

CHRISTIANS IN A CANCEL CULTURE

SPEAKING WITH TRUTH
AND GRACE
IN A HOSTILE WORLD

JOE
DALLAS

“Cancel culture is coming for Christianity. In fact, as Joe Dallas observes in this timely book, it is already here. The question is not *if* it is coming, but *how* will Christians respond. I am grateful for this resource that encourages Christians to respond with wisdom, grace, and truth. I hope you will read this book and share the ideas with a friend.”

Sean McDowell, PhD, professor of apologetics, Talbot School of Theology
Author of *Chasing Love: Sex, Love, and Relationships in a Confused Culture*

“Being a professing Christian who adheres to and applies the truths of Scripture to the world around us has never been easy. But today, articulating biblical precepts in the marketplace of ideas can get you fired, cancelled, censored or jailed. Joe Dallas has written what I believe may be one of the most important books you will read today. We must never be ashamed of the gospel—and we are told to proclaim its precepts. But how *do* we stand up to an increasingly hostile culture that demands our silence? How do we truly speak truth with love? Read this book to understand what winsome boldness is all about.”

Janet Parshall, nationally syndicated talk show host

“Deftly written, deeply insightful, and biblically sound, this engaging book will edify, exhort, and encourage Christians in an age of confusion on contentious issues such as abortion, homosexuality, transgenderism, race, and more. I highly recommend *Christians in a Cancel Culture* to believers and unbelievers alike who desire to understand the current lies of our culture and the truths that counter those lies. Skillfully balancing grace and truth, this book shines a much-needed light in a dark world.”

Becket Cook, host of *The Becket Cook Show* on YouTube
Author of *A Change in Affection: A Gay Man's Incredible Story of Redemption*

“You and I are witnessing the incremental ‘criminalization’ of Christianity. Don’t believe it? In *Christians in a Cancel Culture*, Joe Dallas explains a number of trends growing at a frightening speed that endanger the liberties of people everywhere. His book is a worthy investment of your time. As always, Dallas provides keen analyses of his subject matter and presents you with numerous insightful conclusions. His grasp of current events, American government, the mood of present culture, and church history are all meticulous, and his research is truly educational—something that cannot be said of all people being published these days. This may very well be the most important book he has ever written.”

Alex McFarland, Christian apologist
Truth for a New Generation, North Carolina

“Joe Dallas rightly dubs cancel culture a spreading madness—a virus of twisted thinking. Belief in the normalcy of the male-female sexual union is viewed as homophobic, the immutable nature of our assigned sex, transphobic, and the value of the unborn, misogynistic. The dam has burst, submerging basic Christian morality and ethics. Yet characteristically, Joe does not merely curse the darkness; he equips Christians in the art and science of conducting difficult discussions wielding the Christ-mandated gavel of grace.”

Hank Hanegraaff, president, Christian Research Institute
Host of the *Bible Answer Man* broadcast and the *Hank Unplugged* podcast

“How can a Christian relationally and effectively address the cancel culture without compromising truth? That’s the question so practically answered by Joe Dallas. His dialogues of likely comments and questions raised by those with a nonbiblical reference point can quickly train and equip any believer to be effectively relevant and influential, showing love and respect all along the way. This is a book long overdue and one I strongly recommend to every Christian wanting to have an impact for Christ on those around them.”

Brad Dacus, Esq., President of Pacific Justice Institute

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*Peter and John answered and said to them,
“Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you
more than to God, you judge.
For we cannot but speak the things
which we have seen and heard.”*

ACTS 4:19-20

CHAPTER ONE

THE LAST TEMPTATION

Somebody's telling you to shut up, so what are you going to do about it?

That depends. It depends on who said it, what they're telling you to quit saying, and how important you think your words are.

It starts with the *who*. If it's the government, you'll get mad and stand on your right to free speech. If it's your boss, you might be offended but still put up with it, depending on how badly you need the job. If it's a celebrity on a late-night talk show saying Christians should zip it, you might just chuckle and say, "Yeah, I really care, bro!" But if it's someone close to you, you may be hurt or bewildered, asking, "Why the hostility?" The *who* has a lot to do with your response.

As does the *what*. If someone reacts to your words, you'll ask yourself, "What did I say that got them so mad? Was it true or false? If it was true, was it appropriate? If it was true and appropriate, did I say it responsibly?" After some self-examination, you may defend, retract, explain, apologize for, or stand behind what you said.

Then comes the *how*. How important is what you're saying? Is it a hill to die on or relinquish? If it's an essential truth, you defend that hill to the end. Is it a secondary issue not worth arguing over? Then you agree to disagree. How important the issue is helps you to decide.

Those three points—the who, the what, and the how—will affect your response when someone tries to silence you. They’re also the essence of what Christians consider today when responding to the demands and tactics of the Cancel Culture.

Those demands and tactics have caught us by surprise. Up until the sixties, when we talked about issues such as sexual morality, Christian orthodoxy, or abortion, we reiterated what was widely believed. Our position on those subjects was mainstream, needing little explanation and virtually no defense. It was business as usual.

Then came the social upheavals of the sixties and the sexual revolution of the seventies, and what had been commonly believed now needed to be explained to new generations with a mindset that didn’t quite get where we were coming from.

By the nineties, an increasingly cynical culture compelled us to also *defend* beliefs we had just gotten used to explaining. Now Christian views weren’t just seen as odd. Both they, and we who held them, were also seen as offensive, calling for a defense, not just an explanation.

But now we’re having to provide a twofold defense, defending not just our beliefs, but also our right to teach and practice them. No longer viewed as a quaint group with odd ideas, we’re now labeled “fascists,” “haters,” “bigots,” and “misogynists.” If someone is all that, then what else would a decent society do but tell them to shut up? Hence, the strong arm of speech codes, church disruptions, and the indignation of the “woke generation.”

We’re not well prepared for a fight we didn’t see coming. Certainly, we knew the moral landscape was deteriorating. We knew we were having less and less influence on that landscape, and that it was drifting further every year from Judeo-Christian values. But we didn’t count on it becoming downright hostile.

We should have. While we’ve been paying our universities six-figure tuition fees, they’ve been running our sons and daughters through a catechism of contempt for America, Christianity, and some of the most basic values each holds. Our media can barely conceal its bias, treating its left-leaning slant on the news as the only decent way to view current events. Our state governments have passed laws stifling religious

expression and sanctioning its repression. Big Tech, that prime mover and shaker of public opinion, censors and cancels our online voices at whim while saying, with a wink and a smirk, “We value free speech. We just want to protect our community!”

That’s the big picture, but there’s a smaller one causing us even more turmoil. In our own families, social connections, places of work, and spheres of influence, we’re feeling at an intimate level the tensions being played out nationally.

People who are most dear to us are becoming strangers to us, not by our choice but by their disgust with our views and, as a result, their dismissal of us. In most cases, their designation of us as “untouchables” is a reaction to our beliefs about homosexuality, transgenderism, race, abortion, salvation, judgment, and sin nature. Our crime is not the adoption of those beliefs but our refusal to abandon them, as the truly enlightened folks seem to have done.

The culture is embracing a new world vision, but we haven’t. So we’re charged with refusal to bend, and now, shocked and numbed by our recent arrest, we’re prepping for the trial.

It can be held anywhere we converse and interact. Gone are the days of Bible-believing Christians living an unchallenged faith, because the land we once viewed as a comfortable home is becoming foreign territory, barely recognizable to those of us who remember other times.

Are we ready?

Ready or not, here comes the mandate to face the cancel culture, hear its charges against us, and do something perhaps new to us but historically common to the church: be ready to give an answer for the hope that lies within us (1 Peter 3:15), speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15), be unashamed of our Master’s words (Luke 9:26), act as ambassadors for Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20), and contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints (Jude 3).

My own work since 1987, as a biblical counselor and Christian speaker addressing sexual issues, has forced me to do just that. Early on, I realized I wouldn’t be allowed to just minister to people who wanted to reject sexual sin. I’d also have to articulate a defense for their decision, and mine as well, both as a counselor to them and an advocate for their choice.

That meant sharpening tools and weapons at the same time. Tools were needed to minister, but weapons were also needed to defend. They included a working knowledge of the arguments being used against us, a “wise as serpents” approach to public dialogue, and the covering of intercessors. It meant going to boot camp and battle at the same time, learning as you go. Anyone who has served on the front lines of culturally edgy ministry will tell you the same.

But these days, the lines between civilians and soldiers are awfully fuzzy. Any one of us who believes in the authority of Scripture, its relevance to social issues, and the importance of offering a defense for sound doctrine will find herself or himself drafted into battle. Just say “Let there be light,” and watch the darkness howl.

We know where we stand. The question becomes, *How* do we stand? How do we not only articulate the biblical view on today’s controversies, but also defend that view against serious, false, but widely believed accusations?

This book was written in hopes of answering the “How do we stand?” question when we as Christians are charged with homophobia, sexism, racism, transphobia, and judgmentalism. At some point, you’re likely to be accused of one or all of the above, and you’ll need to give an answer.

KEEP THE FAITH, LOSE THE OFFENSE

You’ll need to give an answer not only in response to the culture’s challenge, but also in response to what may become one of the church’s last major temptations—the temptation to minimize the importance of doctrines that are critical to the faith but offensive to the world.

Now, some of what we believe and express is acceptable to the culture. You can say, “I love Jesus” just about anywhere without serious push-back. You can quote Psalm 23 on social media, sing a hymn during your office break, or publicly thank the Lord when you accept your Grammy. Do any of these, and you’re not likely to find your career threatened, your Facebook page taken down, or your human decency questioned. In these kinds of ways, professing Christianity is generally acceptable.

But professing certain Christian doctrines is not, and there's the rub. It is not a vaguely defined faith that's getting people into hot water. It's Christian distinctives, beliefs about life and people that are spelled out in both the Old and New Testaments yet tempting to downplay in these times of easy offense and swift retaliation.

All of which can leave us asking if perhaps we can keep the faith but lose the offense. Why, after all, should we alienate people? If certain biblical truths drive unbelievers away from us (and our churches), then shouldn't we avoid those and concentrate instead on just loving people, sharing the gospel, and being good neighbors? According to polls, Christians have a credibility problem. The world allegedly sees us as judgmental, unloving, anti-women, anti-gay, anti-trans, and anti-progress. So shouldn't we water down some of our positions to gain back the trust we seem to have lost?

This is where I fear the desire to get along is superseding the desire to obey. When God instructed the people of Israel on how they were to function in their new land, He placed obedience above all else. He also gave His priests a mandate that we, as members of a holy priesthood (1 Peter 2:5), would do well to consider:

...that you may distinguish between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean (Leviticus 10:10).

This mandate to distinguish between the two was reiterated through Ezekiel:

They shall teach My people the difference between the holy and the unholy, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean. In controversy they shall stand as judges, and judge it according to my judgments. They shall keep My laws and My statutes in all My appointed meetings, and they shall hallow My sabbaths (Ezekiel 44:23-24).

God expected those who were leading His people to make the distinction between right and wrong, normal and abnormal, clean versus unclean. When controversy arose, these leaders were to consult God's



judgments, not the polls. Obtaining the approval of the surrounding culture had little to do with their job description.

Likewise, though modern believers have no mandate to force biblical morality onto nonbelievers (1 Corinthians 5:12), we are obligated to hold fast to that morality, practice it ourselves, teach it in our homes and churches, and express it when expedient. To be asked, for example, “Where do you stand on abortion?” provides an opportunity for dialogue and an obligation to honesty. The fear of controversy, though understandable, is no excuse for evasion when truth is called for.

Then again, modern Christians aren’t necessarily rewriting the Bible to accommodate abortion, homosexuality, or transgenderism. Some are, but when they do, they embrace errors so glaring that most biblically grounded believers see the errors for what they are and reject them.

But others embrace something not so easily discerned. It’s not a wholesale revision of truth, but a minimizing of its importance. That minimizing, often done in the name of keeping peace, is an easier error to fall into than blatant heresy, a fact making it especially dangerous. It’s a siren call to keep the faith but lose the offense, often for the sake of achieving a goal through a pragmatic but serious compromise.

In that sense, perhaps the challenge is nothing new. Luke’s account of Christ being tempted by Satan (Luke 4:1-13) describes a similar challenge. Read the passage through, then think again about the specific offers Satan made to Jesus. They seem to boil down to this: “You have a mission to save humanity. OK, fine, let’s make it easier. I’ll give You the world and its people if You’ll excise a few items from Your job description, like that ugly cross business. Worship me, skip the suffering, and they’re all Yours. Unsaved and eternally lost, sure, but a nice and orderly kingdom. Just remove the truths that make it hard, and You can have it all.”

Today’s enticement to modern Christianity seems awfully similar. “Just compromise those distinctives we take issue with, and you can be the church that gets along smoothly with the world.”

Problem is, it’s a world under the same influencer who tempted Christ, as per Paul’s identification centuries ago when he cited him as “the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons

of disobedience” (Ephesians 2:2). It’s also a world that says to us, somewhat as its influencer said to Him, “You Christians have a mission to evangelize humanity? OK, that’s fine, let’s make it easier. You see how much trouble you get into for saying and believing the wrong things? You can be spared all that if you’ll mute a few items in your belief system. Like that rigid definition of marriage, the divinely assigned male or female status, the insistence that life in the womb is in fact life in the womb, the refusal to acknowledge there are different ways to God, that belief in a place of eternal punishment, and that insulting doctrine about people being born sinful rather than wonderful. You don’t have to deal with laws passed against you, or censorship imposed on you, or friends and loved ones rejecting you. We can all get along! Just minimize the truths that make it hard, and you can have it all.”

But think again about whether those truths are negotiable. They include the exclusive nature of salvation as coming only through Christ’s atonement and faith in Him, the Creator’s definition of marriage and sexuality, the command to perpetuate the race rather than murder its future unborn members, the recognition of sin and its consequences, and the concept of individual responsibility rather than the indictment of an entire race as being guilty of a sin by virtue of its race alone.

Remove these from the Christian faith, and you’re left with something akin to what Satan hoped Christ would accept: a false, incomplete, and wholly inadequate version of what the Father sent Him to redeem, and an abortion not only of what that Father intended Him to do, but what He Himself declared His goal to be: to seek and save the lost.

Had Christ said yes to this temptation, He would surely have said no to us in the same breath, as a civilization packaged for Him without redemption would have been the very thing God prevented by driving a fallen Adam and Eve from the garden lest they eat from the tree of life and remain always and forever unredeemed (Genesis 3:22).

Likewise, if we say yes to this modern temptation, what are we offering the world if not a neutered church, an ineffective gospel, a place to gather nicely but receive limited truth, and the bleak achievement of approval coming from those we were meant to reach, not just please?

No, we’re not likely to be opposed, limited, or persecuted for merely

expressing our belief in God. Our belief in His words is another matter, a point He Himself made when He admonished that those who are not only ashamed of Him but of His teachings as well are subject to His displeasure (Luke 9:26).

All of which leaves us with this hard and increasingly unavoidable question: Will we faithfully—in our pulpits, homes, and lives—profess and steward the Word of God without adding to or detracting from it? Or will we acquiesce when the world enticingly reminds us that a profession of something less than the whole counsel of God will allow us a far more peaceful though far less profitable existence?

THAT'S WHY WE'RE TALKING

Those are the reasons you and I will be required to give an answer, and those are the reasons this book was written.

It was not written, however, to provide guidance in resisting social media censorship, unjust anti-Christian legislation, or government interference. There is a huge need for such guidance, but this is not the place to look for it.

This was written with a more personal goal in mind: that of equipping believers to provide reasonable answers and have effective dialogue with family members, close friends, and associates who take issue with their belief system.

So in chapters 1–5, I've tried to frame the issues with some background and context. In chapters 6–10, we will look at the hot topics with an overview of each, along with the reasons for seeing these as primary rather than secondary doctrinal issues, some rules of engagements to follow, and talking points to use when you're conversing. In chapter 11, we will consider where we're going and how to take one last stand along the way.

I've learned much these past three decades about taking such a stand, and I've still much to learn about speaking truth in a time of confusion. Yet however dark and confusing the times may be, I'm more convinced than ever that the Word of God is still the answer, and that it remains exactly what it's always claimed to be.

It is *alive*. “The word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Hebrews 4:4).

It is *relevant*. “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

It is *potent*. “So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it” (Isaiah 55:11).

I am grateful to Harvest House Publishers for their thirty years of support and friendship, and to William Jensen of the William A. Jensen Literary Agency for helping me appreciate both the need and the timing of this book.

I hope you will find it to be an encouraging and useful tool.

