



Leaders Manual

Guidance for Teachers, Pastors, and Discussion Group Leaders
in Colleges, Seminaries, Churches, Book Clubs, and Secular Organizations

EvolutionaryChristianity.com

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What is “Evolutionary Christianity”?

Evolutionary forms of Christianity are practiced by Christians who not only accept but value the scientific evidence of a cosmos and Earth billions of years old, in which life forms evolved over time via entirely natural processes. Thought leaders in the Evolutionary Christianity movement explore approaches for embracing scientific discoveries in deeply meaningful and life-enhancing ways. In their quest to build bridges between (and sometimes integrate) religious wisdom with scientific discoveries, they place immense value on nurturing new interpretations of ancient scripture and of doctrines that arose in pre-scientific times.

Synopsis

- **core material:** interviews with 38 Evolutionary Christian thought leaders
- **formats:** all 38 episodes can be both listened to (audio mp3) and read (pdf transcript)
- **time:** each interview is between 40 and 75 minutes in length
- **audio quality:** each interview was professionally edited for cogency and listener ease
- **audio downloads:** free via SOUNDCLOUD here:
<https://soundcloud.com/michael-dowd-grace-limits/sets/the-advent-of-evolutionary-christianity-38-interviews>
- **transcript downloads:** the carefully edited and **keyword-hotlinked** transcripts are unsecured so that, when opened onscreen, teachers and students in classroom situations may highlight and paste entire paragraphs into their own digital documents for use in test questions and student essays.
- **study guide questions:** each episode is paired with its own study guide chapter (in unsecured pdf format) so that teachers and group leaders may highlight and paste into their own documents precisely those **questions** they wish to use, in whatever order they choose, and with the freedom to alter the template language.
- **assistance in selecting episodes to use:** a primary focus of this study guide overview is to assist classroom teachers and discussion group leaders in **selecting an optimal menu of episodes** — given the time constraints, the context, and the goals of the institution or group facilitator.

Recommended uses

This series and its companion study guide are intended for **three primary user groups**:

- (1) **CLASSROOMS** – undergraduate and graduate programs in religious studies, as well as Christian and interfaith seminaries.
- (2) **DISCUSSION GROUPS** – churches, book clubs, secular organizations, and other forms of adult learning and continuing education.
- (3) **LIVING ROOM GATHERINGS** – individuals who want to explore the leading edge of science and religion with their friends and neighbors.

Who is the host?

Rev. Michael Dowd is the author of [*Thank God for Evolution: How the Marriage of Science and Religion Will Transform Your Life and Our World*](#) (Viking/Plume 2008). His book was endorsed by [6 Nobel laureates](#) and other science luminaries, including [noted skeptics](#), and by [religious leaders](#) across the spectrum.

Dowd excels as host because of **his unusual capacity to engage and resonate with all forms of Christian theology and experience**. For each guest he chooses an ideal level of interactivity. Among his peer group of clergy and authors he tends to be very conversational. However, with the most prominent elders and scientists he draws back into a more formal

interview style. In all cases, his questions are courteous and intended to call forth the most important ideas (and heartfelt experience) of his guests.

Who are the invited speakers?

The quality and diversity of Christian thought leaders featured in this series are unexcelled. Their leadership spans **pastoral experience, undergraduate and graduate teaching, theological scholarship, campus ministry, artistic expression, personal and societal transformation, intra-denominational change agency, and interfaith dialogue**. Two are Templeton Prize–winners (Barbour and Townes). A half dozen are distinguished scientists — two of whom are Nobel laureates (Townes and Phillips). Another is author of a leading college biology textbook and is nationally recognized for his work to ensure quality science education in public schools in the USA (Miller).

Which Christian denominations are represented?

- **Roman Catholics** – Chittister, Delio, Gibler, Haught, King, Miller, Morwood, O’Murchu, Rohr, Schaab, Southard, Worcelo
- **Mainline Protestants** – Episcopal (Fox, Hostetter, Roughgarden, Spong); Anglican (Polkinghorne); United Church of Canada (Sanguin, Vosper); United Methodist (Cobb, Phillips)
- **Evangelical** – Davis, Giberson, Gingerich, Lamoureux, Phillips
- **Emergent** (postmodern Evangelicals) – Burke, McLaren, Morgenthaler, Pagitt
- **Other** – Process (Clayton, Cobb); unspecified (Barbour, Dowd, Kelly, Lawton, Townes)

*Note: Six of the speakers interweave their Christian affiliations with an **Integral** perspective: Burklo, Hostetter, Sanguin, Smith, Thresher, Vosper*

Which Christian perspectives are *not* represented among the speakers?

No individuals who disavow a mainstream understanding of biological evolution and a multi-billion-year age of Earth and cosmos are represented in this series. Thus, leading Christians who are “**Young Earth creationists**” and “**Intelligent Design**” advocates were not invited to participate. New Thought forms of Christianity (**Unity** and **Religious Science**) are also not represented in this series, with the possible exception of Paul Smith (Episode 37), who does evoke some New Thought sensibilities, since he and his congregation were expelled from the Southern Baptist Convention.

Style and Content of the INTERVIEWS

This series entails 38 interviews (teachers may regard them as **case studies**) that explore a **diversity of approaches to enriching and enhancing Christian thought and practice** in harmony with the scientific discoveries of mainstream evolutionary sciences — notably, astrophysics, biology, anthropology, and neuroscience.

Episodes deliver important concepts and perspectives in both didactic and storytelling ways.

The host begins by inviting each guest to share his or her **personal story** of how they came to value both faith and science, and how a science-celebrating form of Christianity has

vitalized their life journey. Some guests continue to use personal story and anecdote in discussing **concepts and issues within their areas of expertise.**

Equally important, almost all episodes feature **both head and heart.** The latter is encouraged by **the host's warm, conversational style** and by his willingness to contribute vignettes of his own faith journey. Indeed, conversational dynamics make the **listening experience both engaging and memorable.** Tonal nuances, laughter, and surprise offer far more than mere ideas. There is intimacy; there is invitation.

Hence, while the transcripts are important (especially for essay assignments in college and seminary contexts), **the audios are highly recommended for all learners.**

Transformative Learning Opportunities in the STUDY GUIDE QUESTIONS

The study guide questions (which are offered episode-by-episode) are carefully written to respect the beliefs and perspectives that participants may bring to their learning experience. Nevertheless, both the interview process and question preparation were undertaken with the goal of becoming resources for gentle forms of *transformative learning*.

Wikipedia definition: At the core of **transformative learning** theory is the process of "perspective transformation", with three dimensions: psychological (changes in understanding of the self), convictional (revision of belief systems), and behavioral (changes in lifestyle).

The interviews themselves **encourage self-reflection** in nonthreatening ways because, in contrast to a classroom lecture or public presentation, the learners are never being talked *at*. Rather, they are simply overhearing a conversation. The study guide questions then amplify that experience. Consistently, **the questions invite learners to:**

- **Reflect on their own beliefs and assumptions.**
- **Identify the major influences and turning points** in their faith journeys.
- Sense an opportunity for **reinterpreting their personal stories in empowering ways.**
- Recognize that **making meaning of life experience** in the context of worldview will happen unconsciously (and perhaps unhelpfully) if we do not consciously attend to it.
- **Value both head and heart** (of themselves and others) in the learning process.
- Accept (even appreciate) that **a diversity of perspectives and beliefs** necessarily constitute what it means to be Christian in the 21st Century.
- **Practice the skill of perspective-taking** — seeing through another's world picture.
- **Experience the benefits of perspective-taking**, without fear that one's own beliefs and values might be threatened.
- Discover **the benefits of deeply listening to others** — including those whose beliefs and life experience may differ greatly from one's own.
- Gain confidence in **the art of using snippets of life experience** to illustrate one's viewpoint, judgment, or assessment of a concept.
- Recognize that it may be **impossible to fully convey in words experiences of great emotional or spiritual depth** — and to be okay with that limitation.

- Practice noticing and critically reflecting on the power and pervasiveness of **metaphor**.
- Gain **compassion for self and others**, owing to the challenges of human experience.
- Anticipate that **further transitions may be on the horizon** in their own faith journeys — and throughout their lives.

Deciding whether to use transformative or traditional classroom modes

NOTE TO TEACHERS: If you are not keen on transformative learning techniques and prefer to structure a course that focuses on concept learning, you and your students will find this series challenging (and you will need to substantially rewrite the study guide questions). While important concepts are clearly presented in the interviews, they are neither highlighted in the transcripts nor rendered accessible to speed reading and crash studying. Rather, **these resources are best utilized if grades are based on student participation in class and small-group discussion, take-home essay questions**, and other assignments and creative projects that require no memorization of texts.

Assisting participants who come to discussion sessions unprepared

Whether you choose to focus on as few as 4 or as many as 38 episodes, your “Evolutionary Christianity” series will take place over the course of weeks or months. Occasionally, a learner will have had an especially hectic week — and will not have taken the time to listen to the audio or read the transcript that was assigned. Not to worry! **The study guide questions incorporate extracts from the transcript to refresh everyone’s memory of the core passages**. Asking volunteers to read aloud those extracts will offer a welcome shift of voice and attention.

As well, you may choose to begin each group session with **a short video clip**. Freely accessible **online videos** of the guest speaking before a group or being interviewed on television are hotlinked in the study guide chapters.

Facilitating safe and fulfilling group discussion or classroom participation

Because the study guide questions encourage self-reflection and sharing of personal stories and viewpoints, it is crucial for group leaders and teachers to establish discussion structures and processes that **encourage civility and respect, that foster care for one another, and that build trust**. This is especially important if a diversity of beliefs and values are represented.

Even so, study guide questions that invite participants to reflect on very personal issues (especially those that are sometimes stigmatized, e.g., depression, addictions, deaths of loved ones) include **a caveat to speak or write of those matters “to the extent you are comfortable.”**

Selecting the optimal episodes for your discussion group or classroom

Selecting *how many* episodes to use in your group or classroom will, of course, be determined by how many weeks or months learners will be signing up for.

We recommend **no fewer than six sessions** — which would itself utilize only **4 of the episodes**, sandwiched between specially designed introductory and concluding sessions.

NOTE: Pages 12 – 16 of this manual provides assistance in choosing which episodes will best suit the needs of your participants.

Selecting the optimal Study Guide questions for each episode

A primary function of course leaders is to **select in advance which study guide questions** will actually be read aloud and discussed in your group or assigned to students as homework or take-home essay exams. The study guide questions are merely suggestions. Pick and choose which questions you and your group will use, or feel free to create your own.

The **Study Guide chapters** are formatted as **unsecured PDFs** so that relevant questions from the guides can not only be pasted into a new document but can also be edited, added to, and entirely **rearranged** by course leaders.

Similarly, the **transcripts** can also be mined for relevant paragraphs. This will be especially **helpful for students** who wish to embed quotations into their essay projects.

Another option for teachers: Simply give students direct online access to the full study guide for each episode included in your course and direct them to **individually choose which 4 (or 6, etc.) questions they prefer to write about.**

An advantage of **giving students direct access to the full study guide content** for the relevant episodes is that **they will be helped enormously in their listening/reading by first scanning the short sections** titled “Profile,” “Highlights,” “Suggested Audiences,” “Blog Comments,” “Keyword Topics,” “Biography,” “Supplementary Video,” and “Supplementary Webpage.” Indeed, **the webpages and videos hotlinked in those sections will make it easy for students to learn more about a particular speaker**, in the event that they choose to write an essay on that expert or on any of the ideas advocated in that particular episode.

As well, a superb ancillary outcome to student experience would be if this series **helps students discover someone whom they want to learn a great deal more from** — a remote mentor of sorts. The hotlinked resources will thus launch them on their own independent, beyond-class explorations — and perhaps on an accelerated path for their own faith and worldview journeys.

Universal questions in addition to the Study Guide suggestions

Virtually all of the 38 episodes are provisioned with study guides that pose up front **one or two questions about the speaker’s personal faith journey** before delving into the content and concepts. Among the advantages of initiating group discussion in this way are (a) participants who failed to listen to the audio or read the transcript will get at least some sense of who this guest is, simply by listening to the question read and hearing what others in the group share on that topic, and (b) rarely will the topic of a speaker’s personal faith journey provoke heated response or debate.

In some contexts, discussion leaders may wish to encourage spontaneous comments before delving into the episode-specific topics. Two recommended **universal opening questions** (which encourage those who are most excited by the episode to speak first) are:

1. Did anyone have an aha! experience during your encounter with this speaker? If so, please briefly share that experience with the group.
2. Let's also first hear from any among you who had an especially strong positive or negative response to this episode.

Recruiting Course Participants

- Send all prospective course participants to the **course participants page** online:
<http://thegreatstory.org/ec-creation-participants.html>
- Advise course participants to listen to the **66-minute audio excerpt** (stream or download):
<http://evolvingfaith.libsyn.com/webpage/6-evolutionary-creation-samples-of-10-episode-audioseries>

The 38 Thought Leaders in Evolutionary Christianity

Editor's Note: Episode numbers signify the order in which the interviews were recorded.

Course leaders will wish to select among them and remix their order by topical interests.

- 1. Ian Barbour** is the elder statesman in the science and religion movement. He was awarded the Templeton Prize in 1999 and is the author of *Myths, Models, and Paradigms; Religion in an Age of Science; When Science Meets Religion;* and *Nature, Human Nature, and God.*
- 2. Bruce Sanguin** is pastor of Canadian Memorial United Church, in Vancouver — a congregation that, thanks to his leadership, models openhearted evolutionary Christian spirituality. He is a leading voice in both Progressive and Integral forms of Christianity and is the author of *Darwin, Divinity, and the Dance of the Cosmos* and *If Darwin Prayed.*
- 3. Denis Lamoureux**, a leading evangelical contributor to the public understanding of evolution, is a professor of science and religion at the University of Alberta, Canada. He is a council member of the Canadian Scientific and Christian Affiliation, and author of *I Love Jesus and I Accept Evolution.*
- 4. Ross Hostetter** is an attorney, mediator, executive trainer, corporate consultant, and former General Counsel of the Integral Institute. A leading advocate of Integral Christianity, he is co-founder and director of the Boulder Integral Center, in Colorado.
- 5. Karl Giberson** is a noted science-and-religion scholar who teaches at Eastern Nazarene College. He was one of the founders of the BioLogos Foundation, a think-tank helping evangelicals integrate faith with science, and the author, with Francis Collins, of *The Language of Science & Faith: Straight Answers to Genuine Questions.* (He left BioLogos six months after this interview was recorded.)
- 6. John Cobb** is a United Methodist theologian instrumental in the development of process theology. Author of 30 books, Cobb is a founder of The Center for Process Studies and was on the faculty of Claremont School of Theology (in California) from 1958 until his retirement in 1990.
- 7. Charles Townes** was awarded the Nobel Prize in physics in 1964 for his invention of the laser. He received the Templeton Prize in 2005 for contributions to the understanding of religion, especially his notion (published in 1966) of the “convergence of science and religion.”
- 8. Jim Burklo** is Associate Dean of Religious Life at the University of Southern California. Ordained in the United Church of Christ, he is a leading voice in Progressive Christianity. His books include *Open Christianity: Home by Another Road* and *Birdlike and Barnless: Meditations, Prayers, Poem, and Songs for Progressive Christians.*
- 9. Brian McLaren** was featured by *Time* magazine as one of America’s 25 most influential Evangelicals. He has served on the board of *Sojourners’* Call to Renewal and is a founding member of Red Letter Christians. His book *A Generous Orthodoxy* is widely considered a manifesto of the Emerging Church movement, and *A New Kind of Christianity* explores the intersection of Christian faith with contemporary culture and global crises.
- 10. John Shelby (Jack) Spong** is a prolific best-selling author and perhaps the best known proponent of a liberal, inclusive, culturally relevant Christian faith. Prior to retirement he was an Episcopal Bishop in the United States, who helped lead his denomination toward the ordination of women and acceptance of openly homosexual clergy.

11. Ian Lawton is executive minister at C3 Exchange in Michigan, a church that made national headlines in 2010 for its controversial decision to remove the cross from their grounds. Ordained as an Anglican Priest, Ian's work on the inner city streets of Sydney inspired him to take up the mantle of creating a more inclusive and inspirational Christianity. Still evolving in his faith walk, Ian considers himself a "spiritual naturalist."

12. Kenneth R. Miller is professor of biology at Brown University and co-author of some of the foremost textbooks used by high school biology teachers. A Roman Catholic, he is a leading voice in advocating for the teaching of evolution in public schools. His publications include two books for general audiences on overcoming the conflict between religion and evolutionary biology: *Finding Darwin's God: A Scientist's Search for Common Ground Between God and Evolution* and *Only a Theory: Evolution and the Battle for America's Soul*.

13. Michael Morwood is one of the leading writers and teachers of the most progressive expressions of Christianity. His first book, *Tomorrow's Catholic*, was banned by the Catholic hierarchy and he was silenced, which led to his leaving the priesthood after nearly 3 decades service.

14. Tom Thresher is the pastor of a UCC church in western Washington state, USA, with a central focus on exploring how to manifest an Integral approach in all that they do. He is the author of *Reverent Irreverence: Integral Church for the 21st Century, From Cradle to Christ-Consciousness*, where the practical benefits of applying an Integral perspective in Christian settings are explored.

15. Richard Rohr is a Franciscan priest who founded the Center for Action and Contemplation (in New Mexico, USA). A contributing editor for *Sojourners* magazine and a contributor to *Tikkun* magazine, he is the author of many books and educational programs, including, *The Naked Now: Learning to See As the Mystics See*; *Why Be Catholic?*; and *Falling Upward: A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life*.

16. John Haught, a Roman Catholic, is Senior Fellow in Science and Religion at Georgetown University (Washington DC). A systematic theologian, helping to enrich Christian faith with the evolutionary sciences is his foremost scholarly contribution. He is the author of many books including, *Making Sense of Evolution: Darwin, God and the Drama of Life*; *God and the New Atheism*; and *Christianity and Science: Toward a Theology of Nature*.

17. Mary Southard, a Sister of St. Joseph, is one of the best known visual artists depicting the inner human experience of a meaningful and broadly sacred understanding of an evolving universe and planet. For several decades she has been producing paintings and sculptures beloved by secularists, Christians, and adherents of other faith traditions who resonate with scientifically accurate and ecologically sensitive portrayals of this ancient and evolving cosmos — from the scale of galaxies to creatures and inward to the human response.

18. Matthew Fox is founder of the Creation Spirituality movement. Formerly a Catholic priest, now Episcopal, he was expelled from Catholicism in 1993 by then-Cardinal Ratzinger (now Pope Benedict XVI). A best-selling author (he has written 30 books), Fox is one of the most recognized and revered leaders in evolving the Christian faith in ways that honor both the tradition and the need for change.

19. Sally Morgenthau is an innovator in religious practices, catalyzing new trends in worship, congregational systems, gender relations, and leadership. Known best for her work in *The Emergent Manifesto of Hope*, Morgenthau's "Leadership in a Flattened World" called for a major shift in how clergy lead congregations: from command-and-control paradigms to radical collaboration.

20. Gloria Schaab is an assistant professor of systematic theology at Barry University in Florida. She is also a Sister of St. Joseph in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Scholarly interests in the mystery of God and suffering led her into the study of evolutionary theology and especially the work of the late Arthur Peacocke. Her 2007 monograph is titled, *The Creative Suffering of the Triune God: An Evolutionary Theology*.

21. William D. Phillips was co-recipient of the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1997 for development of methods to cool and trap atoms with laser light. An evangelical Christian, he is a United Methodist layperson and a founding member of the International Society for Science and Religion.

22. Owen Gingerich is professor emeritus of astronomy and the history of science at the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics. A former vice president of the American Philosophical Society and a trustee of the John Templeton Foundation, his books include *God's Universe* and *The Eye of Heaven: Ptolemy, Copernicus, Kepler*.

23. Ilia Delio is one of the premier Catholic theologians bringing a scientific, evolutionary understanding fully into her interpretation of Christian doctrines (notably, God, the Christ, salvation, and care for Creation). A Franciscan sister with a doctorate in historical theology, she is a fellow at the Science and Religion program at Georgetown University. Her books include *The Emergent Christ: Exploring the Meaning of Catholic in an Evolutionary Universe*.

24. Diarmuid O'Murchu, an Irish Catholic priest and member of the Sacred Heart Missionary Order, is one of the most effective and beloved popularizers of the Great Story, or Epic of Evolution — especially in Roman Catholic circles. He is able to convey fairly radical ideas because of his depth knowledge of contemporary sciences and his decades of work as a social psychologist. Among his books are *Quantum Theology; Evolutionary Faith; and Ancestral Grace*.

25. Gail Worcelo is a Catholic nun who co-founded Green Mountain Monastery (with the late Thomas Berry) — a new monastic community dedicated to the healing and protection of Earth and its life systems. A leader in the “Sisters of Earth” movement, Sr. Gail is working toward grounding religious life within the context of the Universe Story.

26. Doug Pagitt is the founding pastor of Solomon's Porch, a holistic Christian community in Minneapolis, and founder of *Emergent Village*, a global Christian social network. He hosts a weekly radio show, where he interviews thought-leaders on contemporary issues and leading-edge ideas in Christianity. Pagitt's books include *A Christianity Worth Believing; Church Re-Imagined; and Preaching Re-Imagined*.

27. Edward B. (Ted) Davis is a historian of science at Messiah College in Pennsylvania. Past-president of the American Scientific Affiliation, he is an evangelical Christian who subscribes to the Apostle's Creed. He has edited and contributed to technical books in the history of science, and he is currently writing a book about the religious beliefs of prominent American scientists.

28. Gretta Vosper is the author of *With or Without God: Why the Way We Live Is More Important than What We Believe*. The book is informed and inspired by her pastoral ministry at West Hill United Church (Toronto, Canada). Founder of the Canadian Centre for Progressive Christianity, she was listed as one of “the most compelling women in Canada” by *More Magazine* in 2009.

29. Philip Clayton is a process theist and one of the most respected theologians and philosophers at the intersection of science and religion. He teaches at Claremont School of Theology in California. His books include *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Science; Evolution and Ethics; Science and Beyond; and The Problem of God in Modern Thought*.

30. John Polkinghorne is both a theoretical physicist and an Anglican priest. He is internationally recognized for his contributions to the study of theology and science. He is the author of five books on physics and 26 on issues in science and religion and was awarded the Templeton Prize for contributions in science and religion.

31. Joan Roughgarden is professor of biology and geophysics at Stanford University. Her specialty is the evolution of social and sexual behaviors and mutualistic interactions, emphasizing the role of cooperation. Her two scholarly books on these themes are *The Genial Gene* and *Evolution's Rainbow*. Her popular book, *Evolution and Christian Faith*, is the topic of this conversation.

32. Kevin Kelly is one of the most respected thinkers and writers on the leading edge of technology. Past editor of *Whole Earth Review* and *Wired Magazine*, and the author of three acclaimed books (most recently, *What Technology Wants*), Kelly interprets his Christian faith through personal spiritual experience, an evolutionary worldview, and a hope-filled regard for information systems and technology as extensions of biological evolution.

33. Linda Gibler is a Dominican Sister and associate academic dean at the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, Texas. She is also adjunct professor for the Loyola Institute for Ministry. She is co-editor and contributing author of *The Evolutionary Epic: Science's Story and Humanity's Response*. Her book *From the Beginning to Baptism: Scientific and Sacred Stories of Water, Oil, and Fire* is the subject of this interview.

34. Spencer Burke is at the forefront of the Emerging Church movement. He founded one of the largest online gathering places for people exploring new paths emanating from evangelical Christianity (TheOoze.com). Author of *A Heretic's Guide to Eternity*, he pastored churches and beyond-church religious communities for 22 years.

35. Ursula King is an internationally renowned scholar on spirituality, interfaith dialogue, women and religion, and evolutionary mystic Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. She is professor emerita of religious studies at the University of Bristol. Her books include *Spirit of Fire: The Life and Vision of Teilhard de Chardin* and *Religion and Gender*.

36. Joan Chittister is a Benedictine sister who co-chairs the Global Peace Initiative of Women. She is a columnist for *National Catholic Reporter* and *Huffington Post* and a prolific author. A *Publishers Weekly* review characterizes her as “well known in Catholic circles for her willingness to take on anybody—even the Pope—in defense of women's rights.

37. Paul Smith and the congregation he pastors (in Missouri) have been on the evolving edge of Christianity for nearly 50 years. Bringing himself and his church into congruence with shifting cultural attitudes in women's equality and gay rights, Paul and his congregation were expelled from the Southern Baptist Convention in 2003. His current focus of spiritual development infuses Progressive Christianity with Integral theory. He is the author of *Integral Christianity*.

38. Michael Dowd is an itinerant evolutionary evangelist and religious naturalist. He is the author of *Thank God for Evolution: How the Marriage of Science and Religion Will Transform Your Life and Our World*, which was endorsed by six Nobel laureates and other science luminaries, including noted skeptics, and by religious leaders across the spectrum.

Selecting the Optimal Episodes

for your discussion group or classroom

IMPORTANT! Each of the episodes is self-standing, and there is no need to present them in the order in which they were recorded.

This series is ideal for mixing and matching among the episodes. Once you determine **how many** episodes to use, you will need to **make your selections** and choose how to sequence them. There are **three resources to assist you in your selections**:

1. **Editor's Picks (by topics of interest)** pages 14 – 16 of this manual
2. Appendix 1: **Summaries of the 38 Episodes**
Speaker profile, interview highlights, and suggested audiences (separate pdf)
3. Appendix 2: **Topical Index to Study Guide Questions**
Scan the index for any topics ideal for your group (separate pdf)

Creating Your First and Final Sessions

Teachers in graduate and undergraduate classrooms will have their own context-dependent ideas of how to introduce this series and how to conclude it.

Discussion leaders in non-classroom settings will need to establish a FIRST SESSION to:

- **assign the sequence of episodes** and provide the instruction page (with coupon code) so that participants can freely **download** onto their own computers and ancillary devices the audios and transcripts.
- **help participants get to know one another** (and the ground rules for safe and heartfelt discussion)

OPTION FOR A FIRST SESSION: Leaders in all settings should consider having participants listen in advance to the [free hour-long sample of excerpts](#) drawn from 10 of the 38 audio episodes, and use that **for the first session**—as a way to introduce participants to **the diversity of the entire series**.

Suggested Discussion Questions for first and final sessions

FIRST SESSION:

- How satisfied are you with the degree to which your faith / worldview is compatible with (perhaps even celebratory of) a scientific understanding of this evolving universe?
- Why did you sign up for this course? And what do you hope to get out of it?
- Share with your group one especially vivid, poignant, or comical story of an encounter you had with an evolutionary understanding of the universe during your life — or with its opposite (that of anti-evolutionary religious fervor).
- After surveying the list of episodes we will be covering in this series, has anyone here already had significant contact (in person or by way of book or video) with the ideas of any of the speakers we will be learning from? If so, please elaborate.

FINAL SESSION:

- In what ways, if at all, has your worldview or faith shifted as a result of this course? Do you perhaps understand religion in a different way than you did before? Do you understand science in a different way? And what about your sense of the conflict or compatibility between the two?
- Which (if any) of the speakers most inspired you? And do you have any plans for learning more about their ideas or exploring topics of most interest to you?
- What about digging deeper into the field of science-and-religion, in general, and “Evolutionary Christianity,” in particular. Notably, are you interested in continuing to explore, as part of a group, additional episodes in this 38-episode series?
- Have you noticed, as a result of this series, any tangible shift in your sense of who you are, your way of being in the world, your values, your ability to find hope, your capacity for compassion? If so, please elaborate.
- To the extent that you recommend this series to others, what might be the next steps for helping others to participate in a group endeavor, such as we have just completed?

Editor's Picks (by topic)

Awakening to evolution (poignant stories): 2-Sanguin, 17-Southard, 25-Worcelo, 33-Gibler, 12-Miller, 29-Clayton, 6-Cobb, 3-Lamoureux

Bible passages (scripture that works well with science): 31- Roughgarden, 2-Sanguin, 3-Lamoureux, 17-Southard

Catholic theologians celebrate evolution: 16-Haught, 20-Schaab, 23-Delio, 33-Gibler, 35-King

Catholic priests and nuns who challenged tradition: 18-Fox, 13-Morwood, 36-Chittister, 25-Worcelo

Christianity, bold proposals for theological change in: 10-Spong, 13-Morwood, 36-Chittister, 18-Fox, 24-O'Murchu, 26-Pagitt

Christianity, history of and change within: 10-Spong, 29-Clayton, 36-Chittister, 25-Worcelo

Compassion (evoked by understanding evolution): 2-Sanguin, 38-Dowd

Congregational leadership and progressive worship: 28-Vosper, 26-Pagitt, 11-Lawton, 14-Thresher, 34-Burke, 2-Sanguin,

Cooperation (and mutualism) as key evolutionary process: 31-Roughgarden

Cosmic narrative ("big picture"), psychological need for: 16-Haught, 18-Fox, 24-O'Murchu

Death, evolutionary understanding of: 38-Dowd, 28-Vosper, 30-Polkinghorne

Depression and how awakening to evolution can overcome: 2-Sanguin, 17-Southard

Emerging Church progressive evangelicals who celebrate evolution: 9-McLaren, 34-Burke, 26-Pagitt, 19-Morgenthaler

Emotions, evolutionary value of: 1-Barbour

Emotional openness and the importance of artistic expression: 17-Southard, 2-Sanguin, 13-Morwood, 18-Fox, 19-Morgenthaler, 15-Rohr

Environmental ethics and reverence for nature: 25-Worcelo, 17-Southard, 11-Lawton, 24-O'Murchu, 18-Fox, 15-Rohr, 19-Morgenthaler, 35-King, 33-Gibler

Evangelicals (theologically conservative) who celebrate evolution: 21-Phillips, 27-Davis, 3-Lamoureux, 5-Giberson

Evangelicals, episodes suitable for theologically conservative: (listed in numerical order)
1-Barbour, 3-Lamoureux, 5-Giberson, 7-Townes, 12-Miller, 16-Haught, 21-Phillips, 22-Gingerich, 27-Davies, 30-Polkinghorne

Evolutionary Christianity, principles of: 16-Haught, 38-Dowd, 29-Clayton, 35-King

Evolutionary “emergence” (as process): 29-Clayton, 35-King, 36-Chittister

God, concepts of: 36-Chittister (Note: Almost all speakers have something important to say on this topic, but Chittister offers the fullest and most succinct overview of the possibilities and then contributes metaphors of her choice. Consult the Topic Index for the full list.), 16-Haught, 24-O’Murchu, 15-Rohr, 20-Schaab

Heresy (its value and courageous examples of): 18-Fox, 13-Morwood, 37-Smith, 36-Chittister, 34-Burke, 11-Lawton, 10-Spong, 25-Worcelo

Human nature, an evolutionary look at the dark side of: 3-Lamoureux, 38-Dowd, 2-Sanguin, 17-Southard

Human role in evolution: 36-Chittister, 2-Sanguin, 23-Delio, 25-Worcelo, 38-Dowd, 17-Southard, 24-O’Murchu,

Integral philosophy: 4-Hostetter (begin here!), 14-Thresher, 37-Smith, 2-Sanguin, 25-Worcelo

Intelligent Design, strong criticism of: 5-Giberson, 3-Lamoureux, 12-Miller, 31-Roughgarden, 16-Haught, 22-Gingerich, 6-Cobb

Jesus (belief in bodily resurrection of, alongside evolution): 21-Phillips, 27-Davis, 3-Lamoureux

Jesus (evolutionary interpretations of the Crucifixion/Resurrection): 32-Kelly, 23-Delio, 2-Sanguin

Life purpose (individual “essential vocation”): 2-Sanguin, 25-Worcelo, 36-Chittister

Naturalism, as fully replacing supernaturalism: 38-Dowd, 13-Morwood, 11-Lawton, 24-O’Murchu, 28-Vosper, 8-Burklo, 29-Clayton

Process theology: 6-Cobb, 29-Clayton

Religions, evolutionary fitness of: 29-Clayton, 38-Dowd, 31-Roughgarden

Sacraments, evolutionary reinterpretation of: 33-Gibler

Science, helping evangelical students cope with: 16-Haught, 3-Lamoureux, 12-Miller, 8-Burklo

Science, remarkable stories of discovery by two Nobel laureates: 7-Townes, 21-Phillips

Science and religion, academic study and teaching of: 1-Barbour (who is considered “the grandfather” of this academic discipline), 3-Lamoureux, 5-Giberson, 16-Haught, 30-Polkinghorne, 27-Davis

Science and religion, history of interactions: 27-Davis

Scientists speak of their faith journeys: 30-Polkinghorne, 21-Phillips, 31-Roughgarden, 7-Townes, 5-Giberson, 12-Miller, 22-Gingerich, 3-Lamoureux

Self help, practical uses of adopting an evolutionary worldview for: 17-Southard, 15-Rohr, 38-Dowd

Spiritual experience, authentic forms of: 11-Lawton, 4-Hostetter, 19-Morgenthaler, 8-Burklo, 37-Smith, 15-Rohr, 17-Southard, 25-Worcelo, 18-Fox, 9-McLaren, 19-Morgenthaler

Stages of faith, as a natural developmental sequence: 4-Hostetter, 14-Thresher, 37-Smith, 15-Rohr, 34-Burke

Teaching Science and Religion: 1-Barbour, 12-Miller, 22-Gingerich, 3-Lamoureux

Teilhard de Chardin: 35-King, 16-Haught, 24-O’Murchu, 23-Delio

Theodicy and the problem of evil: 6-Cobb, 16-Haught, 24-O’Murchu, 36-Chittister, 38-Dowd, 32-Kelly (Question 4C includes Kelly’s viewpoint, along with quotations from 11 other speakers who address this issue)

Thomas Berry: 25-Worcelo, 35-King

Universe, best understood as story: 16-Haught

Values as more important than beliefs: 28-Vosper, 25-Worcelo, 38-Dowd, 29-Clayton

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