



# WEEK 1

## HYBRID TEACHING GUIDE

# CANCELED

## THE BIG IDEA

Love people who aren't like you.

## THE BIBLE

John 4:1-26, 39-42; II Timothy 4:2-4;  
Galatians 3:28

**WHAT?** *What are we talking about today?*

### ACTIVITY | Culture Cancellations

- As we kick off a new series called Canceled, let's identify a few trends that some of us would like to see "canceled" forever.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** For this game, you'll need [index cards](#) and a list of 5-10 cultural trends or experiences your students might want to cancel, like pandemics, reusable straws, Kevin Durant, Crocs, or an overdone TikTok trend. For each item, write three hints on a note card that start generic and become increasingly specific, so the more hints a student hears the more likely they are to guess correctly. Your hints for "Crocs," might be: 1) These shoes can be found in a variety of colors and styles. 2) They have ventilation holes that some people fill with Jibbitz. 3) They are made of foam and named after a large reptile." To play, split the room into teams and bring one student from each team to the front of the room to compete. Put 30 seconds on the clock and read a hint, one at a time, every 10 seconds. Award 3 points to the player who guesses correctly after the first hint, 2 points after the second hint, and 1 point after the third hint. After each item is identified, have your students vote whether or not that trend should be canceled.
- We may disagree on whether or not Crocs should be canceled, but sometimes "canceling" things can be much more controversial than footwear.

### DISCUSSION | Define the Terms

- In the last few years, terms like "online shaming," "call-out culture," and "cancel culture" have become popular. But it's not always clear what these words mean. What does it mean to . . .

- Call out?
- Shame?
- Cancel?

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Ask students to split into groups of 2-3 with the people sitting beside them, and to quickly come up with definitions and examples for these terms. Then ask a few students to share with the whole group.

## DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you're working only with middle schoolers.
  - **When do you think it's right or justified for someone to get called out, shamed, or canceled? When do you think it's wrong or harmful?**
    - ✧ **Do you see "cancel culture" happening more often online, in person, both, or neither? Why do you think that is?**

## IMAGE | Cancel Culture Diagram

- These terms can be confusing because they're sometimes used interchangeably.
  - Some people say "canceled" as a joke, like, "Gross, you like pineapple on your pizza? Canceled."
  - Some fuel celebrity drama with hashtags like #ChrisEvansIsOverParty. (Not that anyone would ever want to cancel Chris Evans.)
  - Some people use social media to embarrass or hurt each other, maybe for a laugh or revenge.
  - And other people "call out" or "cancel" others for legitimate reasons — especially public figures who said or did something very harmful.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** As you teach, show the image on screen that is provided in your Week 1 folder.
- So how do we make sense of all of these ideas? Here's how I think about it.
  - **CALL OUT:** To publicly hold someone accountable for something harmful they said or did. We all need to be called out sometimes, but **is it possible to be too eager to point out other people's mistakes?**
  - **SHAME:** To mock, embarrass, or humiliate someone. This could be anything from posting a meme to doxing someone (posting their private information publicly). When we do something that hurts others, we should feel ashamed of our actions, but **do we have the right to hurt or be cruel to people we disagree or are angry with?**
  - **CANCEL:** To boycott someone someone you believe needs to be held accountable for something they said or did. Boycotts are an important tool for creating positive change in the world, but **how do we balance accountability with grace and forgiveness?**
- Calling out, shaming, and canceling are all a little different, but where they meet is what we call "cancel culture." It's the jumbled mess we get when legitimate concerns get lost in drama, pettiness, cruelty, and revenge.

- “Cancel culture” is usually about what happens online, but we struggle with these same issues in our off-line relationships too. With or without the Internet, we can all sometimes be critical, judgmental, impatient, uncaring, and cruel.
- For the next few weeks, we’re going to talk about four kinds of people most of us would rather cancel than love, and what we can do about it — besides canceling everyone we don’t like.

## SO WHAT? Why does it matter to God and to us?

### STORY | Talk about a time you avoided or were cruel to someone who was different than you.

- It’s not easy to admit we’re capable of treating people cruelly, so I’ll go first. There are plenty of people I’ve “canceled,” and I’m not proud of it.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Tell a personal story (or ask a student or volunteer to tell a story) about a time you avoided or were cruel to someone who was different than you, using the list of examples below as inspiration. Draw specific attention to the ways you overlooked, excluded, or were cruel to that person because they were different than you.
- **Have you ever avoided (or even hated) someone because they were different than you?** You might think, “No way!” But if you’re honest with yourself, I think you’ll realize there are people you’ve decided to overlook or “cancel” because they were different than you, like . . .
  - A celebrity or public figure who stood for things you don’t like.
  - Your former friend, after you couldn’t seem to agree on something important.
  - A family member or classmate with opinions or beliefs you disagreed with.
  - A neighbor or peer who seemed different, weird, or scary.
  - Someone whose culture, skin color, language, appearance, or disability made you feel uncomfortable.

### DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you’re working only with middle schoolers.
  - **What are some ways you’ve seen people avoid, dislike, or get angry with each other because of their differences?**
  - ☆ **Have you ever felt uncomfortable, angry, or afraid of someone who was different than you? In what ways were you different from each other?**

### SCRIPTURE | John 4:1-26, 39-42

- This isn’t new! Social media might be a modern invention, but humans have always been quick to cancel people who are different.
  - In Jesus’ time, people were often “canceled” by society when they sinned, got sick, were poor or disabled, or were from a different country or culture.
  - Maybe that sounds horrible, but how often do people today get angry, or even violent, toward people with a different skin color, political view, gender, or religious belief?

The answer: often.

- During Jesus' time, there was a major rift between the Jews (Jesus' people) and the Samaritans (people from a neighboring city). Picture the kind of rivalry between Yankees and Red Sox fans — but worse. Way worse.
- There were major differences between the Jews and Samaritans that led to major disagreements. If social media had existed back then, the posts between Jews and Samaritans would have been intense.
  - **Their ethnic and cultural differences** made them distrust each other.
  - **Their political differences** made them angry at each other.
  - **Their religious differences** made them hate each other.
- For hundreds of years, you would never see a Jew and a Samaritan interact, let alone have a respectful conversation about the differences in their customs or beliefs. But then Jesus showed up.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read or summarize John 4:1-26, 39-42.*
- In this conversation, Jesus rose above the social and religious restrictions of the day. According to those customs, it would have been already controversial for a respectable man like Jesus to speak with an unmarried woman as if she were his equal. On top of that, Jesus was a Jew talking to a Samaritan!
- Despite their differences, Jesus and the Samaritan woman both did something remarkable.
  - **JESUS VALUED HER.** Although Jews were accustomed to dismissing and hating Samaritans, Jesus never dismissed or was cruel to her. Instead, He valued her enough to . . .
    - Start a conversation with her.
    - Treat her with respect.
    - Share with her the good news that would change her life.
  - **SHE VALUED JESUS.** Although Samaritans were accustomed to dismissing and hating Jews, this woman valued Jesus enough to . . .
    - Give him a drink of water.
    - Listen and learn from Him.
    - Tell others what she learned from Him.
- Imagine how things could change if we acted this way with the people we don't like or who we seriously disagree with.
- Everyone would have expected Jesus to either ignore or condemn this woman. But by choosing to love, embrace, and value her, Jesus challenged His followers to love people who are different instead of rushing to "cancel" them.
- Because both Jesus and the Samaritan woman valued each other instead of letting their differences separate them, many lives were changed.

## DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share. The starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them if you're working only with middle schoolers.*

- ✧ Why do you think it was important for Jesus to show that He valued the Samaritan woman?
- ✧ What's one way valuing people who are different than us lead to more people hearing the good news of Jesus?

## SCRIPTURE | II Timothy 4:2-4

- Whether you follow Jesus or not, there's a passage in the book of II Timothy I think we can all learn from. One of the early Christian leaders was a man named Paul. The book of II Timothy is a letter Paul wrote to a young man he was mentoring. Here's one of the things he told him.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** Read II Timothy 4:2-4.
- Paul warns Timothy that people tend to only believe or listen to things they want to hear. He's specifically talking about theology (what people believe about God), but that's true about a lot of things, isn't it? We prefer to hang around people who . . .
  - Like the things we like.
  - Think or talk like we do.
  - Behave like we behave.
  - Believe the things we believe.
- There's not necessarily anything wrong with that most of the time, but here's where it can go wrong: when we only spend time with people who are just like us . . .
  - **We forget to value people who are different than us.**
  - **We only learn from people who already agree with us** — which means we don't really learn anything new.
- The Jews and Samaritans both believed God was okay with them ignoring and hating each other. Because they surrounded themselves with people who believed that too, they continued to be comfortable with that belief. But when Jesus crossed dividing lines to have a conversation with a woman who was different than Him, He helped both sides see just how wrong they had all been.
  - Through their conversation, Jesus challenged both the Jews and the Samaritans to love the people who are sometimes the hardest to love: people who are different than us — our neighbors who may not share our culture, values, behaviors, skin color, language, or beliefs.
  - Through His example, Jesus challenges you to do the same — to **love people who aren't like you.**

**NOW WHAT?** *What does God want us to do about it?*

## IT'S OKAY TO HAVE DIFFERENCES

- The Jews and Samaritans had a lot of differences in their customs and culture. But did you notice that Jesus didn't seem interested in addressing all of those differences or expecting the Samaritan woman to become Jewish? Jesus didn't tell her she needed to change all of her customs in order to follow Him. He didn't tell her she needed to talk, or act, or dress a certain way, or sing a certain kind of worship song.

- Right now, all over the world, followers of Jesus are worshiping in different ways that are unique to their culture and context. Those differences aren't something to fear. They're beautiful.
  - There are Jesus-followers all of over the world of every culture and skin color, speaking more languages than you can name.
  - Even within the same country, city, or church, you'll find followers of Jesus who worship, think, pray, talk, vote, and act differently. That's more than okay. It's good.
- We're all united in Jesus, but being united doesn't mean we all need to be the same. It means we're loved the same. It means we all have the same access to God through Jesus.
  - Jesus' death and resurrection destroyed the argument that only certain people are welcome in God's family or Kingdom. Jesus died for everyone — including me, you, Samaritans, and the people you struggle to love.
  - In Jesus, we're all invited to become children of God, differences and all.

## RESPONSE | Who do you struggle to love?

- You're probably not angry at any Samaritans right now, but I'm guessing there is a person, or maybe a group of people, who you struggle to love because of your differences. You may not hate them, but you might be . . .
  - Overlooking or avoiding them.
  - Uncomfortable around them.
  - Angry with or disgusted by them.
  - Afraid of them.
  - Mocking them.
- So who is that for you? Is it a person? Is it a group of people? This is a safe place where you can admit who you're struggling to love, because we all sometimes struggle to love people who aren't like us.
  - I know it's easier to cancel someone than love them. It's easier to ignore them than to start a conversation with them. It's easier to hate, mock, or avoid them than reach out to them. But that's not what Jesus challenges us to do.
  - Just like Jesus confronted the Jews with the reality that God loved Samaritans, the people you're thinking about are loved by God too. They may be different than you, but you're both made in the image of God, and that makes you valuable and worthy of love.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Before your program, print and cut the handouts provided in your Week 1 folder. Place one under each seat, along with a pen and a [small gift box](#). Encourage students to write down the person, type, or group of people they struggle to love, and then place that slip of paper into the gift box as a reminder that people who aren't like them are valuable and worthy of love. While students respond, play or perform a song like "Build My Life," by Passion.*
- This won't always be easy. There will be people who are hard for you to understand, connect with, or care about because of your differences. But remember . . .
  - The people you struggle to love are made in the image of God, just like you are.
  - Our differences don't have to divide us.
  - We can love each other even when we don't agree.

- If you want to love like Jesus loves (and I hope you do), **love people who aren't like you** — don't be so quick to cancel them.

## DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Break for discussion. If you have more than ten students, split into groups so everyone can share.*
  - **Read Galatians 3:28. What is one way we could practice being “one in Christ,” while celebrating the things that make us different?**
  - **Think of someone who is different than you. How can you show value to that person like Jesus and the Samaritan woman did by . . .**
    - Starting a conversation?
    - Treating them with respect?
    - Serving them?
    - Listening to them?
    - Learning from them?
    - Telling others what you learned from them?
  - **Who is someone you're struggling to love because they're different than you? What's one way you're going to value them this week?**