

# #metoo

By now you've probably seen or heard of the #metoo movement in the media somewhere. It's an evolving movement, which started in 2006 but really took off last year in the wake of sexual abuse scandals in the United States. Women everywhere tweeted or posted #metoo in an attempt to break the silence surrounding sexual abuse. It has since evolved into something different, but it has created the possibilities for a conversation.

I remember the day it broke. #metoo appeared beside tales of sexual harassment and abuse throughout twitter and facebook. Everything from cat calling in the street through to ongoing sexual destruction was referenced by women from all walks of life. It was a harrowing moment.

A lot of my friends put up posts. One after the other. Sometimes just the reference 'metoo' appeared next to their name. Sometimes there was more detail. The impact of so many women having an experience of sexual abuse or harassment was considerable. I like to think that people were genuinely affected by it. I certainly was.

We should have been affected by this. It is awful that any one person is treated this way. And there was more than one person; many ordinary women seem to have subjected to such horrible treatment simply because they were women and they have never been able to forget it. They may have moved past it, processed it, possibly forgiven it, but never been able to forget it. This is an outrage. There should be justice!

I am glad that the God I know in Christ is just. God teaches us to fear him, to know that he sees the way we treat others, even behind closed doors. So, those who fearfully scrawled #metoo on their social media posts can be sure of a just judge who sees all and judges all. Those who have used their power to devour other's lives, rendering them silent and pliable do not have the last word. This may not comfort or help the pain, but it is real and true just the same. There is justice. God is just.

In Christ, we have a Saviour who has come to our world and seen the privilege of powerful people turned against the innocent. He has felt the nails of injustice and he didn't say a word. For our souls' sake, he suffered evil and knew the depths of its pain. He knows about the utter loneliness of unjust suffering caused by others. He rose again to be our advocate, to speak for us and to bring us to God. Jesus gives us a place in his home, to be whole. With God, we are heard. We are believed. We are understood. We are finally, completely safe.

The #metoo movement is, of course, not without its problems. It is seen by some as increasingly representative of already privileged women, consolidating their own power. The 'name and shame' element of the project has polarised people. While it quickly brings punitive action against those who are guilty of these crimes, they are not tried fairly and have no defence in a hungry media. It has also been suggested that there is a significant hesitation by these women to care for the concerns of lower and working class women. These are serious issues.

There are likely to be more such issues developing from this movement as it evolves in the difficult culture created by the sexual and gender wars currently in play. After all, it isn't surprising that

there should be weaknesses in a movement. No one movement can represent every marginalised and damaged group in our world. We need a justice bigger than ourselves, our tribe, our group. We need a justice that works for all members of humanity as a whole without favouritism. Once again, we find ourselves needing a justice that only God can bring. Hi.

Nevertheless, one thing the #metoo movement has done is to break the silence and create a moment of righteous anger. These are good things. The capacity to speak and be heard, the reflex to be angry about injustice, sexual abuse and bad treatment of others – all of these are gifts from a relation and just God. It's a further demonstration that our lives are not merely figments of our imaginings in bodies held together by atoms co-operating for a time before dispersing. We are people, made in God's image and people matter to God. He listens to us and teaches us to listen to one another. He shows us the shape of love: that it is something outside of ourselves, transcending our own selfish desires. He makes us moral creatures, who reflexively want things to be 'right' even though we aren't able to understand or explain what we mean by that. God crafts our hearts so that we believe in and long for justice, even when we can't find it on this earth. And in our yearning for justice, we find ourselves longing for God: the Judge of the all the earth, who will do right.

-//-