

I. Advanced Organizer

- A. **I grew up in Escondido California, a North County suburb of San Diego.** I understood my family growing up to be a **pretty average middle class** American family in Southern California.
- B. **Three of my four grandparents all had rags to riches post-depression American stories.** None of them went to college, my paternal grandfather didn't make it through high school, but they all found opportunity moving to California and eventually establishing themselves in the middle class.
- C. **My father carried on the legacy of climbing the ladder of opportunity.** He was the first in his family to graduate from college, and then go on to graduate school, becoming a lawyer with a small private practice. **My mom married him right after high school in 1967.** She held down the fort as a young wife and mother at home while he fought in Vietnam and then she supported him through law school, and eventually became his paralegal.
- D. I have a handful of pictures from my childhood to share. Growing up my two siblings and I were given lots of opportunities to learn, experiment, and mature as individuals inside and outside of school. **As a student from a young age in the Gifted and Talented program,** I often got to be a part of classrooms that had extra resources, interesting class trips, engaging teachers, and a love of learning was fostered at a young age. By high school, this track of education had brought me to **AP and Honors classes preparing me for success in college.** I was active in lots of arts based extra curricular activities, as my parents graciously paid for voice lessons and drove me all over the city for auditions and play rehearsals.
- E. No doubt these pictures I've been sharing are the kinds of pictures that many children and teenagers had taken in the eighties, and nineties. But looking at them now, I don't just see happy memories. I also see the starkness of what I was unable to see as a child. **I see the starkness of the whiteness of my upbringing.**
- F. **It wasn't that people of color didn't live in Escondido.** Our city is 40 miles from the Mexican border. I recently looked at my high school year book and noted that **probably around 50% of the students in my graduating class were people of color. But most of them weren't in my classes.** They weren't in my clubs, my show choir, my theatre productions. **The world I grew up in was largely segregated.** And this segregation was one of the core foundations that socialized me into an identity of whiteness. Sure, I got the message in school or the occasional time race was discussed at home that to discriminate against someone because of their race was wrong, that we know better than that. But mostly race growing up was not directly named or discussed, leaving me with an unconscious understanding that ultimately race wasn't or shouldn't be important.

II. (Smashing Idols and Whiteness)

- A. **We are now well into a series on how the lenses and frames we see the world through and the way we prioritize some views over others is a form of idolatry.** Often this prioritization of certain lenses and frames over others even leads to systems of oppression. We've explored a number of these - androcentrism (linked to patriarchy), heteronormativity (linked to oppression of LGBTQIA persons - those who fall outside of the binaries of sex, genders, sexuality).
- B. Today I want to talk about **that which lays behind the oppression of people of color in the United States.** I hope we can all acknowledge that **as much as some of us might want to believe that race is no longer important,** that all people are equal now that slavery has been abolished and the Civil Rights Movement in the 60s has taken place, and we've even had a

Black president, instead **regular events on the news, in our social media feeds, and in our own neighborhoods remind us that racism is alive and well.**

- C. **Here at Haven we talk a lot about wanting to create a safe place for a diverse group of people.** This means **acknowledging the reality of racism**, and I believe everyone in this room agrees it is evil and wrong. But we're still I think early in the conversation about what actually allows this racism to persist. What idols does our society invest in that perpetuate it? And how are we, particularly we who are white and many of us progressive, consider ourselves non-racist, how might we still be invested in those idols? What would it look like to smash the idols and follow the true God instead? These are the questions we're gonna wrestle with a bit today.
- D. I want to acknowledge up front that as we get into these various topics in this smashing idols series, **the content may land differently for different ones of us.** Particularly those in Haven who have experienced marginalization because of race, or gender, or sexual orientation: you are likely more aware of and less invested in whatever "idol" we might need to discuss. Author and spiritual teacher Richard Rohr says it this way: *"If you are a person of color, a person of a different gender, you know what the idols of [a] system are because you've been excluded from it. Those of us who enjoy the privilege don't recognize the idols of the culture."* My hope in cultivating these conversations is not simply to speak to and on behalf of majority culture folks who might need the most waking up in regards to whatever idol we're discussing, but to lead a conversation that recognizes that even if we're in different places in the journey, all of us are impacted by these idols and divesting from them is a cooperative process that we all can play a role in.
- E. **I also acknowledge that I lead us in this conversation with gravity and care.** Each of the teachings in this series gets a bit more intimidating for me, and that's true today. I ask for your grace as I open up the conversation. And I lead us into it acknowledging my own whiteness. Yes, I am white. And the whiteness that I have been socialized into has made it uncomfortable at times for me to even name this. But I believe it's important for each of us as we move forward to consider and own our identity, our own places in this bigger story that none of us have chosen, so that we can all work together in writing the next chapter.

III. (Sneakers, flags, and Jesus)

- A. **This week athletic brand Nike was in the news for a shoe that was...until it wasn't.** Early in the week media outlets reported that Nike had chosen to pull their new Fourth of July athletic shoe, after objections to the shoe came from former NFL player and Nike company endorser Colin Kaepernick. Kaepernick apparently reached out to people from Nike to express concerns over the shoe because it featured the Betsy Ross flag, the original US flag adopted in 1777, with a circle of 13 stars to represent the original colonies.
- B. **Of course the news that Nike had made this shoe and then decided not to sell it after all, stirred up a lot of people's feelings.** Twitter and Facebook were abuzz this week with passion and outrage as folks absorbed the news. And perhaps predictably, the responses largely broke down into a couple of different points of view.
1. On the one side, **there's Colin Kaepernick himself and others who stand with him, who are trying to point out why issuing this shoe in celebration of Independence Day could be problematic.** The shoe centers a flag that was never meant by its creators to speak freedom and independence to people who looked like Kaepernick. On top of that, there is widespread evidence that this history has not been lost on white supremacist groups who have at times centered the flag in their demonstrations and used it as background imagery for their violent words and actions directed against people of color.

2. **But for a lot of conservatives, and it must be said, a lot of white people: to take issue with the Betsy Ross flag is un-American.** Nike has caved to liberal overreach. For them this is just another sign of social justice warriors going too far. First Kaepernick and the like refused to honor our troops by kneeling during the National Anthem; now they're spoiling what should be America's Happy Birthday party by calling into question a historic American symbol: our first flag. Why do you have to be so divisive, these folks seem to say, calling out issues of race where they don't belong? Just get over it and have a hot dog and a beer.
3. **And as these opinions are expressed back and forth on social media,** we see a lot of tension; tension that I think is ultimately wrestling through which set of frames and lenses should be at play? As people of faith, our own weighing of that question also considers the perspective of Jesus. What might he have to say about any of this?
4. Interestingly, while **Jesus lived before the time of sneakers, football, or even the US flag...he did live in a time when a number of the same dynamics were at play.** Because these dynamics go beyond our present context: the **dynamics of group think.** The **dynamics of discrimination.** The dynamics of **power and privilege** and the **willingness of human beings to use that privilege to their own advantage**, even if it means directly or implicitly participating in the oppression of others. And **Jesus had words for the people of his day when he saw these dynamics at play.** Words that I think might speak to us in our journeys to wrestle with these questions too. Let's look together at Matthew 15.

IV. Then some Pharisees and teachers of the law came to Jesus from Jerusalem and asked, 2 "Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? They don't wash their hands before they eat!"

3 Jesus replied, "And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition? 4 For God said, 'Honor your father and mother' and 'Anyone who curses their father or mother is to be put to death.' 5 But you say that if anyone declares that what might have been used to help their father or mother is 'devoted to God,' 6 they are not to 'honor their father or mother' with it. Thus you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition. 7 You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you:

8 "These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.

9 They worship me in vain; their teachings are merely human rules."

10 Jesus called the crowd to him and said, "Listen and understand. 11 What goes into someone's mouth does not defile them, but what comes out of their mouth, that is what defiles them."

12 Then the disciples came to him and asked, "Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this?"

13 He replied, "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be pulled up by the roots. 14 Leave them; they are blind guides. If the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit."

15 Peter said, "Explain the parable to us."

16 "Are you still so dull?" Jesus asked them. 17 "Don't you see that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and then out of the body? 18 But the things that come out of a person's mouth come from the heart, and these defile them. 19 For out of the heart come

evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. 20 These are what defile a person; but eating with unwashed hands does not defile them.”

A. So this is not directly a story about what you should have on your shoes or whether you should stand for the national anthem. It’s not even a story about whether or not you should wash your hands before you eat. **This is a story about confronting the perspective of the powerful and recognizing that that perspective can be a kind of blindness.**

1. **The key figures Jesus is confronting here are named as the Pharisees and teachers of the law.** Don’t get hung up on their identity as Jewish leaders. That’s been a mistake of the church for too long, to read Jesus’ confronting this one particular group of Jewish leaders as a confrontation of Judaism itself. Judaism is an accepted good in our story. This story was written by Matthew who cared deeply about his Jewish heritage and felt called to write to a Jewish audience, drawing upon that heritage. Jesus came and lived as an observant Jew.
2. What matters for us is what these folks, these particular Jewish religious leaders, represent in their particular cultural context. **These folks Jesus is taking about are the gatekeepers. They are the power holders.** They come from the cosmopolitan capital of culture and institutional power, Jerusalem, to confront the itinerant rabbi from the Galilee, the back country. This country rabbi is followed by a rag-tag band. Jesus’ followers are not the educated ones; they’re humble fisherman and peasants. They are not the rich or the powerful. They are the roughians who can’t sit at the same table with the powerful because they don’t conform to the norms of the powerful. **They are “sketchy”.** And these leaders are smart enough to know that to critique Jesus himself is politically unwise. He’s too popular. But they can critique his followers, and by association, delegitimize Jesus himself. “Why don’t your followers wash their hands before they eat? Don’t they care about the tradition of the elders?” (“Why do these people have to disrespect our flag? Don’t they care about those who have died to give them their freedom?”) Ultimately, they’re asking, what kind of a leader are you, Jesus, that you wouldn’t require this of them?
3. **But Jesus sees what these people of power do not. He sees their hypocrisy.** He sees the way they have **twisted their understanding of God’s commandments to serve their own needs.** He brings up just one example, that turns their justification for judging his followers on its head. **“You want to talk about respecting our elders?”**, **Jesus responds. “Let’s talk about it.”** and he reminds them how yes, God intended men and women to honor their parents, care for them as they needed it (there was no social security then). But these religious leaders told their followers they didn’t need to provide for their parents economically, as long as they gave that money to “God”, meaning the religious leaders, instead. Why would they do this? Because it served them to do so. They were exploiting the people in the name of religious worship, lining their own pocketbooks, filling the temple with resources, while oppressing the elderly as they did so. Guess what?...God’s not a fan of that. Jesus calls them on that hypocrisy as well as the hypocrisy that is at play now, even as they seek to discredit Jesus by going after his “sketchy” followers.
4. “You say you care about purity,” he’s saying, “but that is a distraction. You are focusing on this petty scruple over what’s the appropriate way to eat, and missing that your pettiness is causing you to have far more that is counter to God internally, than a little dirt might be. It’s not what goes in your mouth that makes you dirty. It’s what is in there inside. And what comes out of your mouth reveals the sin within. That’s what you need to be concerned about.”

5. **But the powerful people can't see their hypocrisy.** They can't allow themselves to see it because to do so would bring the system down. To do so would be to bite the hand that feeds them. And so these holders of power and privilege are *blind*, and as leaders, Jesus believes they are dangerous. Jesus says, "do not follow them". **His followers are not sure.** They feel nervous offending these people of power. "Are you sure we should question their point of view? I mean they did make that point about the elders... My parents speak really well of these guys." **But Jesus says "Stop"**. Turn back. You cannot follow them. They cannot see clearly. They are blinded by privilege and power. And if you follow them, they will lead you into a pit.

B. (Whiteness as Blindness.)

1. **One of my favorite subjects in school was US History.** Something about the stories was captivating to me. From early on, for me history was more than just names and dates, battles and election results. I loved connecting with the characters, getting a sense of who people were and how their stories interwove to become our own.
2. And yet I have to acknowledge that **again and again my understanding of history centered people like me:** immigrants from Europe who came to the new world fleeing religious persecution, looking for economic opportunity, in search of a bit of land they could call their own. **The concept of Manifest Destiny was celebrated,** the stories of these Europeans who understood themselves to have a God-given blessing to make this land their own, to tame it, to harvest it, to civilize it. This was held up as an origin for our American Dream. But I have to admit, **the annihilation of indigenous peoples at that dream's expense was softened.** I remember being disturbed by events like the Trail of Tears, but having no framework to process what it meant that the people I originate from had taken their Manifest Destiny from others through violence and annihilation. I remember being disturbed by the no-doubt sanitized reports of black chattel slavery, but I had no framework in my education or my culture, again, **to consider what it meant today that people who looked like me used and abused and raped and killed people who were black.** I remember hearing stories that **celebrated innovation, and pioneering, and riding waves of opportunity in the post depression era, stories like my grandparents had lived.** But these stories never explored how things might have gone for people like my grandparents, had their skin not been white.
3. **We never talked in my US history class about how the construct of race was created by the powerful throughout our nations history in order to secure power for some at the expense of others.** We never talked about how various ethnicities: **French, British, Dutch, German, Italian, Irish and so on were assimilated into one; their various distinct cultural identities effectively erased,** with one aim in mind: **the concentration of power in the hands of those who could assimilate because of the color of the skin and the exclusion of those who did not share that superficial marker.** The truth is we never had these conversations in my AP US History class. And I think it was in part because my class, my teacher, our curriculum, the AP exam itself, like the broader social system around it, **had the same kind of blindness of the privileged that Jesus decried. It was the self protective blindness of whiteness.**
4. If Whiteness is a kind of blindness, what are its particular blind spots? This is where I found the work of Dr. Robin DiAngelo particularly helpful. Dr. DiAngelo is an academic, a sociologist in the field of race. She's also the author of a number of excellent books, including most recently, *White Fragility*. In her work, she identifies a number of common

conceptions of race that white people tend to hold, which make it difficult for them to see the issues clearly. Let's just take a quick look at two of the big ones.

a) And as I mention these, I want to name that the pervasiveness of whiteness means that the frameworks and messaging have been absorbed by more than white folk; so brothers and sisters of color may also have absorbed and internalized these messages too, and I invite you wherever you're at, as you look at these two blind spots to consider where they may have played a role in your own thinking about race.

5. First: **Whites (and others influenced by whiteness) often see racism as a series of individual acts and explicit attitudes, rather than a system of oppression that includes explicit and implicit biases of those who are a part of it.**

- (1) This seems to be a **common misunderstanding**: to think that racism as simply individual, intentional acts of race-based discrimination. **People using the n-word, or carrying tiki torches in Charlottesville, or posting vile comments on Facebook**: that's the problem we need to worry about.
- (2) But racism is much bigger than these individual, explicit actions. **Racism is a form of oppression based on race**. And remember **oppression is not prejudice alone, it's prejudice plus power**. It's historic, it's systemic, it's institutional, it's beyond any individual. If this is true, then it means racism can't ever happen in "reverse" - racism goes one way in the United States with white people on top and people of color of various races and ethnicities holding less power in varying degrees. **Racism includes inequitable distribution of resources, inequitable access to education, inequitable access to voting rights, inequitable access to health care, and so much more.**
- (3) **Racism is also beyond explicit bias**. We may not want to think of ourselves as biased, but social scientists tell us as human beings it is **impossible for us to be without bias**. It is part of what it means for us to be socialized. **We learn from infancy how to categorize**. And what tells us how to sort all the information that's coming our way, are the biases we learn. We actually cannot avoid learning them. Most of them are not explicit. They're not conscious; they're implicit.
 - (a) So we may believe our parents taught us not to discriminate. **We believe our parents taught us to see everyone equally**. But that is simply a myth. Our parents may have **wanted** to teach us that. We may want to teach our children that, but it is not actually possible. We are socialized from an early age to be biased, and the implicitness of the biases whites have learned: that whites are normal, that whites are trustworthy, that whites are beautiful, that whites are knowledgeable, that whites are safe, and all others are perhaps *less so* - these implicit biases are a hugely important component of racism as a structure of oppression remaining in tact. It's an important part of the blindness of whiteness.
- (4) Now I do want to point out before leaving this blind spot that while racism on a large scale in the US functions between whites and people of color, **people of color are not a monolith**. The evil of racism impacts communities of color too, often pitting ethnic groups against each other through discrimination and difference in social power, as well. Whether we're white or not, it's important for all of us to examine the biases we were socialized into, and how they participate in upholding racism.

- b) So not seeing the systemic and implicit nature of racism, that's a blind spot of whiteness. The second important blind spot of whiteness that Dr. DiAngelo notes, works together with the first. She calls it the **Good/Bad Binary**. This binary is an effect of living in a Post Civil-Rights Era; it's an effective adaptation of racism in a world where by and large, society has identified racism as wrong. So for many whites, **racism is seen as a binary**. To be a racist is to be a bad person. To be not racist is to be a good person.

(1) Racist=Bad

- (a) Ignorant
- (b) Bigoted
- (c) Prejudiced
- (d) Mean-spirited
- (e) Old

(2) Not Racist=Good

- (a) Educated
- (b) Progressive
- (c) Open-minded
- (d) Well-intentioned
- (e) Young

(3) **This binary causes white people particularly to feel defensive in conversations around race.** We all fear being seen as a bad person. And according to the binary, you can't be a good person and be complicit with racism. This defensiveness is what was on display recently when candidate Joe Biden was called out for saying something racially problematic. Rather than apologizing and seeking to learn how he had offended, he defended himself, proclaiming "there's not a racist bone in my body".

(4) Again, Biden was focussing on intentional acts and explicit biases, and was defensively working to distance himself from racism because to acknowledge himself as even implicitly participating in it, meant he would be seen as a bad person. But this taboo for whites of owning our part in racism only reinforces the status quo.

(5) Dr. DiAngelo sums it up this way: **"This binary is probably the number one construct that keeps racism in place and makes it nearly impossible to talk to white people about racism."**

(6) **These two blindspots working together function to keep white people, even progressive white people, from really dealing with the ways that we uphold systems that are oppressive to people of color, the ways that we participate in racism.** And as long we remain unwittingly or defiantly blind to them, **we who are white are like the leaders Jesus critiqued in his days:** people who are not safe to follow because we cannot see how our investment in a system that benefits us to the expense of others, twists our understanding of reality.

C. Throughout this series we've been talking about how perhaps humans have adapted in their capacity to **make convincing idols**. We don't carve statues and worship them any longer. But we do allow the frames and lenses we see the world through to shape our understanding of truth. I have been positing that this is a kind of idolatry. **And if this is so then I believe Whiteness is an Idol.** It distorts our view of humanity. It distorts our view of what it means to live in community. It distorts our view of God.

1. But there is good news, friends. The good news is **we do not worship a white God**. We do not worship a white God. We do not worship a white God. Rather I believe we worship a God of mercy. A God who desires all of us to see God, others, and ourselves more clearly. A God who came to embody what it means to be human in community so that we might see. A God who promises freedom and forgiveness for our collective sin, and offers an invitation to new sight and a pathway to receive it for any of us who find ourselves blinded.
2. There is another story in the New Testament that I think provides an interesting and hopeful counterpoint to the first. And we find it in the Book of Acts, after the death and resurrection, and ascension of Jesus.

D. Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest 2 and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. 3 As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. 4 He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" 5 "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. 6 "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do." 7 The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. 8 Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. 9 For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything. 10 In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, "Ananias!" "Yes, Lord," he answered. 11 The Lord told him, "Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. 12 In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight." 13 "Lord," Ananias answered, "I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your holy people in Jerusalem. 14 And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name." 15 But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. 16 I will show him how much he must suffer for my name." 17 Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit." 18 Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, 19 and after taking some food, he regained his strength.

1. On the road to Damascus, **Saul had an encounter with the living Jesus**. Saul, the **pinnacle of people of power and privilege**. Saul, the Pharisee of Pharisees. Saul, the gatekeeper, empowered to **shut down the rebels**, in this case empowered to shut down this movement of Jesus followers through execution. This Saul encounters the living Jesus, and he physically loses his sight. His eyes come to reflect his inner reality. **He has**

been blinded all along, and now he is forced to recognize it. He's confronted for his complicity in not simply persecuting this rogue element of political protestors. **He's confronted for persecuting Jesus,** persecuting the manifestation of God, God's own self. God identifies with the marginalized and is calling out those who endanger them.

2. **But there is not just a judgement and a sentence for Saul.** He's not just banished. He's not done for as a leader. There is also an extension of grace. There is an invitation to be healed. **There is an opportunity for new sight.** Saul is invited to go, to be led instead of to lead, and to submit to someone he wanted to kill. He's invited to receive Ananais.
3. **No doubt Ananais has his own complicated process to go through.** Why would this be something God would ask of him? To go to the home where his oppressor is? And yet God calls Ananias forward into this place of vulnerability. **God is calling Ananais into something difficult and painful, just as God explains God will be calling Saul into the difficult and painful, into a deep suffering that will also bring life.** They are to find one another there, at the house of Judas on Straight Street. They are to trust the Holy Spirit in their midst. And when the first becomes last, and the last becomes first, when the oppressor receives the blessing of the oppressed, something miraculous happens.
4. **Saul doesn't just regain his sight.** It says **scales fall from his eyes.** Something was clouding his vision, but as he is filled by the Holy Spirit that which kept him from seeing is able to fall away. **What was in those scales? How did they function to obscure his vision? How was he changed to have them no longer cloud his eyes?**
5. **And what might all of this mean for us?** I believe this story reminds us that there is hope that our God doesn't want any of us to be blinded by idolatry, but the Divine wants to reveal God's true nature to all of us and invite us to see God and one another more clearly. It shows us that the Spirit is about the work of removing scales from eyes, and that often happens for those who are blinded by privilege through humility and submission to those who've experienced oppression. It shows us that the Spirit is the one who calls some to participate in that vulnerable and empowering work of leading those who are coming into sight.
6. **I believe I have spent years on a journey of slowly finding scales falling from my eyes.** Those scales have brought grief as I have grieved the cost of whiteness for us collectively and personally. I grieve the places that whiteness has blinded me to loving others well and receiving them as Jesus did.
7. Mercifully, I have also spent the last 20 plus years experiencing the blessing of deep connection with people of color in my life, and I have to say my life is so enriched at this point because I've been given the gift of gracious people of color who have been courageous enough to trust the Spirit's activity in my life and in theirs to love me and help me through my journey of gaining sight. **I've been enriched not just through personal relationships but also through resources, particularly voices of color who've helped me see my blind spots more.** I'm sharing a number of these at the bottom of your sheet in case you find them helpful. And I have hope that this process of growth might continue for me and for all of you in this community. I have hope that Haven will be a place where we can take that journey together, where we can encounter one another like Ananias and Saul, and truly become safe for one another.
8. But I also recognize that **there are a lot of scales on these eyes.** I recognize that I am and I will always be in process. I recognize that I need the feedback, it's a gift to me, but I can also be defensive when confronted with my own insensitivity around race. I recognize

that I am trying to learn from my mistakes, but the process is painful. I ask for your grace and courage to love me as I continue to heal.

9. **At the same time, friends of color, I want to name clearly that it is not your job to help those of us who are white gain sight.** As the pastor of this community, I speak permission to you to participate in that work only as you feel led and empowered by the Spirit to do so. I also encourage you to practice self-care and self-love and healing from oppression in whatever ways you need. I bless you to withdraw from mixed-race space when it doesn't feel good and to cultivate people of color only spaces, even within the Haven community, as we grow. I bless you to allow Jesus to speak truth and healing and love to you, free from the idol of whiteness, even as we collectively work together to help our Haven community and the world around us divest from it.
- E. The truth is **whiteness and white supremacy are not anything any of us have chosen.** I do not believe most of us would have chosen to participate in oppressing others, and I know my brothers and sisters of color would not have chosen to experience oppression. **We did not choose it, it was chosen for us.** But we can choose, we *must* choose, how we respond to what we've inherited. None of us have the luxury of not being concerned with race; not on this side of eternity. Particularly not in this moment in history, when black boys are being shot in the streets and brown babies are dying in detention centers. This is life and death stuff; simply being "non-racist" isn't a category available to us. **We are either actively against racism, we are anti-racist, actively participating in the dismantling of whiteness and white supremacy, or we are complicit in it remaining so.** Jennifer Harvey is a pastor and author who says at any given time a space is becoming safer for racism or safer for people of color. I pray that here at Haven, God would give us the wisdom, the humility, the courage, and the clarity of vision by the Holy Spirit to ever grow in creating safety for our brothers and sisters of color. Amen.

Questions for Reflection and Conversation:

1. Whatever your race, how has Whiteness affected your experience of race? What has it meant to be socialized into a society that centers Whiteness and upholds white supremacy?
2. If you are white, how have the two blind spots we discussed affected your ability to see race clearly? If you are not white, how have the blind spots made it difficult for you to feel safe in majority white spaces?
3. If you are a person of color, have you been able to give feedback to white people about their unintentional acts of racism with a positive outcome? What would that look like? How might it change your experience of racism?