

WES: Okay. Welcome to a very special episode of the Radically Christian Bible Study Podcast. I'm recording this in my home with my beautiful wife, Hollee.

HOLLEE: That's me.

WES: We've been meaning to do this for quite a while and we haven't made time to do it, so I'm glad we're finally getting to do this.

HOLLEE: Thanks for having me.

WES: It's been a while since we've done it. So if you think that this episode sounds a little bit different, we're not recording in our fancy studio at the church building. We're recording it at our house. But I think that this will be a good conversation because we're talking about cancel culture. And the reason I especially wanted to have this conversation with my wife is because she follows sort of the sports and entertainment world a lot more than I do and has some thoughts on this that I thought would be really helpful for us, and we received a question about it. I think we were actually planning on having this conversation anyway. You had listened maybe to Reba McEntire's podcast.

HOLLEE: Shout out, Reba.

WES: You were listening to her podcast and they talked about it, and then we received a question from one of our listeners, so I'll try to read this and talk into the microphone at the same time. Okay. So one of our listeners, who signed it -- I love the way that she signed it. She signed, "Not ready to be canceled." So she says, "Love the podcast and I have really enjoyed for months having something other than news to listen to in the mornings. I would love to hear you guys discuss cancel culture.

Of course, at this moment in time, I can claim I hate cancel culture because it's affecting me on a more direct level and I see that it's out of control. However, the same reasoning I have used in the past are the same ones that the other side is using now. I've, quote, "canceled" many people on social media and in my friendship circles for years because I don't want what they are posting to be on my wall or feed, nor do I want it penetrating my mind. I have, quote, "canceled" a whole host of entertainment options due to my desire to honor God with my choices and do my best to Philippians 4:8 those choices. There are people I don't hang out with because of what they're doing when they hang out. It simply doesn't align with my personal goals and could derail me from reaching said goals. That doesn't mean I won't have lunch or sit down for coffee, etc. It doesn't mean that I want to cancel them in every aspect of their being. It simply means we have different views on how to entertain ourselves. There are people I won't have certain conversations with, but, again, I don't want to cancel their entire being, nor is it my intention to, quote, "silence" them. I just don't want to engage in certain conversations with them. I'm Enneagram 9 and do not like conflict in heated, spur-of-the-moment-type situations. I usually need a quiet moment to discuss calmly after quite a bit of praying. But if I continue down the rabbit hole, yes, there are industries I would like to cancel -- recreational drugs, the porn industry, etc. -- I don't want to cancel the people addicted to or participating in those industries, but I encourage my children, as well as those I still influence, to not participate, i.e. cancel them from their options. Wes, my son would not

be in the trouble that he's in had he canceled from his inner circle of influence some of the people or entertainment choices that he's made. I remember having very distinct conversations with both of my children. One needed to push people out, and the other had to learn to let people in. I get that we need to stay in the conversation and offer a certain level of influence, but when they start influencing me more than I influence them, I have to push them back, which some view as canceling them. Where is the balance? Where do we go from here, and how do we have the conversation moving forward? Signed, Not ready to be canceled." I thought that was a fantastic e-mail; that's why I read it in its entirety. Really good.

So let's start with definitions of "cancel" because I think that this e-mailer -- this listener who e-mailed in, I think that she's operating with maybe a different definition of "cancel" than others might be using and she's kind of being hard on herself in calling some of the things that she's done "cancel culture" or "canceling someone," so let's -- and this is kind of a new phrase or a new idea that we've been throwing around lately, and maybe some people that are listening have never even heard of this idea of cancel culture or canceling someone. So Hollee, what would you say is the definition of "cancel culture"?

HOLLEE: Well, I think maybe one way you could think of it is like of a TV show series. Once it's canceled, it's canceled. It's never coming back. That series, that episode, that show is never coming back. It's gone for good, you know? I looked up "cancel culture," the word -- the phrase in dictionary.com, and it says, "Withdrawing support for public figures or

companies after they have done or said something considered objectionable or offensive; a cultural boycott." And I think it's -- and we could continue talking more about this, but I think it's like extreme; you know, cancel, never coming back. You know, you are pushed out. Pushed out for good.

WES: Yeah, that's really -- I like that, "cultural boycott." That's really good. So I tried to think -- without looking at any Internet sources, I wanted to kind of formulate my definition, how I define it. So Hollee's was the official definition, or at least dictionary.com's definition, so here's how I would define it. I said, "attempting to permanently and publicly discredit someone for words or actions that violate core values of the community." Okay. So I'm going to kind of walk through my definition. I think -- and Hollee kind of touched on that. You touched on the idea of -- that it's permanent. We're not just talking about, "Hey, we need to take a break from this person." It's a permanent cancellation, like "You're done. We're done with you. We're finished with you," and it's public. I think that there's a big difference between a person saying, "I'm not going to listen to this music anymore," or, "I'm not going to follow this person on Twitter anymore," or even, "I'm going to unfriend this person." "I'm going to curate my news feed," much like the listener was saying that she's done, and we've all done that and we have to do that. We can't follow everybody. We can't listen to everybody. We can't really have room in our life for everybody. And so --

HOLLEE: We have to filter.

WES: Right. We're all filtering. We can't hang out with everybody in the

world. We can't spend time with everybody. Not everybody is going to be our best friend. Not everybody is going to be somebody we follow on Twitter. Not everybody is going to be our friend on Facebook, and so we're all, like you said, filtering or curating our news feed or our life or our friendships. We're all deciding, "These are the people I'm going to hang out with and these are the people I'm going to kind of put some distance between me and them," for whatever reason. And I don't think that's canceling someone, to put distance between yourself and those people, unless you do it publicly. Now, if you're getting on Facebook and saying, "Hey, this person, Wes McAdams, is a horrible person and nobody should be friends with him and people need to watch out for this guy because he's a bad guy," now that's --

HOLLEE: "And burn his books while you're at it."

WES: Yeah, exactly. Which there's been some people that have done that. But that's -- I think in order for it to be canceling, it has to be both permanent and public, and it's really about discrediting a person. I think it's really about saying, "This person is not trustworthy. This is a bad person." And it's when they violate -- the way I put it is that they violate core values of the community, and that's really important because what this is is actually just a modern version of shaming people, and shaming people has always been part of community life, community culture. And so this is a modern spin on it and we're calling it "cancel culture," but it's really nothing new. It's really something very old that ever since time began and communities had core shared values and they said, "These are the things that are really important to our culture. These are things

that are really important to our shared belonging. These are our values. This is our value system." When somebody violated those, especially in a big way, they would say, "You're done. You're out. We're finished with you." And so I'm not saying that's a good thing, necessarily, but I'm saying that's something that's always been part of community life, and so that's what happens when somebody is canceled, is that -- or that's the reason is because there is at least a perception that this person has violated core community values.

And I think one of the challenges right now is that we don't all share the same values, and so the reason somebody might get canceled is very different now than it used to be. The reason why the community might shame somebody now is different than it used to be, so we've put this new label on it but it's actually a practice that's really, really old. It's just that our values are shifting and we're living in a community, in a culture, that has various values.

HOLLEE: Did you want to talk about the difference between shaming someone and canceling them?

WES: I would love to hear your thoughts on that. I'm not sure.

HOLLEE: Well, I mean, I think canceling goes beyond shaming someone, like telling them, "Hey, what you did, what you said was wrong, John Doe." But then canceling goes beyond that. You know, it destroys their reputation. You know, you're never coming back from this. There's no hope for future redemption. And so there's a difference between shaming someone and telling them, "Hey, what you said was wrong. You don't need to say that anymore. Let's talk about this," and then

canceling someone.

WES: Yeah, I think that shaming someone -- there is a huge spectrum of what that might look like or what that might be. I mean -- and shame usually takes on a negative connotation in our culture. Usually -- a lot of work has been done with the idea of shame, and, usually, that's attached to what we think we are, who we think we are, what kind of a person we think we are. But, really, shame is about belonging. It's whether or not you belong. And shame can be used in very minimal ways to say, "If you belong to this group, we don't act that way. We don't do that around here. This isn't the way we act. If you act like that, you're acting like somebody that doesn't belong to our group." And so shame can be a good thing to help people realize this is how we belong in this community. This is how we act in this community. These are our values in this community.

But I think canceling someone is just an extreme version of shame, and I think maybe -- and to get to what you're talking about, too, I think that there's a place for disagreeing with somebody. Even public disagreement is not necessarily canceling. And it may feel -- it may feel like shaming someone and it may even have an element of that, to say, "That's wrong. People in this community don't do that." And so you're disagreeing with them, but you're not saying, "You're a horrible person and there's no redemption for you and you don't belong here anymore and you're out." You're just saying, "I disagree with this."

And I even think that we need to try not to shame someone. We need to try not to imply or state that they don't belong in our community. I

think that we have to start with the most mild form of disagreement. When somebody does something that's wrong, we simply say, "I disagree with you. I think that's wrong."

HOLLEE: But it seems like, especially with this recently, cancel culture -- it's like one shot and you are out. "You made one mistake. I never want to hear or see you or see your products ever again," you know. We're not giving -- we're not allowing for discussion. We're not allowing for forgiveness. We're not allowing for grace. It's one and you're done.

WES: Yeah. It's really -- when I think about shaming someone, or especially canceling them -- and, again, I think cancel is an extreme form of shame. It's going all the way to -- there's nothing beyond that other than, I guess, ending somebody's life, but it's ending their public life. It's really a public execution of their credit, of their influence, of their voice. It's publicly executing their persona and saying, "We're done with you and there's no resurrection. There's no coming back from this."

And I think that there's all kinds of ways that we -- humans have always done this, but I think one of the ways that we try to do this -- and we're often guilty of doing this -- is labeling people. And I think that's a way we try to publicly and permanently discredit somebody. We don't say, "Hey, I disagree with your position on that." And we do this even in the church. I think about the number of times that this happens to preachers and teachers, and we say, "That person's a false teacher." Well, wait a second. That's canceling them. That's attempting to publicly and permanently discredit them. You're trying to end their preaching career. You're trying to tell people, "Don't listen to that



person because he's a false teacher," whereas it would be much better to say, "I disagree with this preacher on X."

HOLLEE: Right. Again, taking it to extremes and -- yeah, yeah.

WES: Yeah. I think that when we -- and we do that -- again, we say, "Well, you're a Pharisee." "You're a" -- whatever. "You're a liberal," "You're a heretic," "You're a" -- whatever. We fill in the blank. And then in the culture -- in the secular culture, being a racist -- I mean, that is the ultimate -- right now, that's one of the values -- and, again, that's -- it's good to be opposed to racism. It's good to stand opposed to racism, but when you call somebody a racist, you don't just say, "I disagree with what you said. What you said reflects a value system that goes against our value system. This is wrong."

HOLLEE: "Let's talk about it."

WES: "Let's talk about it." And instead of saying that, you say, "You are a racist," and with the implication, "You will always be a racist and there is no redemption for you and you're done. We're finished with you. You're out." And so I think we have all kinds of examples of this, both that Christians have perpetrated, and, more recently, that Christians have stood against and said, "Don't do that. You shouldn't cancel people just because they said something or did something." I think this goes back, even in the public culture -- we were talking a second ago before we started recording about the Dixie Chicks and how that was one of the first --

HOLLEE: "The Chicks" now.

WES: Oh, yeah, sorry. Yeah, they changed their name. And, again,

they -- this was one of the first times that I remember a public figure speaking -- an entertainment figure -- Natalie, is that her name?

HOLLEE: Uh-huh.

WES: So Natalie said something about George W. Bush while she was in another country, and, I mean, I remember this. And she said something negative about the president, and a lot of people said, "We're done.

Never buy their music again. I will never listen to them again." And, again, that's not just saying, "We disagree with what she said. That was rude. That was uncalled for. She shouldn't have said that." It was going to the extreme and saying, "We're done with them forever."

HOLLEE: I had to sell my concert tickets, yeah.

WES: Yeah, exactly. Well, so let's talk about whether that's right or wrong. We've kind of made some implications that we think that that's wrong, and I think right now it's -- it is popular to say canceling someone is wrong, but that's an interesting subject, whether or not it's always wrong to cancel someone, whether or not it's always wrong -- and, again, selling concert tickets -- there's an example. Like is it wrong to say, "I'm personally not going to support this band anymore," or, "I'm not going to support this person anymore"? I don't think that's the same as canceling them. That's just saying, "I'm making this choice not to do that." But as soon as you go on social media -- and social media has sort of amplified all of this. But as soon as you go publicly and you not only state, "For me, I'm not going to do this," you have a rallying cry to rally condemnation -- you can rally support for somebody, but you can also rally condemnation, and it's like digitally grabbing the pitchforks and the

torches and saying, "We all need to rally around this condemnation and we are finished with these people," and I'm not just talking about the Dixie Chicks and what they said back in the '90s, or whenever that was. I mean, this happens all the time and it happens both on the left and the right side of our culture where we sort of all grab the pitchforks and grab the torches and say, "We're done with these people."

And I think there's a big difference between saying, "I'm not going to support this actor anymore," or, "I'm not going to support this band anymore," "I'm not going to support this musician anymore." I think we can make those decisions because, again, you can't watch every movie; you can't listen to all music, and so we're all curating our life and saying, "I'm going to listen to these kinds of artists," or, "I'm going to watch these kinds of movies," and so it's not really canceling somebody to say, "I'm going to navigate away from this artist and I'm going to navigate towards these other artists." But as soon as we publicly try to rally condemnation towards somebody because we don't like what they said, then that is canceling somebody.

HOLLEE: Right. And like in your definition, permanently and publicly. Permanently, "There's no chance I'm ever going to want to hear your voice again about anything." You know, "Go away and stay away," you know, and that's, again, extreme. Maybe a different -- something -- a different thing you could say is, instead of canceling someone, you know, "Go away for a little while." You know, recently someone -- a country music singer said something that he shouldn't have said and, you know, he needs to go away for a while. You know, we need to have discussions

with him and he needs to figure things out, whatever, whatever, whatever, and he does. He needs to go away for a while, think, you know, learn, and be educated and stay under the radar for a little bit and just think and stay away for a little bit. But that doesn't mean, maybe, that we don't forgive him later or we don't open lines of communication later or we don't -- I don't know.

WES: Yeah. Well, and it's interesting that that -- I'm not going to mention that artist's name for lots of reasons. One, because I don't remember what it was, but I do remember that he said the N word, and I think it's -- I think that this is a good indication -- I brought this up a minute ago, that shaming someone or to the extreme of canceling them or kicking them out of the community is all about values. What do we value? And every community has a shared set of values, and when someone goes to the extreme and violates those values, there's going to be some level of shame involved in saying that behavior is not acceptable.

Now, there has been a lot of time where saying the N word or being racist or being overtly or implicitly racist has been tolerated, has been overlooked. Now our value system has shifted and those things are no longer tolerated. I, for one, think that that shift in values is a good thing, that we need to become, as a culture, less racist where we don't tolerate or overlook or be okay with someone saying --

HOLLEE: Right. You have consequences.

WES: Right.

HOLLEE: And you need to face them.

WES: Absolutely. And so -- and that's the big question here. It's not just with racism or whatever value is violated or overstepped, but what values will we share as a culture? What values do we not share as a culture? And then how will we handle it when someone violates our cultural values? And there's all kinds of different value systems at play here, and, as Christians, we have some unique values. We have sexual ethics, for one. That's one of our unique -- our unique value systems, and there was a time in our culture -- in western culture where we had that in common, where our sexual ethics were very similar. But as time progresses, our sexual ethics, our value system that Christians have with those that are not Christians is shifting, and they don't value -- the world does not value the same kinds of things that Christians value, and Christians value things that the world doesn't value. And so there are going to be times where, when you hold to a Christian value system, you might be labeled and canceled, and that very well could happen. I don't want that to happen to me or to anybody that I love, but there has also been a time in our culture where, because you didn't hold to Christian sexual ethics you were canceled, and so it's kind of a knife that, for a while, cut one way and now it's kind of cutting a different way.

And so I think that, as Christians, we're going to have to figure out how do we navigate this world that we live in where our value system isn't shared by the majority of people, and the majority of people, more and more, are holding to a contrary value system that very well may end up getting us the way it did in the first century, have us canceled, because we don't -- we don't hold to the value system of the world. But

there are some good things. Again, both Christians and non-Christians should be able to agree that racism is a bad thing and that that shouldn't be tolerated, but how will we react to someone who violates our shared values or someone who violates just Christian values or secular values? How will we react to that? Nobody wants to be canceled, but sometimes we end up doling out the cancellation and then condemning it when it cuts us.

So here's a few -- let's look at a couple passages of scripture since it is the Bible Study Podcast. I think one thing that we need to consider is from I Corinthians 5:12. Paul is talking about church discipline, so there is a place for publicly disciplining someone, and I think that's what this is. And to your point, you know, the singer -- that's what the industry and the fans are trying to do, is discipline him.

HOLLEE: Right.

WES: And there is a place, as Christians, for disciplining people for violating our core values and so there is a place for public discipline, for saying, "This person violated our core values and we're publicly and collectively disciplining that person."

HOLLEE: Right. And you should be, yeah.

WES: Right. Absolutely. And so -- but what's interesting here in I Corinthians 5 is that Paul is talking about this discipline that they're supposed to dole out towards this brother in the church there, but he says, "Listen, this is -- this kind of discipline is only for Christians." He said in verse 12, "For what do I have to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge?" The implication is,

"I have nothing to do with judging outsiders," and I think that that's something we have to remember, is that, as Christians, we shouldn't expect to share values with the world, and it's not really our job to punish them. Again, that doesn't mean you have to support everybody or agree with everybody or like everybody or listen to everybody's music or watch everybody's movies. Of course not. We're all going to limit what we watch to some degree, and there's going to be decisions that we make about who we support and who we don't. But at the same time, when it comes to publicly disciplining someone and saying, "That behavior was wrong and you should be ashamed of yourself and you need to not do that," that really is something we should do, but it really should be limited to brothers and sisters in Christ.

Now, when we get outside of that -- again, we're going to have to be very careful, and I'm not saying there's never a time where we speak up and say, "This behavior was wrong; they shouldn't have done that," but to, quote, take it upon ourselves to discipline them or to shame them, that's really something I think we have to be very careful about, and Paul was very specific that it's not the place of Christians to discipline non-Christians. It's not the place of Christians to discipline non-Christians. Again, that doesn't mean we can't ever disagree, but there's a big difference between disagreeing with someone and disciplining them, to take it upon ourselves to say, "Everybody needs to be done with that person. That person is no good. We're finished with them. We're going to discipline them. We're going to give them a time-out. We're going to" -- whatever. I think we have to be very careful

when that person isn't a follower of Jesus and so they haven't agreed to keep the values that we keep. And so if we're going to hold them to a value system that is specific to Christianity, then I think we have to be very careful about trying to discipline unbelievers.

HOLLEE: Why?

WES: Well, yeah, I think that's a good question. Why? Why did Paul -- again, he doesn't spend any of his time in any of his epistles talking about what Nero's doing or what unbelievers are doing other than just to say, "We don't do that," or, "We don't act like that." He wasn't trying to discipline them. Because I think that we have to focus -- our calling is to be who we are called to be and to be salt and light in the world and not to try to force the world to act like us, but to image Jesus, to reflect Jesus so they know -- so they're drawn to him.

HOLLEE: Right. We are different by how we act and what we say and what we do, and so they come to us.

WES: Yeah, I think that's right. We're supposed to be drawing them to us. And it's really hard because, at one time, we lived in a culture where almost everyone, and maybe even some of the people we've talked about in this conversation already, that they claim to be disciples of Jesus. And I think if somebody claims to be a disciple of Jesus, then we need to hold them to that standard and say, "Okay. You said you were my brother. You said you follow Jesus. You say you're a Christian. Here's how Christians act. Christians aren't racist. Christians don't do this. Christians don't do that." And there can be discipline if somebody claims to be a follower of Jesus. But if somebody claims to be an atheist



or agnostic or a Buddhist or a Hindu, or whatever, and they're secular people or they're unbelievers or they're not Christians, then we really need to be very careful about disciplining them. Again, I'm not saying we shouldn't ever disagree with them because there can be disagreement, but this, what we're talking about right now, is really discipline, and it's saying, "I'm taking it upon myself to punish you and to send you to the corner," or whatever it might be.

Again, that doesn't mean we can't withdraw our own support, but if we're going to rally people to punish someone for bad behavior -- and this also gets into inconsistencies, because if we are going to boycott and we say, "Well, we're going to boycott this business," or "We're going to boycott this entertainer," or "We're going to boycott this athlete" -- for what? "Well, they did this thing that I don't like." Well, what about all of the other ones that you do publicly support even though they're doing all of these other things? And so when we take it upon ourselves to punish the world for being worldly, then we're going to be caught up in a huge amount of double standards, and that's one of the biggest problems we run into is that we discipline some entertainer because of their sexual ethics, but then we ignore this entertainer over here who is just as promiscuous or just as whatever, but that hasn't violated our conscience for some reason, but this other one does, and so when we get into the business of disciplining the world for being the world, then we're going to find ourselves trapped.

HOLLEE: Yeah, we'll never run out of a job.

WES: Right. But we'll be overlooking all kinds of things that we -- again,

it's just a huge amount of double standards, and Paul is very specific that it's not his business to discipline the world for being the world. Again, that doesn't mean he didn't disagree with them.

But I think another point, too, is that this kind of public discipline should only follow personal warnings and efforts to get someone to repent. So if we are going to publicly punish someone, publicly discipline someone, publicly shame them, then that only comes after we have privately and personally tried to get them to repent, Matthew 18:15 -20. I'll read Titus 3:10-11: "As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him, knowing that such a person is warped and sinful. He is self-condemned." So there is a time and a place to say, "You're done. You're out of the community." But, again, that's happening within the church community and it's happening only after they've been warned personally.

Or II Thessalonians 3:14-15, "If anyone does not obey what we say in this letter, take note of that person and have nothing to do with him that he may be ashamed." But then he says right after that, "Do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother." So this sort of public condemnation for someone's behavior should really only follow personal appeals to them to stop doing what they're doing. This idea that that's the first thing we jump to -- and, again, Paul is specifically talking about things in the church community, and so this applies to teachers and preachers, people we disagree with something they said, and then we're just going to jump on social media and say, "That

person's a false teacher. Don't ever trust anything that they say"? Well, wait a second. Have you gone to them? Have you talked with them about this? Have you voiced your disagreement with them? Have you shown your concern, or are you just jumping to public condemnation? And so, again, really, if we want to talk biblically about discipline, it should be happening within the church and we need to be very careful about trying to discipline those outside the church. And, again, when we discipline somebody publicly, it should really only follow personal appeals for them to stop doing what they're doing.

And then, finally, the third point I want to make is that the goal should be restoration, not ruin. I love alliteration. It should be restoration, not ruin. And I think we have to stop and ask ourselves, "Am I just trying to ruin this person's reputation or am I really concerned about restoring them?" You got into that earlier, that am I just saying, "Hey, we need to take a break," or am I saying, "No, I want this person ruined. I don't want them ever coming back from this. I will never trust them again. I will never listen to them again. I will never listen to them again. I'm done with them and everybody else needs to be done with them, too."

HOLLEE: Right. And once you write people off, then the conversation will end. You can't -- it's gone. You can't restore; you can't forgive; you can't discuss. They're gone. They're gone. That episode, that series, is gone; it's never coming back. So, yeah, once you cancel them, then there's no -- you can't have the conversation anymore.

WES: Yeah. And I think this does apply even outside of the church. I

think it especially applies inside the church, but I think it especially -- but it also applies outside the church, too, that we need to ask ourselves, "Am I really concerned about restoration, making things better, fixing what's broken, or am I just trying to ruin them?" And that can go from a company that's doing things we don't like, or a musician, or an actor, or an athlete, or whatever, and we look at that and we say, "I don't like the way this is headed. I don't like what this person is saying." Well, let's work towards restoration. And it may be that we're not in a position to influence them, and maybe we are not in a position to do anything but say, "Well, as for me and my household, we're done with that."

But if we're really trying to restore them, I think we have to keep in mind that it's not our job to try to ruin them. I think history is replete with people and examples of people that were headed in the wrong direction and, through the grace of God, they were turned around, and that's what we want to happen. And I keep thinking every time there is a Christian outcry, especially -- because I'm talking to Christians here. And so every time there's a Christian outcry about a company or about an individual or about an entertainer, or whatever, that "This person is a bad person and so we need to be done with them," and I wonder, are we helping to move that person or the people associated with that company -- are we helping to move them closer to Jesus or are we pushing them further away?

HOLLEE: Or just trying to take a stand, and...

WES: Right. I think that's the thing sometimes, is we just want to pat ourselves on the back for taking a stand rather than actually working

towards restoration. It's not wrong, and sometimes maybe the best way to restore someone is to say, "Hey, I disagree with you. I disagree with this."

HOLLEE: Right.

WES: "I think this was a bad move," and we can do that without canceling them. In fact, we can disagree with kindness and respect. I think that's the biggest thing that's missing from this cancel culture. And, again, it happens on the left and it happens on the right. It happens with unbelievers and it happens with Christians, that we just jump to the worst possible punishment and we publicly execute the reputation and we say, "We are all done with you. We want nothing to do with you," is that it's missing the element of restoration. There's no desire to bring them back, and there's no kindness, there's no patience, there's no gentleness, there's no respect.

HOLLEE: Can I play devil's advocate for a second?

WES: Please.

HOLLEE: Okay. What about Matthew 10:14, and it talks about, "If anyone will not receive or listen to you, shake off the dust from your feet when you leave that house or town"? Is Jesus telling the disciples to cancel people who won't listen to them?

WES: Yes and no. I would say yes -- if you go back and you read the context of that -- and I didn't know you were going to bring this up, but I think that's a great devil's-advocate question, that yes, Jesus is telling them to cancel those villages. And it's exactly what we're talking about. It's shame. It's a shame-based culture, that Jesus is saying, "These

Israelites are acting like Gentiles because they are rejecting the kingdom of God," and so that's what Jewish people in Jesus' day would do. When they left a Gentile community or left a Gentile country and they came back home, they would shake the dust off their feet from these Gentiles. And so he's telling his disciples, "Go and share the kingdom of God with them, and if they receive you, great. And if they don't, shake the dust off of your feet as an act of divine judgment against them, that they're acting like Gentiles; they're not acting like Israelites because they're not receiving the kingdom of God." But this is tied to the limited commission. This is a very short period of time that Jesus is sending his disciples out to preach to these Jewish communities. But then later on, at the end of the gospel of Matthew, he's going to send them out on the Great Commission: "Go into the whole world. Make disciples of all nations," and there is no commandment to shake the dust off your feet. That was a limited-time thing, like "The Messiah is here. Receive the kingdom," and if they don't, shake the dust off their feet.

We take this passage and we apply to it our lives. Jesus didn't really give us a limited commission; he gave us a Great Commission. We go into the world and we patiently try to teach them the gospel. Yes, there's a time where you say, "Okay. This person is not ready to receive the kingdom yet," but you don't shake the dust off your feet. Number one, you're not an apostle and you weren't given that authority as an act of judgment to shake the dust off your feet from that community or that person or that household. You're just a follower of Jesus like the rest of us. We're all just followers of Jesus and we're patient with each other.

And, yeah, there may be a time where we say, "I'll try again later over here because that's not really being received right now." But this idea that we just final -- as a final act of judgment, this person will never be able to receive the kingdom; this person is never going to listen to the gospel; this person will never receive Jesus -- that kind of thing is just taking that passage and that idea out of context because that's not a part of the Great Commission; it was part of the limited commission.

So I think -- and you and I, Hollee, we've had this conversation so many times over the last year about just kindness, love, respect, and, again, that doesn't mean we can't disagree with people. I don't want people to listen to this and say, "Well, Wes is saying we should never disagree with the world." Of course not. Of course not. There's so much to disagree with, and the world needs Christian critique. The world needs Christian pushback, to say this sexual ethic or this way of living or this kind of lifestyle or this pattern of behavior is going to end in destruction because not only is it not healthy for your relationship with your Creator, it's not healthy for your life. And so they need Christians to step in and bring truth and bring light and bring salt into these communities and into these places. But if we're just going to say, "Hey, you did bad. You did wrong so we're done with you," then we're going to shut ourselves off from being able to be salt and light in those places.

HOLLEE: It'll be a party of one before too long.

WES: Right. One preacher said that we like to draw the circle so small, and we keep drawing it smaller and smaller until we can't even stand up in the circle, and that's the problem. When we're always judging -- and

this gets to what Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 7 about being critical and being judges when we have this beam sticking out of our eye. And that's the problem with cancel culture, is that whether it's on the left or it's on the right, whether it's from Christians or from non-Christians, we all have this big beam in our eye and we're saying, "My sins, my problems aren't a big deal, but you stepped over the line and so we're finished with you forever." Wow. I just don't want us to be those kind of people. I want us to take the log, the beam, out of our own eye. Yes, help each other with the speck. Help each other with those problems. And sometimes it's a really big speck. Sometimes it's a really bad thing that someone did or it's a really bad thing that someone said, and, yes, they may need some public criticism or some public disagreement.

HOLLEE: Public consequences.

WES: Yes. And just because you publicly disagree with somebody or publicly criticize them doesn't mean you're publicly condemning them, and your rallying condemnation to say, "Let's be finished with this person," and, "We need to ruin them financially" -- that's not going to help you to restore them. There may be a time within the church where we say, "Hey, we're withdrawing fellowship from you because you refuse to repent," but that's only after we warned them and warned them, and then we say, "We're withdrawing fellowship from you." But the whole point, even of that, is restoration. In II Corinthians Paul talks about once they repented, bring them back, because that was the whole point. The whole point is restoration.



So if we're going to engage in publicly disciplining someone -- and maybe there is a time for that. Maybe there is a time for a boycott; I don't know. But if we're going to publicly boycott a company or an individual, we have to remember that these are all image-bearers of God. Even if it's a company, it's made up of God's image-bearers. Now, you may think they're not acting like God's image-bearers, and that may be true, but our job is to help restore them to their vocation of image-bearing, and so if there's a time to discipline them, let's only discipline someone with the goal of restoration and not ruin.

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