



Forgiveness and Restoration in a Cancel Culture

15 Jan 2023 – Lk 19:1–10
Small Group Notes

Our current series, 21st century discipleship, explores several issues in our time. This week we are thinking about cancel culture and how this connects with our Christian values around forgiveness and restoration.

The Cambridge Dictionary defines cancel culture as, “a way of behaving in a society or group, especially on social media, in which it is common to completely reject and stop supporting someone because they have said or done something that offends you”.

What examples of cancel culture can you think of?

How might cancel culture, affecting celebrities and companies, filter down into the rest of society?

To what degree should Christian ethics inform the ethics of a society? What should we be aiming for in our engagement with culture as Christians?

Are there limits to the morality that we should want to hold a non-Christian society to? If so what might these be?

Are power dynamics at play within cancel culture?

A person can be cancelled based on a single statement or action. How is this fuelled by the internet?

What are some of the unwritten rules that you are aware of?

How might cancel culture especially affect young people?

Can you think of any examples where artists, comedians, or creators are trying to push back against cancel culture? Or examples where such attempts have failed?

As Christians where do our values around forgiveness and restoration sit with cancel culture?

How is cancel culture similar or different from being shunned within a community in ancient times?

Our study today will look at three bible passages. These are passages are meant to be held in tension with each other.

Read 1 Cor 5:1-2

What do you think, for Paul, is shocking about the situation here?

What are the possibilities around the phrase, 'and you are proud'?

What do you feel about what Paul says they should do in this matter?

Our next passage is likely about the same man.

Read 2 Cor 2:6-8

What do you think has happened in-between these two passages?

What do you like about Paul's response here?

What do these passages say about the tension we hold, as Christians, between grace and sin?

In modern times when it is appropriate for a group to help a person with changing their behaviour? How do we determine when a collective response is necessary?

How does a collective response fit with our beliefs about forgiveness and restoration?

Read Luke 19:1-10

Luke 19:1-10 – Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. ² A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. ³ He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. ⁴ So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way.

⁵ When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." ⁶ So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly.

⁷ All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a sinner."

⁸ But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount."

⁹ Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰ For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

Why would the role of chief tax collector have made Zacchaeus repulsive to the Jewish people? What was this like for them?

Why would Zacchaeus have chosen this lifestyle?

What examples can you think of, in scripture, of people that were outcasts, but were embraced by God or his people?

The church has a history of extending forgiveness and restoration to the most unlikely of people. How do we see Jesus setting an example of this here?

What is profound about the way Jesus engaged Zacchaeus? Why might someone not engage Zacchaeus like this?

The crowd are shocked by this. What might they be thinking?
Is there a modern day equivalent to help us connect with what they were feeling?

What might you feel as one of the disciples?

Place yourself in the story. Where would you be in this story and why? Would you be like Jesus, able to welcome someone that everyone has turned against. Would you be like disciples, unable to be proactive, but waiting to see how it would turn out. Would you be like the crowd, upset by Jesus' action. Or do you most connect with what Zacchaeus would be feeling?

If you were giving advice to a friend that is finding forgiving someone difficult, what might you say?

What might offering restitution to someone be like in our time?
Jesus here gives Zacchaeus a way back into being accepted, which is something that Zacchaeus can't do for himself.

How, do you think, we are to reflect God's character, regarding sin, forgiveness, and restitution?

Radical forgiveness and radical restoration have marked Christians and the church throughout the ages. What about us?

Can you think of any example of forgiveness or restoration that you have found encouraging?

Do you have a personal example of being forgiven or restored in a such a way that enabled you to live differently thereafter?

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