

I. Advanced Organizer

A. My complicated history as an evangelical

1. **I remember the first time I found myself in a small group bible study.** It was 1995. I was a freshman at Northwestern, a theatre major, and on the search for a spiritual connection. I'd had some powerful moments of spiritual awakening that I couldn't dismiss that led me both to leave my home and family in southern California and move to Chicago for school, and **then to join this senior theatre major and his friends in the basement of the arts dorm on campus as they prayed, talked about the Bible, and sang love songs to Jesus.** The content of the evening was so simple. It was so genuine and honest. And so stunningly moving. I went skeptical but curious. I left a weepy mess who had no idea what new dimension I had stepped into, but I knew something was different and whatever this was, I needed more of it in my life. **This was my first taste of what I'd come to know as evangelicalism.**
2. A little more than a year later in December of 1996, I **found myself in Champaign, Urbana on Christmas break at an international missions conference put on by InterVarsity Christian Fellowship,** one of the most prominent and respected collegiate evangelical ministries in the world. I worshipped alongside almost 20,000 Christians of a variety of skin colors, from a variety of churches, in a variety of languages. I was moved by the testimonies of some of the Christians there who had made huge sacrifices to share the good news of Jesus with the world. I was stirred and touched by the worship. I saw a man miraculously healed before my own eyes. **And when it came time to consider a response to what was happening I felt a sense of gravity and weight and holiness. I said yes** to giving my life in a meaningful way to the service of Jesus, even though I had no idea what Jesus might ask of me. When I took communion that night I felt the honor of being a part of the global family of God. **This for me was evangelicalism.**
3. **Less than five years later in 2001, I found myself at another conference.** Comparatively this one was much smaller, but it was still a highly charged environment. My church of about 800 people was celebrating its 25th anniversary. Alums from around the globe had returned to Evanston for a family reunion of sorts. I was there with my new fiancé, Jason.
 - a) Our brand of church was from a particularly charismatic wing of evangelicalism, which meant there was a lot of space made to listen to the Holy Spirit, and believe that God was eager to speak to us. The last night of the conference the leaders invited many of the alumni up to pray for the next generation of future leaders. **They called up all of us under 30 to come forward and receive prayer. It was one of the highs in my life.** I felt chills throughout my body, a powerful sense of God's closeness as people prayed over me. And as I wept in the beauty of that moment I felt like God spoke some of the clearest words I'd ever hear. **"Someday you guys are gonna plant a church. Don't tell Jason."**
 - b) That was the beginning of this journey that has brought me to where we are today. **Conception happened on that night. Pregnancy would eventually develop,** though for years I had no idea the role I'd even play in it. At the time, I didn't have a model in my church framework that as a woman I could be a senior pastor. Yet because of that moment, I'd eventually discern a call to ministry, I'd eventually say yes to it. I'd go to an evangelical seminary, where I'd learn about a biblical ethic for women in leadership, and racial justice, and truths held in tension. Jason and I would move our family from

Chicago to Iowa City, and from Iowa City to Berkeley. **I'd dream and scheme and sacrifice to someday start a church myself. This, too was evangelicalism.**

4. **And then there was another fateful conference, twelve years after that night of conception**, in a season where I was now late in this stage of church plant pregnancy, ready to embark on the adventure of actually giving birth. I had cleared all the hurdles, passed all the evangelical tests, and looked ahead with excitement and fear at the adventure to come. And then a problem had arisen. **My movement of churches for the first time had taken a position on LGBTQ issues, a position that I could not in good conscience agree with.**
 - a) You see my evangelicalism had taught me to take the Bible seriously, and to hold it in tension with the movement of the Spirit, and the call of God to speak in my present day. My evangelicalism had taught me that God ever moves to those outside of God's family with the desire to bring them in. **My evangelicalism taught me that sometimes healing isn't actually about individuals changing, its about systems changing to see what God is doing.** It is about God saying in our time "do not call unclean what I have made clean" and being willing to trust God's Spirit enough to step into those places of uncertainty. **As one of the great leaders in my brand of evangelicalism said, "Faith is spelled RISK".**
 - b) And so when it came time to prepare to move to Berkeley and begin a faith community, my faith, formed in evangelicalism, compelled me to be honest that **the church I sincerely believed Jesus was calling me to start had to be fully inclusive of LGBTQ individuals, couples, and families.** And so there, at that fateful conference in 2013, I found myself in another powerful spiritual moment. I was face to face with the person who held all the power to bless me to move forward with this group of churches that had become my family, or to end that possibility. **And as I sat down with him, I felt as if once again the Spirit of God was remarkably close. I felt like the Spirit brought me out of myself, and I was watching this moment from the ceiling.** I saw from above this man and and I in our little chairs in this church lobby, with God saying. **"Be aware Leah. This is a significant moment. This is the moment you're being kicked out of this movement.** He may not say the words, but that's whats happening right now." And it was. That was the moment that I was told **because I couldn't come to a theological agreement with church leadership about gay Christians, this was no longer my family.** It was the moment I was told I had to decide "if this was the hill I was willing to die on" or not. And as I stood my ground and committed myself to what I could not deny that Jesus has been calling me into for over a decade, it was the moment the bridges were burned and I could no longer go back. **This too for me was evangelicalism.**
- B. **We've been doing a teaching series for the last several weeks called, "Smashing Idols".** And in this series we've been confronting the ways that I believe we culturally create idols today. Rather than worshiping statues and carvings, we create constructs: ways of viewing the world, and we prioritize some of those over others. And when we do this ultimately we distort our view of truth, we distort our view of one another, we distort our view of God, and we sadly often become oppressive. **And if this can be true of the idols we've been talking about: like androcentrism, like heteronormativity, if it can be true of whiteness, then it can also be true even of the frameworks through which we try to conduct our faith. It can be true of evangelicalism.**

1. Here at Haven, we've been networked, sometimes formally, and currently more informally, with other churches who have shared similar history to our own origins. And in this group of communities, we've talked about where we aspire to land in relation to other Jesus-centered communities of faith. Here at Haven, like some of our friends, **we intend our connection to other faith communities to be ecumenical**. We ideally see ourselves as circling the center of the quadrants **Phyllis Tickle laid out in her book *The Great Emergence***, drawing on the best of the evangelical, the best of the renewalist, or charismatic, the liturgical, and the social justice wings of the church. So while this is true of what we aspire to be, we can't help our DNA. As of now, where we are coming from has been a primarily charismatic/evangelical background. Most of my background and the background of other churches I'm currently connected to has emerged primarily from the bottom half of the quadrant.
2. **Now I started with my stories of my faith history because I want you to know that this isn't abstract for me.**
 - a) **I don't approach this topic gleefully, eager to skew some silly group and their backward ideas.** This is emotional for me. It's personal. To consider the impact positive and negative of evangelicalism is to consider in a sense my spiritual family of origin in many ways. I owe my faith to the gifts I've received from the evangelical church. I've experienced moments of glory I don't know that I'd have experienced otherwise. I am living the faith that was formed in me in those settings and I have given my life to it.
 - b) But my heart has been broken by the evangelical church in that unique way that your heart can only be truly broken by those you have known as family, as kin, as closest relation.
3. I know this isn't all of our stories. But it is true for many of us here today. And for those of us for whom it is not, even if you're new to church, or your faith background is not evangelical, your involvement at Haven makes it relevant because this is not only my story, it's our story. It's Haven's story in a sense. And all of us are in some way a part of it.
- C. So to **wrestle with the idols of our faith frameworks**, to consider the idol of evangelicalism, is **to wrestle with a family story. Family stories are messy**. And it's a hard to look at the parts of our family histories that are toxic. It's hard to hold those in tension with all that we should celebrate and seek to uphold. There is beauty and there is ugliness but we need to see it all to understand ourselves in the story.
 1. A central question that we will be wrestling with as many people are, is what happens when we find ourselves at odds with the folks we have known as family? How do we follow Jesus in that place?
- II. Well, in case you didn't know, **Jesus also seemed to have a fairly complicated relationship with his family.**
 - A. **We see it from early on.**
 1. Remember the first story of Jesus' life that comes beyond infancy. In Luke 2, we're told the story about Jesus the twelve year old boy journeying to Jerusalem for one of the annual festivals. But rather than pilgrimaging back at the end with his parents, young Jesus stays at the temple for while, and his families starts caravanning without him. And then a day out of town they finally go looking amongst the tents, they go looking amongst the groups of friends, asking you know Jesus' buddies Judah, David, Jacob whoever where Jesus is and they can't find him anywhere. So they go back to Jerusalem, to see if he got left behind and they find him hanging out with a group of rabbis in the temple, learning torah, listening, asking questions.

48 When his parents saw him, they were astonished. His mother said to him, “Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you.”

49 “Why were you searching for me?” he asked. “Didn’t you know I had to be in my Father’s house?” 50 But they did not understand what he was saying to them.

2. It’s like **Luke is giving us a hint of what’s to come.** This story comes right after the nativity accounts. We see Jesus’ parents so grateful for the miracles around his birth, but by the time he’s twelve years old, it’s clear that they don’t really get what all of it-the angels, the shepherds, the prophecies - really meant. **They don’t really get him. They did not understand what he was saying to them.**

B. And as an adult, once he begins his ministry, we get a sense that things get harder from there. Mark highlights the tension Jesus had with his family from the beginning particularly starkly. (Mark 3:20-34)

1. **20 Then Jesus entered a house, and again a crowd gathered, so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat. 21 When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, “He is out of his mind.”**

22 And the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, “He is possessed by Beelzebul! By the prince of demons he is driving out demons.”

23 So Jesus called them over to him and began to speak to them in parables: “How can Satan drive out Satan? 24 If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. 25 If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. 26 And if Satan opposes himself and is divided, he cannot stand; his end has come. 27 In fact, no one can enter a strong man’s house without first tying him up. Then he can plunder the strong man’s house. 28 Truly I tell you, people can be forgiven all their sins and every slander they utter, 29 but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; they are guilty of an eternal sin.”

30 He said this because they were saying, “He has an impure spirit.”

31 Then Jesus’ mother and brothers arrived. Standing outside, they sent someone in to call him. 32 A crowd was sitting around him, and they told him, “Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you.”

33 “Who are my mother and my brothers?” he asked.

34 Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! 35 Whoever does God’s will is my brother and sister and mother.”

2. Context: **Jesus has recently started ministry and it's taking off.** He’s healing people, he’s preaching and people care about what he has to say, and folks are starting to regularly follow him. As Mark tells the story, this account comes right after Jesus has appointed 12 main followers to do life with him and be his ambassadors. He’s calling people to live intimately into mission with him. And then this happens.

3. **Here we see two groups really troubled by what's happening with Jesus. One, if we've studied the gospels at all, are the folks we'd expect...**the teachers of the law; the Jewish religious leaders. These are the classic adversaries to Jesus, the religious elites. **But the other group is a bit more surprising. His family.**
4. The picture we get isn't that mom and the sibs are coming to have a nice little chat; make sure he gets a snack and a nap. Mark tells us they are coming to take charge of him, saying **he is out of his mind.**
 - a) This isn't the only place we see that for Jesus; family life is complicated. In John 2, we see Jesus getting a bit ticked with his mom because she's asking him to turn the water into wine at a party. In John 7, we're told that his brothers didn't believe in him.
 - b) We don't often think about what it would have been like to grow up with Jesus in the house, or to build a carpentry business with older brother Jesus, but I guess I can understand why they might be a bit annoyed when all of a sudden he's shirking his duties building tables and benches or houses with them and is galavanting around the countryside hanging out with fisherman and telling people what to think about God instead.
 - c) Whatever the case we get the sense that Jesus' family, similarly to the teachers of the law, misunderstand him.
5. **Mark puts these stories together not because they actually happened at the same time, but because for him, they're connected.** One informs the other. Why might that be?
 - a) both of these groups of people are making false accusations against Jesus. They misinterpret him. **The family thinks he's mentally unwell** and can't be trusted with himself.
 - b) The Jewish leaders think he's possessed; **that he's in league with evil.** This evil is personified by Beelzebub, or Satan, language for the Enemy of God. **While these religious leaders can't deny Jesus' power, they can question the source of it** - say it comes from evil instead of good. **Jesus' parable points out how illogical that is.** "How can Satan drive out Satan?" You are seeing powerful things happening. You are seeing positive activity. And yet you are calling it the activity of evil. This is a big deal. Not only are you just incorrect, you are grievously missing it. You are calling the activity of God evil. That's like cosmically offensive. Mark says **Jesus calls it the eternal sin.**
 - c) I don't think this is about being scary and spiteful. "Ha-ha. We gotcha. You just committed the unforgivable sin." No, it seems like what Jesus is saying is **if you can't trust the activity of God, if you can't see the fruit of God's good work, if you're too blinded by your frames and lenses to see God at work in your midst, if you're too invested in your idols, whether they are the idols of your religious practices or the idols of family roles, that you have to interpret things that don't fit the mold not as astounding miracles but as signs of the devil, you are colossally missing out.** You miss seeing and experience the Holy Spirit at work right in front of you. **And that's tragic.** Where do you go from there?
 - d) In Mark's story, Jesus goes from that point once again to these people who also seem to be missing what Jesus is doing, the mother and siblings. **They do not see the activity of God in their midst. They are missing it.** They may be well meaning, but **their investment in pulling Jesus away from what he is doing makes clear they are not able to partner with the activity of God, playing out in front of them. And that causes separation.**

- e) Jesus doesn't go with his family. A lot of commentary writers try to play this down, but you can't get around it - **it's a diss**. His family has traveled from Nazareth to Capernaum to rescue Jesus from himself, and he's not gonna let himself be rescued. No. I am not mentally unwell, just like I am not in league with the devil. I have the work of the Spirit to do here. **And my people, my kinsman, my family right now are the people who hear that call, who sense that Spirit, and who are committed to that work with me.** And so I love you. I'm grateful for you. I will always care about you. On the day I'm hanging on the cross, mom, don't worry, I'm gonna reach out to my buddy John here and make sure he takes care of you. Brother James, I know your gonna come around one day and play an important role in this project too, but now - no...I can't go with you. Cause like I told you when I was twelve, "I gotta be in my Father's house."

III. In recent years I've been doing some research into the history of evangelicalism. The parts I didn't learn in seminary.

- A. Truthfully more and more articles have been popping up in my Facebook feed in the last couple of years, exploring this history. Because on November 8, 2016, 80% of white evangelicals voted for Donald Trump to be President of the United States. Evangelicals - the Christians who are supposed to care about the Bible, who are supposed to care about pursuing lives of holiness, the Christians who are supposed to care about the poor, and welcoming the stranger, and actually living your faith- these Christians voted overwhelmingly, for a man who seems to be Biblically illiterate, has a history of oppressing the vulnerable, calls immigrants rapists and murderers, has had many affairs and brags about grabbing women by the pussy. And two years in, after Charlottesville, after kids locked in cages, and the Mueller report, while some who voted for him have expressed having second thoughts, his support amongst evangelicals is nearly unwavering. So how is this the guy for evangelicals?
- B. Early in my experience in college as an evangelical, I was exposed to a fairly attractive brand of evangelicalism. I was introduced to an evangelicalism that was smart, and thoughtful; concerned with justice for the vulnerable, and could demonstrate that concern with it's history. **Evangelicalism was basically defined as a broad swath of Christianity, folks from many brands of church, but that all shared four core things.** These Christians took seriously **the idea of conversion** - making some sort of active choice to follow Jesus. **They believed seriously that the Bible was inspired by the Holy Spirit (inspiration)** and thus had authority to speak into the lives of Christians in a unique way. **They believed that the cross had a unique power through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ to bring salvation**, to connect people with God, and **they believed that our faith should compel us to activity in the world (activism)**, to partnering with God in what he was up to, to **sharing the good news of Jesus with those who hadn't experienced it for themselves**. That's basically what I understood it meant to be an evangelical.
- C. But while it's true that evangelicals may share in some way those core understandings of Christian faith, **evangelicalism is also still a human culture and system.** And **human systems can sometimes get in the way of us actually living our ideals.** Human systems have a hard time flexing to nuance and adapting to change. Human systems have a hard time defining what the ideals actually mean and how we apply them. And in the process **human systems often concentrate power and serve some while oppressing others.**
- D. So there have been **19th and 20th century Christians that today's evangelicals see as historical parents that found their Christian faith compelling them to advocacy for the vulnerable:** compelling them to serving the needs of the poor, to advocating for women to

have the right to vote, to make biblical arguments for the abolition of slavery. But there have also been **Christians we also should count as our forefathers and mothers who used Christian faith as a way to try to pacify their black slaves**, to teach them that they needed to learn to submit to their earthly masters and in this would be their salvation.

- E. While there may be some versions of evangelicalism that see themselves as open-minded and intellectually curious, it is also true that in the early twentieth century in the face of growing acceptance culturally for the scientific theories of evolution including in some brands of the Christian church, **conservative Christians hardened themselves against these intellectually challenging beliefs, giving rise to a brand of militantly passionate Christian faith called fundamentalism**, as they insisted that true Christians would read the Bible as literal and historical. Evolution could thus not be true.
- F. And then after World War II, as the brand of fundamentalism began to fall out of favor, perhaps because its militancy drew parallels to what we had just confronted in Germany, **conservative Christians sought to soften the image. What we know of as contemporary evangelicalism was born.**
- G. **Many scholars of religion today note the success of the brand change from fundamentalism to evangelicalism, it gave rise to the understanding I have sincerely held of what it meant to be an evangelical**, but they also note **how little in the core structure of the system has actually changed**. While evangelicalism hoped to have a bigger tent than fundamentalism, at its core it has always had an androcentric, heteronormative, and white supremacist culture of faith. And any challenge to those has generally caused great tension within the system.
- H. **When Dr. King led his march on Selma, Alabama, white evangelicals were primarily disapproving.** Yes, there were some white Christians who marched with Dr. King, but most of them were not conservative Christians, they were Catholics and Lutherans and Unitarians - not evangelicals. Frank Gaebelien was an outlier. He was an associate editor for the young premier publication in the evangelical world, *Christianity Today*. He went from New York to Selma to cover what was happening, and what he saw so inspired him he wired his boss and told him that they needed to let evangelicals know that they must join the march. But Gaebelien's stories never saw the light of day. Because the primary founders and funders of *Christianity Today* were staunch segregationists.
- I. **Many of us are aware today of the unholy alliance that the white evangelical church has seemed to hold with the Republican Party since the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980, thanks primarily to the rise of the Religious Right. But are we aware of the origins of that religious and political organizing effort?** The way most in the religious right tell the story, conservative Christians started organizing politically in the 1970s as a response to a decision by the Supreme Court legalizing abortion, *Roe vs. Wade*. But as Randall Balmer, a Dartmouth Religion professor has written and lectured on extensively - **this is a myth. It's demonstrably false. The impetus for the rise of the contemporary religious right was never abortion. It was segregation.** Abortion was the smoke screen.
- J. **When *Roe vs. Wade* was first passed, W. A. Criswell**, the Southern Baptist Convention's former president and pastor of First Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas—also one of the most famous fundamentalists of the 20th century—was pleased: *"I have always felt that it was only after a child was born and had a life separate from its mother that it became an individual person,"* he said, *"and it has always, therefore, seemed to me that what is best for the mother and for the future should be allowed."*

K. **What could not be allowed was what was happening due to another part of the Federal government. It wasn't the Supreme Court. It was the IRS.**

1. Beginning in the early 1970s the Internal Revenue Service had begun using its tax exemption policies to try to motivate institutions that resisted desegregation to comply. They did this by **denying tax exempt status to institutions that refused to admit people of color.** And the primary institutions in question were evangelical universities. **Bob Jones University (slide) was one of these institutions that came under fire from the IRS.** They believed that racial segregation was mandated by the Bible. Anger at the government overreach many white supremacist Christians saw in this move was the actual impetus for the organizing that happened in the late 1970s. These forces would organize to help white evangelicals unseat one of their own, a Sunday School teaching Evangelical named Jimmy Carter, to replace him with a relatively Biblically illiterate, Hollywood playboy named Ronald Reagan. **Abortion was actually chosen amongst a number of ideas thrown out in a strategic conference phone call between religious and political leaders as the issue to publicly galvanize evangelicals around because in a post-Civil rights era it couldn't be race.** Feminism and gay rights down the line would become other popular targets. But **the animus that organized the political wing of white conservative Christianity was always about race.**

L. **So when scholars like Randall Balmer saw how 2016 was playing out,** with more and more white evangelicals choosing Donald Trump over those who seemed to be genuine Bible-believing Christians, they weren't surprised. Balmer wrote an article in the Washington Post in April of 2016 as Trump was sweeping the primaries, titled, **"Trump's success with evangelical voters isn't surprising. It was inevitable."**

IV. **Some of you already know the origin story of this teaching series. But some of you don't.**

Two summers ago we had a prayer group, led by Ginny, hosted by Jason and I. **We were praying into the vision for Haven I'd been laying out the earlier spring: how I believe God has called us to be a community holding three things in tension. Being safe, diverse, and Jesus-centered.** So we were praying into that over the summer and asking God to speak to us about practically how we might move into living out that vision. And we got lots of amazing pictures and words that were encouraging throughout the summer in this group. **And then the last night happened. We came to the last time of listening prayer. And I got what was to me the heaviest of pictures.**

1. **In this picture I had something like a vase in my hands. And I was throwing it the ground and watching it shatter as I heard these words. "*Leah, it's time to shatter the idol of evangelicalism.*"** I gotta admit that felt pretty harsh. Pretty heavy. I mean **I had long since stopped seeing myself as fitting in the evangelical mold.** I understood that that fateful conference in 2013 was essentially my ejection not just from a particular church movement but from the movement of evangelicalism. And while rejection of course hurt tremendously, I found something on the other side. I have found this beautiful community. After death, I have experienced resurrection and it has transformed my faith. **And so I've been ok saying I've emerged from that corner of the church and I'm trying to live in an ecumenical way circling the center.** And while I might not have called myself evangelical, **I wouldn't have pointed to evangelicalism and called it an idol.** That felt too intense. But when I nervously spoke it into the room, all of us who were gathered there felt the weight of it. **And we all acknowledged it felt true. This was an idol Jesus**

was inviting us to shatter not for anyone else necessarily but for our own capacity to live into Haven's vision.

2. You see, what I hadn't acknowledge until that word was the ways that my forming in the evangelical world, and **the ways that Haven's origins in that world have shaped me and us and the formation of what we are doing.** While I may have said theologically I'm not sure I can call myself an evangelical anymore, all the ways I thought through this project, how it should be formed, what it should include, how we could evaluate its success or failure **came to us from the evangelical social system. The very project of "planting a church" has largely been an evangelical project.** And until we acknowledge that and think critically about how it shapes us, we may find ourselves captive to our faith family of origin. Captive to an idol.
3. **When Jesus' family and his religious leaders came to confront him, they both questioned his authority. They both questioned his motivation. They questioned the activity of God in their midst, attributing it to the work of mental illness or even evil.** This too I believe is the **misguided sin that too many evangelicals (as well as potentially other church traditions) have fallen into.** The blindness of our narrow views of the Bible, and the need to justify the upholding of our cultures and systems, have caused us to use our theology not to always seek and support the unfolding work of God in our midst but to restrain it. To redirect it. To shut it down. **To attribute the work of God that we don't yet have a framework for to some version of cultural craziness, or liberal politics, or evil, which lets face it, for many evangelicals are all the same thing.**
4. **So the majority of evangelicals are not comfortable with women in positions of power,** so they celebrate theologically their difference from men and say that the Bible says women were created to help and men to lead. And the **majority of evangelicals are not comfortable with folks outside the binaries of sex and gender and sexuality** and so they point to some obscure verses in Leviticus and call gay people abominations. **The majority of evangelicals are uncomfortable considering issues of systemic injustice** and so they say we need to focus on our individual lives, focus on our personal sins, stay out of politics. But "staying out of politics" for them still certainly means voting Republican and suppressing or ostracizing Christian evangelicals voices who use their evangelical convictions and theology to argue against torture by the government, or for protection for the environment, or for inclusion of the queer community in the church, or for racial justice, *true* racial justice that repents of the sins of racism that have been imbedded in our institutions, in our *Christian* institutions and have brought harm to people of color in the name of Jesus. **The truth is that the vast majority of evangelicals are white. 76% today of evangelicals are white.** And these white Christians may be getting somewhat comfortable with people of color in their churches but not in their pulpits. People of color can come if they want to worship like we worship. They can come if they ascribe to what we ascribe to. They can come but they cannot change what we are. They can assimilate to white church because that's what evangelicals do.
5. **Yet the idol of evangelicalism cannot acknowledge its androcentrism, it cannot acknowledge its heteronormativity, it can't acknowledge its whiteness.** It must try to shut the activity of God down instead.
6. But God is not confined by Evangelicalism. God is not confined by Evangelicalism. **God is not confined by Evangelicalism. The Spirit is bigger than any vessel.** She does not live in any human system or structure. And the activity of God to transform the world with love

and freedom cannot be controlled. When you try to shut it down by crucifying it on a hill, it will rise again. Because that is the resurrection project God is up to.

7. **In the picture I had of smashing the idol of evangelicalism, it was clear that it was not an empty vessel.** There was beauty inside. Genuine spiritual power. Real, authentic connection with God. Worship that brought change in the world. All of these were in the vase that broke. **There is so much good in the world that has been delivered to humanity through the gift of the evangelical church,** just as there is so much good that has come through the other segments of the church as well. **We long for all of these and this is the good stuff we're trying to embody and live into at Haven.** But in order for this to be released to live in power, and for it to live in its unique manifestation here in this cultural moment in Berkeley with Haven, celebrating women, and queer folks, and people of color - **it's the evangelical container that needs to be broken.** The container is not the good stuff. It's just a holder for it.
8. **So we too can love our family. We can pray for our family, We can cry out that God would redeem our family.** But we also recognize that when our family cannot see God at work in our midst at times, like Jesus we must say, **no.** I will not be shut down by you. I will not go with you. I will not come under your control. **For this is my family.** These folks who are participating in the activity of God in the world. These are the brothers and sisters and mothers and fathers I have to live this mission out with.
 - a) Needless to say **we will also have our own blind spots.** we will have our own places where we are tempted to be more invested in our understanding or vision than our view of God. **We must continually be looking for the Spirit to reveal the logs in our eyes and the idols forming in our midst. But our hope is in trusting that this is the work the Spirit is always doing. This is the work the Spirit is committed to** for all who have eyes to see and ears to hear. It's the work the Spirit has done since a group of recently liberated Hebrew slaves burned their earrings and made a cow. Our hope for our communities as well as the global church is that **we worship a God who wants to free us from idolatry so we can see the beauty of our God more fully.** We worship a God is committed to bringing us into greater awareness of who this God is, and as we journey together we as Haven will continue to invite this God to reveal God's self to us, whatever that means. Amen.