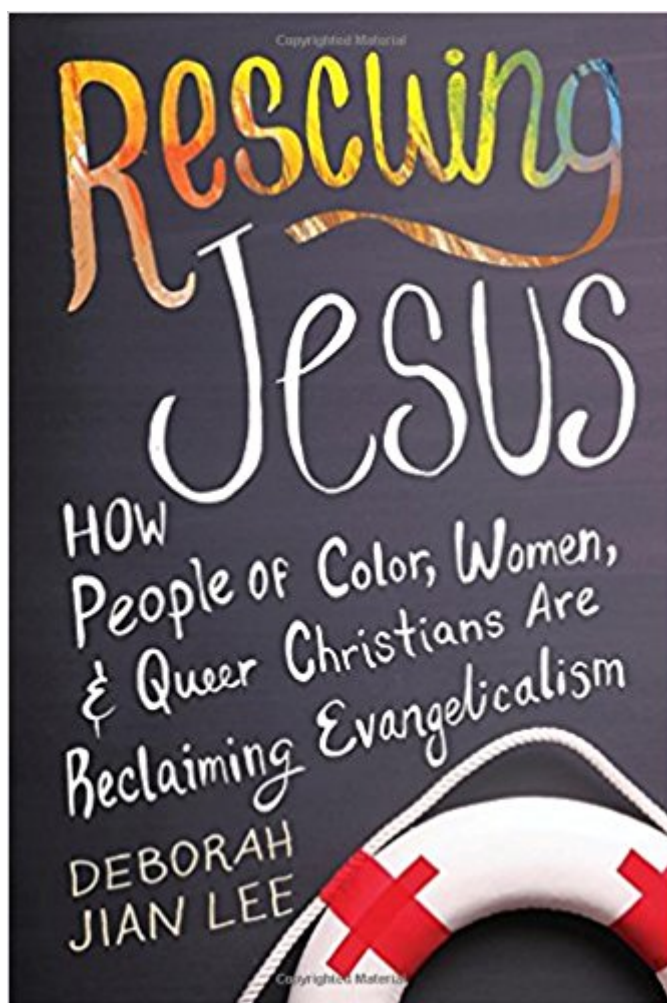


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# Rescuing Jesus: How People Of Color, Women, And Queer Christians Are Reclaiming Evangelicalism



## Synopsis

An inside look at the young, diverse, progressive Christians who are transforming the evangelical movement. Deborah Jian Lee left the evangelical world because she was frustrated by its conservative politics. But over the years she stayed close to those in the movement, and she has come to realize that evangelical culture and politics are changing, and changing fast. Friends had stopped voting based on wedge issues. Believers of color were changing church demographics and political interests. Women were rising in the ranks despite familiar sermons about female submission. LGBTQ Christians were coming out, staying in the church, and leading ministries. What Lee came to find is that most of what we think we know about evangelicals is wrong, or is well on its way to becoming dated. In *Rescuing Jesus*, she ventures into the world of progressive evangelicalism and tells the stories of the young women and men at the forefront of a movement that could change both the face and the substance of religion in the United States. Generational changes and the shifting racial make-up of evangelicals are transforming the movement and pushing it in a more progressive direction. A young and diverse array of people on this leading edge of progressive evangelicalism—LGBTQ and straight; white, black, Asian, Hispanic, and indigenous—are working to wrest political power away from conservatives. Today, young evangelicals are more likely than their elders to accept same-sex marriage, more inclined to think of “pro-life” issues as being about supporting society, less disenfranchised, and more accepting of equality between men and women. With empathy, journalistic rigor, and powerful storytelling, Lee unpacks the diverse and complex strands of this movement—and what it means for the rest of us. Given the clout that evangelicals still hold in national politics, Lee argues, this movement is important not only for the future of evangelicalism but also for the future of our country. From the Hardcover edition.

## Book Information

Paperback: 296 pages

Publisher: Beacon Press; Reprint edition (October 25, 2016)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0807075078

ISBN-13: 978-0807075074

Product Dimensions: 6.1 x 0.9 x 9.1 inches

Shipping Weight: 14.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars 28 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #129,610 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #26 in Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Theology > Fundamentalism #32 in Books > Religion & Spirituality > Religious Studies > Fundamentalism #180 in Books > Gay & Lesbian > Nonfiction > LGBT Studies

## Customer Reviews

“This examination of humanity and culture shows how individuals are affected by the strictures of Evangelical Christianity—and how they are reclaiming it for their own...The journalistic writing will appeal to readers of nonfiction; the personal nature of the content will offer solidarity to those who are struggling with their faith, and the examination of religion and politics will challenge readers searching for a different perspective. This volume offers insight into an often overlooked sect of American Christianity; here, Jian Lee has given women, racial minorities, and the LGBTQ community a voice. This is a succinct, intelligent, personable accounting of an often misunderstood demographic.”—Library Journal, Starred Review

“Rescuing Jesus highlights and spurs on change that is vital not only to the evangelical church but also to the country.”—Foreword Reviews

“Rescuing Jesus holds plenty of revelations about the future of American Christianity...Lee challenges prevailing understanding about American evangelicalism, and she demonstrates that identity politics, which once served to divide liberal evangelicals, are now working in tandem with their evangelical identities.”—Tanner Howard, Chicago Reader

“In Rescuing Jesus, Deborah Jian Lee smashes the stereotype that evangelical automatically means socially conservative. With passionate reporting and skillful storytelling, Lee takes us into the world of Christians who share the same values of tolerance and social justice as secular progressives. Lee puts a human face on the large number of evangelicals invisible in a media culture that focuses on the most extreme right-wing adherents. Every liberal should read this book.”—Dale Maharidge, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *And Their Children After Them*

“One of the most important books I’ve read in years, *Rescuing Jesus* is a thoughtful, well-researched, and compelling page-turner that gives me hope for the future of Christianity. Lee’s reporting skills really shine as she features the stories of women, people of color, and queer Christians stepping out of the margins to lead the church in new and exciting directions. I’ll be recommending this book to anyone who asks me about the future of Christianity in America, and I’ll be returning to it often myself for research, encouragement, and inspiration.”—Rachel Held Evans, author of *Searching for Sunday: Loving, Leaving, and Finding the Church*

“Deborah Jian Lee’s *Rescuing Jesus* offers a substantial, well-written, and

compelling investigative report on the stresses and strains of U.S. evangelicalism on issues of race, gender, and sexuality. The author, herself a young refugee from evangelicalism, tells a bracing story that mixes bloodcurdling accounts of (oblivious white patriarchal straight male) evangelicalism with stories of the emerging young leaders who are challenging it. This is an important contribution, carefully reported, thoughtful in its analysis, and highly recommended.

—David Gushee, Distinguished University Professor of Christian Ethics and Director of the Center for Theology and Public Life, Mercer University, and author of *Changing Our Mind*

—Lee, whose reporting indicts modern American evangelicalism's failure to be good news for those who aren't conservative, straight, white men. Weaving in her own story, she movingly chronicles her subjects' search for a spiritual home, and what emerges is a profoundly hopeful, deeply Christian narrative about redemption and resurrection.

—Jeff Chu, author of *Does Jesus Really Love Me?*

—The evangelical church in America is changing from within and Deborah Jian Lee enthusiastically charts its new and unexpected course. *Rescuing Jesus* is an important and refreshing look at religion in America from a smart and passionate observer.

—Ari L. Goldman, author of *The Search for God at Harvard*

From the Hardcover edition.

Deborah Jian Lee is an award-winning journalist and radio producer. She has worked as a staff reporter for the Associated Press, taught journalism at Columbia University, and written for *Foreign Policy*, *Forbes*, *Slate*, *GOOD*, *Reuters*, *WBEZ*, *WNYC*, and others.

From the Hardcover edition.

Just finished *Rescuing Jesus : How People of Color, Women, and Queer Christians are Reclaiming Evangelicalism* by Deborah Jian Lee. I was a little put-off by the book's title - which turned out to be misleading since, Jesus isn't really the one being rescued. But it had some good recommendations, so I dove in anyway. *Rescuing Jesus* really surprised me. I expected it to be a "rant" about these issues. Instead, I found myself drawn in by the personal stories, and fascinated by the well-researched history that was interspersed throughout the book. The personal stories are of people that have been marginalized by their Evangelical communities for their gender, race, or orientation. But rather than abandon their faith, where many stories end, these stories move beyond the pain to self-discovery and finding a calling, rooted in faith, to serve others. It definitely identifies problems that we have inherited in an Evangelical culture dominated by straight, white, males for generations. So if you're not open to being shown those systemic problems and how they impact people, it's probably not a book you will enjoy. If you are willing to take some time to try and view life

in Evangelical circles from some new perspectives, you will be glad you did. I wholeheartedly recommend this book for those in this category.

I highly recommend this book to every Christian, or to anyone who wants a better understanding of how the modern American Evangelical church came to be the powerful political and cultural entity it now is. Growing up as an Evangelical Christian had many benefits in my life, including a close community and opportunities to wrestle with many existential questions. But it also came with its own set of perils and baggage. In fact, over the years, I have met many people from all different races, genders, and sexual orientations who share one thing in common; we now believe that some of what we learned in church was distorted, wrong, or in some instances, just plain toxic. This book is not just a history lesson though; it is a powerful account of people's stories and offers a glimpse into what the church can become if it decides to confront its history of racism, patriarchy, and homophobia. I finished the book with a sense of hope.

I was interviewed for this book, so naturally a good bit of my motivation in reading it was to see my story woven in with a larger narrative. Delightfully, I found much more than that. For me, Deborah's book answers two important questions "how did Evangelical churches end up almost exclusively conservative?" and "how are liberal Evangelicals reshaping Christianity in America?" She does this by reviewing the history of Evangelicalism and exploring the present through a series of personal interviews. Deborah does not hold back in pointing out the racism, anti-feminism, and anti-LGBT sentiments present in modern day Evangelical churches. However, rather than complaining about circumstances, she describes the events, doctrines, philosophies, and influential figures that lead to the situation we have now. Then she tells the stories of several people forging new paths. While it's often a challenging read, it also holds hope for people working for change.

Deborah Jian Lee has an excellent writing "voice" - journalistic and thorough without losing the capacity to inform readers through compelling storytelling, a deep sense of empathy, and a pursuit of justice for her protagonists. It read like a fictional page-turner, I couldn't put it down as I felt her investment in her "characters" and found myself rooting for their victory. Overall, this book shifted my perspectives on many fronts as it brought raw humanity to what has become political fodder. You'll be challenged.

I still have a little left in the book to read but could not wait to post my thoughts on this book.

Deborah expertly weaves her own personal experiences in and around the evangelical community and gives attention to voices that are there in the community. It's not often that non-fiction can bring me close to tears while reading... but given that I "welled up" a few times while reading proves what a deeply personal book this was for Deborah and anyone who has been a part of the evangelical community but felt on the "outside" due to their stances on gender, race or sexual orientation will feel at home.

In this book, Lee gives voice to minority groups who love their church but feel that they have been excluded from full participation in their communities. Rather than preaching, Lee invites readers into real stories of heartbreak and empowerment. I was convicted of my own privilege and implicit bias, and also motivated to encourage intentional inclusivity in my own faith and social communities.

honest and straight-forward. well-written. lee is a voice i have been longing to hear, telling stories of those who i have been longing to know. reassuring to know we are not alone in our questions, our doubts, and our hurt - and that feeling cynicism towards the church doesn't need to equate with cynicism towards the Jesus who we love.

Clear, insightful, and engaging! I love how the author weaves together people's stories with historical context.(For example, she traces the de facto racial segregation of many American churches back to deliberate church growth tactics used in the mid-20th century, which emphasized creating racially and socioeconomically homogeneous congregations. But she illustrates the consequences of this segregation by showing the harm that white evangelical Christianity does to one particular Christian of color. I'm making this sound boring but IT IS FASCINATING!)

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