

# **How should Christians respond to “Cancel Culture”?**

## **Why this topic?**

**Cancel culture is the modern social attitude that controversial speech or behavior must be punished through public shaming, silencing, boycotting, firing, bankrupting, deplatforming, etc. The result is that the offender’s influence, presence, and/or reputation is “cancelled out.”**

- It’s proper for whistle-blowers to reveal corruption and illegality or for abused women to come forward, confront their abuser, and make sure he is held accountable.
- But cancel culture goes far beyond that, setting out new rules to retaliate against speech, behavior, or even thought that has been pre-judged as “offensive” or even simply controversial. In cancel culture, people can be ostracized, their reputations smeared, and their careers ruined although they have broken no laws or engaged in any malicious behavior.

Cancel culture is the outgrowth of two other, equally dangerous things: political correctness and postmodernism. [Political correctness](#) is the attempt to minimize social and institutional offense through policing speech (and therefore thought), forcing the use of certain words and banning other words. [Postmodernism](#) asserts that all truth claims are subjective. Truth becomes a matter of preference, and “tolerance” is promoted as a supreme value. However, the more “tolerant” a culture becomes, the more intolerant it is of anyone it perceives as intolerant. People deemed “intolerant” or potentially giving offense must be silenced—and cancel culture is the result.

## **Cancel culture is associated with several problems that can be addressed biblically:**

1) **Cancel culture is rash.** There is little concern for due process, and in its place are immediate outrage and snap judgments. Fueling the controversy is partial, often biased information. The Bible commands, “Give careful thought to the paths for your feet” ([Proverbs 4:26](#)), and we are to “live sensibly” ([Titus 2:12, NASB](#)). Irrational thinking and the mob mentality have no place in the Christian’s life.

2) **Cancel culture is spiteful.** The vitriolic contempt coming from the cancel crowd is often shockingly ugly. Selecting a person for “cancellation” seems to be tantamount to declaring that person worthy of hate, and with that comes permission to slander him or her. In contrast to promoting the malice of the cancel culture, Jesus commands us to “love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you” ([Luke 6:27–28](#)). Our speech should “be gracious and attractive” ([Colossians 4:6, NLT](#)). Vicious, obscene, or hate-filled speech has no place in the Christian’s life.

3) **Cancel culture is judgmental.** The self-appointed enforcers of “acceptable” speech have gone to great lengths to dig up material over which to cancel others. People have lost their jobs over articles written three decades ago, jokes told in one’s youth, classic literature read aloud, and opposite editorials published. There is no room for nonconformity—or free speech. If the language police were judged by their own severe standard, how many of them would remain un-cancelled? Scripture warns against hypocritical, self-righteous judging ([Matthew 7:1](#)). Hypocrisy or a faultfinding, hypercritical spirit has no place in the Christian’s life.

4) **Cancel culture is unforgiving.** Past instances of inappropriate or hurtful speech or actions, no matter how long ago, are not to be forgiven in cancel culture. Once a person is cancelled, there is no way to restore that person to the good graces of society—there is no grace. There is no chance for redemption. Rehabilitation and restoration are not the goal, and neither is learning from one’s mistakes. The goal is to smear, defame, and malign. The Bible points to repentance and commands us to forgive one another: “Make allowance for each other’s faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others” ([Colossians 3:13, NLT](#)). An unforgiving, loveless attitude has no place in the Christian’s life.

- In the midst of cancel culture, we must use our words wisely. Believers are to “pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness” ([1 Timothy 6:11](#)). We are to “speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ” ([Ephesians 4:15, NLT](#)). And we must continue to reject hatred and love others, even our enemies ([1 John 4:7](#); [Matthew 5:43–48](#)).
- Cancel culture views people with whom a plurality of people disagree as unredeemable and worthy of spite. Christian culture sees no one as unredeemable. Repentance and change are always possible, and forgiveness is available. Christian culture sees no one as an object of spite. God’s love is always available. There are no lost causes.

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## **Questions that Christians Should Address:**

### **1. What does the Bible say about forgiveness?**

- **Scripture Reference:** Jesus' teaching on forgiveness, such as in [Matthew 18:21-22](#) ("How many times should I forgive my brother... up to seven times? I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times") or [Ephesians 4:32](#) ("Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you").

- **Consideration:** *Does "canceling" someone align with the biblical call to forgive and extend grace? How can Christians balance holding people accountable with offering forgiveness?*

## 2. What does the Bible say about judgment and condemnation?

- **Scripture Reference:** *Matthew 7:1-5* ("Do not judge, or you too will be judged") and *John 8:7* ("Let him who is without sin cast the first stone").
- **Consideration:** *How should Christians navigate the temptation to condemn others publicly? Is cancel culture a form of judgment, and how does it contrast with God's call to show mercy?*

## 3. How should we balance justice and mercy?

- **Scripture Reference:** *Micah 6:8* ("He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God").
- **Consideration:** *How can Christians advocate for justice in a way that also upholds mercy? Is cancel culture an appropriate response to injustice, or does it run the risk of becoming too punitive?*

## 4. What is the role of repentance in cancel culture?

- **Scripture Reference:** *Luke 15:11-32* (The Parable of the Prodigal Son), which emphasizes repentance and restoration.
- **Consideration:** *When someone makes a mistake or does something harmful, how should Christians view the process of repentance and restoration? Is there space for people to grow and change, or does cancel culture leave little room for redemption?*

## 5. How should Christians treat those who hold differing views?

- **Scripture Reference:** *Romans 14:1-4* ("Accept the one whose faith is weak, without quarreling over disputable matters").

- **Consideration:** *In a polarized society, how can Christians engage with others who hold views that seem offensive or contrary to their beliefs? Should Christians engage in "cancelling" those they disagree with, or is there a more constructive, loving approach to disagreements?*

## 6. What is the impact of cancel culture on community and relationships?

- **Scripture Reference:** *1 Corinthians 12:25-26* ("There should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it").
- **Consideration:** *Does cancel culture undermine community? How can Christians foster unity and reconciliation, even in the face of harm or offense?*

## 7. Are we more concerned with our own reputation than the well-being of others?

- **Scripture Reference:** *Philippians 2:3-4* ("Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others").
- **Consideration:** *How does cancel culture reflect our human tendency to protect our own image? Should Christians be more concerned with the welfare of others, even if it means stepping out of their comfort zone?*

## 8. Is there a difference between holding someone accountable and seeking retribution?

- **Scripture Reference:** *Galatians 6:1* ("Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted").
- **Consideration:** *How do we distinguish between a righteous desire for accountability and the sinful desire for retribution? Is canceling someone a form of justice, or does it often veer into vengeance?*

## 9. Does cancel culture reflect a biblical view of human dignity?

- **Scripture Reference:** *Genesis 1:26-27* ("So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them").

- **Consideration:** *Does the practice of cancel culture respect the inherent dignity of all people, as image-bearers of God? Are people's worth and identity tied to their actions, or are they still loved and valued by God even when they fail?*

## **10. How can Christians engage with the culture of their time in a Christlike way?**

- **Scripture Reference:** *Romans 12:2* ("Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind").
- **Consideration:** *How can Christians engage with the surrounding culture and the prevalence of cancel culture in a way that reflects Christ's love, justice, and truth? Is it possible to be both relevant to society and faithful to biblical values?*

## **11. What is the long-term effect of canceling individuals or groups?**

- **Scripture Reference:** *Romans 5:10* ("For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!").
- **Consideration:** *What are the long-term effects of canceling people on society as a whole? Is the aim of cancel culture to build a better society, or does it inadvertently create division and bitterness?*

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### **Conclusion:**

- It is not Biblical - Contradicting the Biblical Call to Forgiveness and Reconciliation
- It Closes the door to "talk about Christ" and to share the "Good News"
- It is self-serving – Trying to remove God's Authority
- It is a misunderstanding of "Justice", and "Redemption"
- It Stifles Dialogue and Critical Thinking