

**Published Guest Opinion Article in the Loveland Reporter-Herald 2/24/24**  
**By Don Overcash**

**The Impact of Cancel Culture on the Intrinsic Value of People**

At the heart of the Gospel message is the principle of love and redemption. In the book of John, it is written, "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her" (John 8:7). This moment underscores a significant tension within cancel culture: the rush to judgement and public shaming frequently neglects the complexity of human nature and the potential for forgiveness and transformation. Embedded within this scriptural narrative is the recognition that every person bears an intrinsic value, a reflection of the divine, which cannot be diminished by their missteps.

Scripture emphasizes the importance of tempering justice with mercy. In the prophetic literature, God declares, "I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live" (Ezekiel 33:11). Micah 6:8 speaks to what is required of us; "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." Cancel culture's tactics can sometimes deny this opportunity for growth, preferring punitive over restorative measures. Forgiveness and second chances are foundational to the biblical framework, inviting a culture of rehabilitation rather than cancellation - a poignant reminder in an age quick to discard those who have erred.

Cancel culture also hits at the essence of love: "Above all, keep loving one another earnestly since love covers a multitude of sins" (1 Peter 4:8). This scripture does not condone wrongdoing but emphasizes love as the driving force for addressing and overcoming failings. In Proverbs 6:16-19 we find warnings against the de-valuing of others. "These six things the Lord hates, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him: A proud look, A lying tongue, Hands that shed innocent blood, A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that are swift in running to evil, A false witness who speaks lies, And one who sows discord among brethren." It puts forth the notion that the underlying value of a person should not be obliterated by this type of conduct so commonly practiced on social media. Often they appear to others as blinded by rage demonstrating an uncontrollable, psychologically blinding anger. The de-personalization and demonization of individuals is probably an indication of the attacking individual's inability to accept themselves as flawed coupled with a rejection of the redemptive love of God.

The intrinsic value of people, as espoused in scripture, is seen in God's image within every individual. Genesis avows that "God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them" (Genesis 1:27). This foundational belief asserts that every person possesses an inherent dignity that should not be effaced. Cancel culture can implicitly reject this sacred value, opting instead to define people by their failures or worse yet outright lies.

Scripture encourages community and reconciliation - values often at odds with the isolating effects of cancel culture. "Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you" (Colossians 3:13). This call for mutual understanding and forgiveness stands in stark contrast to the divisiveness and permanent ostracization that cancel culture can promote.

While accountability and the call for justice are vital to the health of any community, the tactics of cancel culture must be weighed against the timeless scriptural touchstones of love,