

TIME

Christians for Gay Marriage Launch “Not All Like That” Campaign

By Elizabeth Dias - Sept. 04, 2013

<http://swampland.time.com/2013/09/04/christians-for-gay-marriage-launch-not-all-like-that-campaign/#ixzz2dyXOJsYs>

They call themselves the NALT Christians, and Wednesday morning they quietly launched a video campaign with a controversial message: there is nothing anti-Biblical or inherently sinful about being gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender.

NALT stands for “Not All Like That”—Christians who say “We are not all anti-gay”—and the NALT Christian Project aims to give LGBT-affirming Christians a platform to tell the world, and especially young gay people, that you can be a Christian and still support equal rights for gays. Modeled after Dan Savage’s It Gets Better Project, the NALT Project lets anyone upload a video to share why he or she is a Christian and supports gay rights.

The project began when Wayne Besen and Evan Hurst of Truth Wins Out, which works to counter anti-gay religious extremism, collaborated with John Shore, a California pastor with the Progressive Christian Alliance. Frustrated that many people think Christians who oppose homosexuality and gay marriage like Tony Perkins, Maggie Gallagher and Pat Robertson speak for all Bible followers, they reached out to Savage to see how they might create a platform like It Gets Better to help affirming Christians speak up. “People feel they have to make a choice between their faith and their sexuality, and for some people that is devastating,” Besen says. “Actually you don’t have to make a choice.”

NALT launched Wednesday morning with thirty videos, mostly from allies. Supporters of the project now include Auburn Theological Seminary, Covenant Network of Presbyterians, Methodists in New Directions, and The Evangelical Network. Young evangelicals are one of NALT’s main target audiences. “Young people are very uncomfortable when they see these finger-wagging evangelicals who don’t seem to have much in common with the Jesus they believe in,” Besen explains.

Shore’s own conversion experience is one many evangelicals might understand. He was sitting at his desk in a law office 16 years ago when, “suddenly and out of nowhere,” as he says, he felt the Holy Spirit’s presence and he fell to his knees in prayer. The next Sunday he knew he needed to go to church, so he drove to nearby First Presbyterian Church of San Diego, and he and his wife began attending.

But six years later, the Shores hit a problem: they wanted to volunteer as deacons, but a church leader asked them to sign a paper agreeing that no one who is in a same-gender relationship

should have a position of church authority. “I thought the lady was joking,” John recalls. “The idea that becoming a Christian meant that I was supposed to suddenly have an understanding that my LGBT friends were suddenly immoral was repugnant to me. It wasn’t reasonable to me that it would be integral to Christian theology.” His wife, Catherine, put it even more strongly: “If this is an inextricable part of the Christian experience, I’m out,” she told him. “Somebody’s misread something.”

That moment pushed the Shores to a new level of commitment to equality. They joined an Episcopal church and started studying the Bible to learn what it actually says about homosexuality. Of the more than 31,000 passages in the Bible, Shore says, homosexuality is only discussed in six or seven, and Jesus never demands his followers sacrifice compassion. “It actually is more Biblical if you make affirmation of LGBT people part of your understanding of the word of God,” he says. Plus, he argues, theology follows sociology. “It changed when it came to slavery, it changed when it came to women’s suffrage, it will change with this issue.”

The test for NALT is how many NALT Christians are out there, and how many of them will submit videos of support. Many Christians believe the Bible teaches homosexuality is a sin and are not comfortable with newer interpretative methods that make room for marriage equality. “We have a disagreement with some people about what is best for people with same sex attraction,” says Peter Sprigg, senior fellow at the Family Research Council. “We as Christians promote unconditional love—it is the liberal side that promotes conditional love that will not accept our love unless it accompanied by support for a particular political agenda.”

Shore however is hoping for volume. “Every video is a drop of water in the bucket to wash away this false Christianity that’s been out there,” he says. “It’s time for this project.”

<http://notalllikethat.org/videos/>