

Is Christian Maturity a Pipe Dream?

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Edit: This post has received a lot of attention, so let me add a disclaimer. If you are a Rachel Held Evans fan, please read the entire article before commenting. You will see that I am not a Driscoll-ite, nor am I attempting to defame RHE (she has written some great stuff). I am bringing up a serious concern over the manner in which Christians debate. This particular scenario just happens to provide an excellent object lesson.

If you are an evangelical Christian, run in those circles, or know anyone who does, you have probably heard the name [Rachel Held Evans](#) spoken at some point. Evans is, by all accounts, a dynamic, intelligent progressive Christian blogger, who has gathered quite the following in the last few years for her over-the-top style and ubiquity in the media.

Evans has had a particular negative interest in [Mars Hill Church](#) pastor Mark Driscoll for some time now. She takes issue with his anti-feminist teachings, blatant machismo, and

authoritarian attitude toward the running of his church families' lives.

To be sure, his antics, which are often featured in newspaper articles as examples of Christian extremism, are many times detestable to those of us who believe women have an important role to play in the church and world. There have been a number of recent outcries for his silence or discipline from outside Mars Hill Church, and there has even been some dissent from inside his own flock.

But Evans has taken her hatred (and I don't use that word lightly) of Driscoll to new, and unhealthy, levels. A quick search on her website reveals that she has mentioned Driscoll on her blog *at least* a staggering 66 times. All of it painting Driscoll in a negative light, and often employing words like *bullying* and *ranting* to describe Driscoll's words.

Recently, Evans posted [another article about Driscoll](#) that has been picked up by major news outlets and is spreading like wildfire across the internet. In it, she shares several thousand words scraped together from Mars Hill's internal message boards by angry former church members, where Mark Driscoll (under the pseudonym William Wallace II) makes some incredibly distasteful comments about both men and women in the church. It is significant to note that these are not recent comments, but ones Driscoll wrote **fourteen years ago**.

Evans' gleeful response to this new ammunition in her war against all things Driscoll is, in my opinion, just as distasteful as the comments themselves. As she claims to take her readers "Inside Mark Driscoll's Disturbed Mind," her hatred is unrestrained. It puts me in mind of all those nature documentaries I watched as a kid, where predators would single out the wounded prey, separate them from the herd, and then pounce in a bloody flurry of claws and teeth.

It all makes me shudder.

In a day and age not too far removed from now, this sort of vitriolic speech would be called something else entirely – *slander* – and the one issuing it could be held to account. These days, it seems anything goes, so long as it helps to sell add space or validate personal feelings of mistreatment.

Let me be clear about something. My concern here is not for Mark Driscoll. He has demonstrated an unbiblical approach to masculinity, femininity, and sex and has too often given Christianity a black eye with his mouth and his antics.

I don't like what he says, and I don't allow him to speak for me as man or a committed follower of Jesus Christ.

My concern here is not for Rachel Held Evans, either. Her approach to her disagreement with Driscoll is little better than the target of her outrage.

My concern is for the people of Mars Hill Church, many of whom do not understand what all of the humdrum is about, and who will be left leaderless, confused, and possibly jaded if Evans has her way and Driscoll is suddenly forcibly removed from his position as pastor.

And my concern is also for everyone else whose Facebook and Twitter feeds are inundated with flowing hate-speech from two sides of a very public argument, both of which claim to be Christian.

Yes, when Jesus walked the earth he made jabs at self-righteous religious leaders. But his mission was not to start a hate campaign against the Pharisees and Sadducees. He spent the bulk of his time healing the sick, loving the poor, and preaching the good news of his Father's Kingdom and reconciliation with God through himself.

No one can claim either Evans or Driscoll are walking in Jesus' footsteps in this.

Our society has largely lost the ability to discern fact from fiction, truth from hype. If you question whether or not this is so, I offer you the case of the recent internet prank in which a Facebook user posted an old picture from the set of *Jurassic Park* with director Steven Spielberg sitting in front of an animatronic dinosaur with the caption labeling him as a disgraceful hunter posing next to the Triceratops he slaughtered. The public outrage was swift and real. *Really* people? You can read about it [here](#) and [here](#).

What concerns me most is that this lack of discernment seems to have worked its way into the church as well. I watch with amazement, every time one of these articles is released, as faithful followers of Christ devolve into mobs of internet trolls taking one side or the other, spewing uncontrolled hatred through their keyboards, and making a mockery of the cross through their actions.

We must be more discerning than this.

As those called to witness to the good news of Jesus Christ, we must find a better way – the way of humility and self-sacrifice. We must learn to take in what we read and hear, then filter it through the the message of scripture before reposting it with our self-righteous sound bytes.

Let me be clear: it is not un-Christian to have opinions, or to express them, or to point out folly and false teachings where they exist. These are right and good. But we should do so in a manner that conforms to the message we have received. **In other words, we must respond with spiritual maturity.**

Hear these words from Paul to the church at Philippi, while he was in prison for preaching the gospel in Rome.

Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the

faith of the gospel without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. (Phil 1:27-28a)

Mark Driscoll's reign will likely come to an end, if he doesn't change his tune. We should pray for his change of heart before that happens, and for the people under his spiritual care in either case.

In the meantime, I hope we as a church will learn to discern what is the good and proper way to disagree with one another, offering the grace that we first received in the place of hatred and contempt.

Let us be "as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves" (Matt 10:16), so that, in our disagreements, we do not bring shame upon ourselves and damage our witness to the gospel.