profanity, social media

Disciplines

Christianity | Gender, Race, Sexuality, and Ethnicity in Communication | Social Media

Comments

In All Things is a publication of the [Andreas Center for Reformed Scholarship and Service](#) at Dordt College.

We Need to Talk

 [all in allthings.org/we-need-to-talk/](http://allthings.org/we-need-to-talk/)

Neal DeRoo

“Hoe, stfu”

“Shut up, ho, and get off the stage.”

“What I would pay for someone to shut the power off and shut her up.”

*“Of course I believe in equal rights for women. Just kidding, suck my d***.”*

This is how Christians talk. We might not like to acknowledge that fact, but a fact it is, since all of these quotes were taken from the [Yik-Yak](#) feed at a Christian college campus. Obviously, not all Christians talk this way, but a quick browse through social media sites and comment sections of news articles and blogs reveals that these comments are not isolated incidences in the Christian community. Many Christians talk this way (at least online). So how can things like this be said by Christians about other Christians?

We can't answer that question yet, as a Christian community, because we haven't yet found a way to talk about gender issues. It's too hard, and too divisive, to have those conversations, given the wide diversity of opinions that Christians hold on these topics. Some Christians describe themselves proudly as feminists, while others think that word has no more legitimate place in Christian discourse than the other F-word. Others would claim that, while the comments above are definitely off-color, they are also just a few college kids goofing around—the comments are dumb, but harmless, and people need to “get over it” and “lighten up.” For still other Christians, comments like the ones above make them think that the church is not a place for them or their gifts, and they either leave the church altogether, or live thinking they're second-class citizens in the eyes of their church (and maybe even of their God).

But while there may be some grey areas, and some gender issues on which we cannot all agree, there are certainly some things that we can agree on. For one, all people, male and female, are created in God's image. To honor the God we cannot see, we must honor the image of that God that we can see (1 John 4:20). Does anyone think the comments at the beginning of this post honor God or God's image-bearers? Is the person being talked about honored by those comments? The speaker? The hearers? Anyone?

We also all know the world is broken. We believe God is working to restore the brokenness brought to this world by human sinfulness because God is not ok with sin distorting the creation God made to be “very good” (Genesis 1:31). Hating, belittling, or harassing someone on the basis of their gender is an example of the brokenness of the world, and should have no part in God's very good creation. If we are willing to condemn sin, why can we not condemn the distorted understanding of humanity that leads to the comments given at the beginning of this post? Why can't we even talk about it?

Part of the reason we can't talk about it is because we can't agree on what exactly it is. One person's gender discrimination seems, to someone else, to be God's creative will; where some see differences to be used, together, for the betterment of creation, others see domination; where some see oppression, others see complementarity.

But part of the reason we can't agree on what it is, is because we are unwilling (or unable) to talk about it. We are convinced (perhaps in part from previous experiences) that we will not be understood, so there's no point in trying to talk about it. The hurts we've experienced from previous conversations come with us,

causing us to put people into camps: the person in front of us becomes a 'type' rather than a person, someone like 'them' rather than someone like God. And we know what 'they' are like, so this person will be just like 'them,' and so they can never get what I'm trying to say, and instead they'll just assume I'm wrong or crazy or evil. And I'll assume the same about them.

The more we let the bad experiences of previous conversations prevent us from talking meaningfully with the people before us now, the further we get from genuinely knowing each other, and the further apart the church grows. And that distance between us makes it even harder to talk with each other.

So we talk at each other instead. The image of God gets lost amid the stereotypes and assumptions. And things get said. Things that do not honor God, or God's image, or anyone or anything. Things that cause a great deal of pain and separation and brokenness.

Things like those Yik-Yak comments. And in those comments, and the things that get said (or don't get said) in response to them, Christian communities seem to perpetuate the pain, separation, and brokenness of sin, rather than offering a sanctuary from it.

Can we talk about that?

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