

“The Advent of Evolutionary Christianity”

Conversations at the Leading Edge of Faith

Guidance for Personal Reflection and Journaling

<http://EvolutionaryChristianity.com>

This set of questions accompanies the **38 one-on-one dialogues**, which were **audio** recorded in December 2010 and January 2011, and later **transcribed**. Your host is [Michael Dowd](#).

We suggest you **peruse the first two blocks of questions** (pertaining to the entire series) before you begin your listening/reading adventure. Thereafter, consult the questions on an episode-by-episode basis to assist your retention of the stories and concepts that you want to remember. The questions are also designed to foster your own insights and to assist you in seeing **practical ways to move what you learn and discover into your faith journey**.

Remember to revisit for each audio experience the second block of questions immediately below: *general questions for any and every conversation*. You may find the *transcripts* helpful, as well, to refresh your memory of the most significant points in the conversations. **The name of each thought leader below is hot-linked to a blog-post for that particular interview**. Feel free to **comment, share your experience, and dialogue with others on those pages**.

TO BRING THIS SERIES INTO GROUP DISCUSSION: If you find this audio series so helpful that you would like others to benefit from it, consider organizing a listening/discussion group informally or at your church or other institution (similar to a book study, where people listen on their own time and come to the group prepared to discuss the dialogue). An in-depth study guide and course manual have been prepared for **group leaders**. There, the questions are designed to encourage discussion and to assist the group leader in setting the context by reading aloud short extracts from the transcripts.

*Click to **learn more about the [GROUP PACKAGE](#)** and to preview samples.*

Before you begin . . .

Assessing Your Current Stance on the Issue of Science and Religion

1. When did you first realize that what you were learning about science and what you thought you knew about religion might not fit well together—and might even be in serious conflict? Were you eager to begin thinking about this topic—or did you turn away from it?
2. How satisfied are you right now with the perspective you have come to? Conversely, how much questioning is still in your mind and heart?
3. What led you to this series on Evolutionary Christianity and what are you hoping to learn or discover here?

For all episodes: **General Questions**

1. What did you find most helpful, interesting, or inspiring in this conversation?
 2. What did your heart most deeply resonate with, or did your soul sing to?
 3. What, if anything, did you find challenging or disturbing — and why?
 4. Where you *do* disagree, can you nevertheless step into the speaker's perspective and come to understand why their position makes sense, given their assumptions / values?
 5. Did the spontaneity or style of the conversation add or detract from your appreciation of the ideas presented?
 6. What are 3+ things that you most want to remember about this talk, or apply to your life?
 7. Where, if at all, did you hear the voice of Spirit coming through one of the speakers?
 8. How could you imagine this dialogue making a difference for you, or others?
 9. What, if anything, did you find novel, fresh, or surprising?
 10. What difference might it make if more people took to heart what was discussed?
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Episode 1: [Ian Barbour](#) – “**God and Evolution**”

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*; and *Nature, Human Nature, and God*.

1. Which of Barbour's four models (or which combination) do you most resonate with?
2. How have your views about morality shifted over time and how does knowing that our moral nature emerges from our primate/hominid experience expand how you think about traditional understandings of right and wrong?
3. What does knowing about “the trajectory of big history” do for you? How does it make you feel — about yourself? about your faith? about the future?

Episode 2: [Bruce Sanguin](#) – “**Evolutionary Christian Mysticism and Cosmological Midrash**”

Bruce Sanguin is pastor of Canadian Memorial United Church, in Vancouver BC. — a congregation that, thanks to his leadership, models openhearted evolutionary Christian spirituality. He is the author of *Darwin, Divinity, and the Dance of the Cosmos*, and *If Darwin Prayed*.

1. What (if anything) would lead *you* to interpret the cosmos as “unfolding grace” or “evolving within a field of love”?

2. What difference does it make knowing that you (and all of us) *are* the universe...in human form? Have you or anyone you know had a similar “evolutionary enlightenment”?
3. Why are “deep-time eyes and a global heart” vital for seeing what God is up to today?

Episode 3: [Denis Lamoureux](#) – “Beyond the Evolution vs. Creation Debate”

Denis Lamoureux, a leading evangelical contributor to the public understanding of evolution, is a professor of science and religion at the University of Alberta. He is a council member of the Canadian Scientific and Christian Affiliation, and author of *I Love Jesus and I Accept Evolution*.

1. Do you agree with Denis that the church is sometimes its own worst enemy? How have you experienced or witnessed this?
2. How, if at all, has an evolutionary worldview strengthened or deepened your own faith?
3. How do *you* make the distinction between what should and should not be considered authoritative or prescriptive in the Bible? In other words, what guidelines do you use or teach your children regarding how to distinguish ancient cosmology or outdated moral guidance from what you’d consider normative theology (i.e., the important stuff)?

Episode 4: [Ross Hostetter](#) – “Integral Christian Spirituality”

Ross Hostetter is an attorney 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.

1. Which aspects of “Integral philosophy,” as applied to Christianity, appeal to you?
2. How would you chart the “stages of faith” in your own life? How difficult were the transitions? And would it make a difference to interpret your story through the lens of “the hero’s journey”?
3. Ross concludes, “Evolution changes everything!” Does his enthusiasm allure or frighten you about learning more on this topic?

Episode 5: [Karl W. Giberson](#) – “The Heart and Soul of the Evolution Controversy”

Karl Giberson is a noted science-and-religion scholar who taught at Eastern Nazarene College from 1984–2011. At the time of this conversation, he was vice president of the BioLogos Foundation, a think-tank helping evangelicals integrate faith with science, and the author of *Saving Darwin: How to Be a Christian and Believe in Evolution*, and co-author, with Francis Collins, of *The Language of Science and Faith: Straight Answers to Genuine Questions*.

1. What are the main challenges evangelicals face in embracing science and evolution?
2. Where do *you* see divine truth and guidance being revealed today?
3. How do you view the relationship of biblical revelation to evidential forms of revelation?

Episode 6: [John Cobb](#) – “Process Christianity in the 21st Century”

John Cobb is a prominent United Methodist process theologian and long-time professor at Claremont School of Theology. He is the author of 35 books, including, *Process Theology: An Exposition*, and *Christian Faith and Religious Diversity*.

1. Where have *you* experienced “God’s power” as persuasive, liberating, or transforming?
2. Do you agree that an interventionist view of divine action trivializes our sense of God’s presence? If yes, how so? If no, why not?
3. How might an evolutionary view of God and gospel transform pastoral ministry?

Episode 7: [Charles H. Townes](#) – “The Convergence of Science and Religion”

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.

1. Are you grateful that Charles spent a considerable time telling the inside story of the joys and challenges of his very big discovery in science? And how important to you is the personal story aspect of this audio series?
2. What if anything would *you* count as evidence for the claim that science is not only revealing an ever more glorious universe but also an ever more intimate and companionable God?
3. Do you agree with Charles that remaining open to updating our beliefs can be a really good thing? And to what extent? Is there anything that might be discovered through science that would cause you spiritual or emotional distress?

Episode 8: [Jim Burklo](#) – “Open Christianity and Progressive Faith”

Jim Burklo is associate dean of Religious Life at the University of Southern California. A former United Church of Christ and Presbyterian pastor, he is the author of *Open Christianity: Home by Another Road*, and *Birdlike and Barnless: Meditations, Prayers, Poems, and Songs for Progressive Christians*.

1. What do you see as the role of direct experience and mysticism in the life of a Christian evolutionary?
2. How do you experience prayer (divine communion) and how do you understand its relationship to ministering on behalf of the common good: such as peace, justice, and sustainability work?
3. What do you see as the most important gifts of a faith tradition evolving in step with what is God is revealing through scientific, historic, and cross-cultural evidence?

Episode 9: [Brian McLaren](#) – “Naked Spirituality and A New Kind of Christianity”

Brian McLaren is a noted Emerging Church leader. Recognized in *Time* magazine as one of America's 25 most influential evangelicals, he is the author of 16 books, including, *A Generous Orthodoxy*; *The Secret Message of Jesus*; and *A New Kind of Christianity*.

1. How if at all has the science-based creation story expanded your own sense of “family” or “kin”, and love for God?
2. What are some ways *you* could imagine introducing youth to a vision of faith in sync with what they're learning in science class?
3. Do you agree that, “biblical literalism keeps God small and Christianity impotent”? If yes, how so? If no, why not?

Episode 10: [John Shelby Spong](#) – “Celebrating Post-Theistic Christian Faith”

John Shelby Spong is a retired Episcopal bishop and prophetic theologian whose books have sold more than a million copies, among them: *Rescuing the Bible from Fundamentalism* and *Why Christianity Must Change or Die*.

1. What difference does it make knowing that Christianity has, for two thousand years, taken in new sources of revelation?
2. What ways of thinking about God and experiencing God most inspire you?
3. How do you feel about the notion of worshipping God via “courageously being everything you can be in service to life”?

Episode 11: [Ian Lawton](#) – “An Inclusive Faith for the ‘Spiritual But Not Religious’”

Ian Lawton is a gifted preacher ordained as an Anglican priest in Australia and now pastor of C3 Exchange, an inclusive spiritual community in Spring Lake, Michigan. He and his wife Meg established [Soulseeds.com](#) to inspire and encourage people in all stages of life.

1. How do you see the “spiritual but not religious” helping religious traditions to evolve?
2. Should experiences and actions we all share trump beliefs, theories, and theology? Why or why not?
3. What are some ways that Ian's “impatient zeal for authenticity” might energize your own personal, relational, faith, and work life? How severe would be the challenges?

Episode 12: [Kenneth R. Miller](#) – “Evolution and the Battle for America’s Soul”

Ken Miller is a Brown University cell biologist and author of *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*. The latter chronicles his role as a lead witness in the 2005 ‘intelligent design’ trial in Dover, Pennsylvania.

1. How might uncritically holding to scripture or tradition lead Christians *away* from truth?
2. If you agree with Ken that America has a “scientific soul,” how can we safeguard this?
3. How if at all has science expanded, deepened, or shifted *your* religious faith?

Episode 13: [Michael Morwood](#) – “Evolving Prayer and Ritual Celebrations”

Michael Morwood is a Progressive Christian leader with 40 years experience in retreat, education, parish, and youth ministries. He is the author of *Tomorrow's Catholic; Praying a New Story*; and *Children Praying a New Story: A Resource for Parents, Grandparents, and Teachers*.

1. To what extent did Michael Morwood’s *naturalizing* of core religious concepts appeal to you — specifically, his understanding of God, Jesus, sacraments, and prayer? In what ways are his interpretations too extreme or challenging for you?
2. Michael Morwood and several other speakers in this series put their careers in jeopardy when they set authenticity ahead of security. How might one’s courage or choices shift in this regard if one is responsible for a family, and especially for children? Where have you chosen authenticity over security at a transition point in your life — and how do you feel now about the choice that you made?
3. How might the new story of the universe (big history / the epic of evolution) transform *your* ideas about, and experience of, God?

Episode 14: [Tom Thresher](#) – “Reverent Irreverence and Integral Faith”

Tom Thresher pastors a United Church of Christ congregation in Suquamish, Washington. A respected voice in Integral Christianity, he also teaches leadership at Bainbridge Graduate Institute. He is the author of *Reverent Irreverence: Integral Church for the 21st Century—From Cradle to Christ Consciousness*.

1. In what ways do you experience tension in relating to others at different stages of personal and faith development? Might an Integral perspective help you become genuinely more accommodating of other stages?
2. Does Tom’s story of the importance of playfulness in pastoral ministry offer you insight into ways you might invite playfulness into your own life circumstances?
3. How, if at all, do *you* encounter Jesus (or the risen Christ) through what science is revealing about the nature of reality?

Episode 15: [Richard Rohr](#) – “Radical Grace and Evolutionary Spirituality”

Richard Rohr is a Franciscan priest who founded the Center for Action and Contemplation. 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*, and *Why Be Catholic?*

1. Why is “both-and” integral thinking more faithful to God than “either-or” dualistic thinking?
2. How might an evidential, evolutionary view of reality lead to greater intimacy with God?
3. When have *you* experienced doubt and darkness as a gift of grace? If such interpretations are possible in hindsight (that is, after the challenge is surmounted), what tools might you use to nurture faith and trust even during present or future challenges?

Episode 16: [John F. Haught](#) – “Darwin, God, and the Drama of Life”

John Haught is a leading Catholic evolutionary theologian and senior fellow in the study of science and religion at Georgetown University. He is the author of a dozen books, including, *Making Sense of Evolution*, and *Christianity and Science: Toward a Theology of Nature*. He was a key witness for the plaintiffs at the Dover ‘intelligent design’ trial.

1. How do *you* think of faithfulness: to God, to tradition, to science, to the future?
2. What is an inspiring vision of the future, grounded in evidence, that lights *you* up?
3. What does it mean to “interpret the drama of life (story of the universe) faithfully”?

Episode 17: [Mary Southard](#) – “Deep-Time Art and the Language of the Heart”

Mary Southard is a member of the Sisters of St. Joseph and a student of the late Thomas Berry. Her paintings, sculptures, and Earth Calendars communicate a sacred and deep-time relationship to Earth and Cosmos across religious divides.

1. What does it mean for us, individually and collectively (and for you, personally) to live faithfully in a 13.7 billion year-old Universe of ever-emerging grace and creativity?
2. How might (or does, for you) the Universe story expand and enrich traditional Christian theology?
3. Does Mary’s approach in interpreting the significance of Jesus as “the emergence of a radically new consciousness in Earth/human history” inspire you? If yes, how so? If no, which interpretations of the Jesus story are most important to you?

Episode 18: [Matthew Fox](#) – “Evolution and Creation Spirituality”

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). He is the author of 28 books, including, *Original Blessing*, *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ*, and *A New Reformation*.

1. How can you imagine ritual, dance, song, and other art forms helping us grow spiritually?
2. What is your reaction to host Michael Dowd’s assertion that there are tragic consequences for faith perspectives based solely on, what he calls, “idolatry of the written word”? Have you experienced such consequences? And how did you then make a shift? Or, where are you now feeling an urgency to make a shift?
3. What was your understanding of heaven, hell, and the crucifixion while growing up? How, if at all, have your views shifted by embracing an evolutionary worldview?

Episode 19: [Sally Morgenthaler](#) – “When the Inside Is the New Outside”

Sally Morgenthaler is a prophetic voice within evangelical Christianity, calling the Church out of its inward focus to become a transforming, generative presence in the world. Bestselling author of *Worship Evangelism*, she has taught contemporary worship at Yale University, Fuller Theological Seminary, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, and other institutions.

1. Where do you find wonder and a “sense of the sacred” in life?
2. How do you think about the divine? Does your sense of wonder expand or contract when you imagine God as a supreme being? as a divine presence? some other way?
3. How do you see (and how do you *experience*) faith and reason working/dancing together?

Episode 20: [Gloria Schaab](#) – “Dwelling in the Word: Divine Revelation in the Cosmos”

Gloria Schaab is a Catholic evolutionary theologian and assistant professor of systematic theology at Barry University in Miami Shores, Florida. Her scholarly work focuses on God as Trinity, evolutionary theology, feminist theology, and the writings of Arthur Peacocke and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin.

1. What does “an evolutionary appreciation of God’s self-emptying nature” mean to you?
2. Why is learning science essential for doing good theology?
3. How does a theology of relationship lead to a global heart and universal compassion?

Episode 21: [William D. Phillips](#) – “**Ordinary Faith, Ordinary Science**”

Bill Phillips was co-recipient of the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1997 for development of methods to cool and trap atoms with laser light. He is a United Methodist layperson and a founding member of the International Society for Science and Religion.

1. How do *you* think about the resurrection of Jesus and other miracle stories in the Bible?
2. Do you view miracle stories in the scriptures of other traditions the same—or differently?
3. When (if at all) has doubt been a blessing rather than a hindrance to your faith?

Episode 22: [Owen Gingerich](#) – “**Evolutionary Creationism**”

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*.

1. When you deeply contemplate the scientific fact that “we are made of stardust,” do you experience this relational presence as grace?
2. In what other ways have the discoveries of science brought you into deeper communion — with time, with Earth and its creatures, with God or whatever is your understanding of Ultimate Reality?
3. What small or large steps might *you* take to bring the faith/relation-enhancing gifts of the Epic of Evolution to others?

Episode 23: [Ilia Delio](#) - “**The Emergent Christ and Evolutionary Catholicism**”

Ilia Delio is a senior fellow at Woodstock Theological Center, Georgetown University. Her research projects include science and religion, transhumanism, technology and evolution, ecology and education, and the theology of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. She is the author of *Christ in Evolution*; *Care for Creation*; and the forthcoming, *The Emergent Christ: Exploring the Meaning of Catholic in an Evolutionary Universe*.

1. How (if at all) do *you* see incarnation theology and ecological responsibility going hand-in-hand?
2. What opens up for you by contemplating “God is love” from an evolutionary perspective? Does Ilia’s approach of imaging love as “the gravity of the soul” speak to you?
3. What next steps might you feel inspired to take for helping yourself and your faith community move further into “relational theology” and/or “evolutionary spirituality”?

Episode 24: [Diarmuid O'Murchu](#) – “Meeting God in Our Evolutionary Story”

Diarmuid O'Murchu is a Catholic priest and social psychologist living in Dublin, Ireland. A leading evolutionary theologian, he is the author of a dozen books, including, *Quantum Theology*, *Evolutionary Faith*, and *Ancestral Grace*.

1. How do *you* think of “the Kingdom of God” and “God’s grace” from a deep-time, global hearted evolutionary perspective?
2. What do you see as the pros and cons of imagining God as a supernatural entity (i.e., a supreme being) versus fostering a personal relationship with the known and unknown processes at work in this vast and ancient universe?
3. How do *you* think about divine creativity as expressed through 7 million years of hominid/human development?

Episode 25: [Gail Worcelo](#) – “Sisters of Earth and the Legacy of Thomas Berry”

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.

1. What do *you* find most inspiring about Thomas Berry’s thinking and legacy? And what might be your next steps for learning and absorbing more such wisdom?
2. What do *you* see as the Great Work of our time? And where do you see yourself contributing in some way — especially in a way that excites and allures you?
3. Gail draws immense strength and a sense of possibility by learning and embedding the historical perspective into her own life work — both the history of the Universe and the history of women’s religious communities. Where might you cultivate strength and possibility by drawing historical awareness and gratitude into your own perspective?

Episode 26: [Doug Pagitt](#) – “Universe-Honoring Christianity”

Doug Pagitt is an Emerging Church pastor and consultant for churches and denominations on issues of postmodern culture, social systems, and religious faith. He is co-founder of Emergent Village and the author of *A Christianity Worth Believing* and a half-dozen other books.

1. Do you agree that a diversity of interpretations of the gospel is a good thing? How have your own interpretations shifted or developed through time?
2. How does a healthy diversity emerge naturally when barriers are removed? Have you experienced this kind of emergence in your own life?
3. How can we support one another in avoiding becoming “victims of our own beliefs”?

Episode 27: [Edward B. \(Ted\) Davis](#) – “A History of the Creation–Evolution Conflict”

Ted Davis is professor of the history of science at Messiah College in Pennsylvania. He is past-president of the American Scientific Affiliation, which is a fellowship of men and women of science and related disciplines who share a common fidelity to the Bible and a commitment to integrity in the practice of science.

1. Why is it important that people learn how the “warfare” view of the history of science and religion may have been discredited? Did hearing Ted speak about his own research on this topic shift your perspective in some way?
2. Do you appreciate Ted’s conclusion that theism helps make sense of nature and our ability to comprehend it scientifically? In what ways?
3. How do *you* understand creation, resurrection, and “the end times” from a science-honoring, evolutionary perspective? Are you grateful for having a chance to hear, in an open and conversational way, how Ted Davis understands those concepts?

Episode 28: [Gretta Vosper](#) – “Beyond God: Becoming What We Believe In”

Gretta Vosper is founder of the Canadian Centre for Progressive Christianity. She pastors West Hill United Church in Toronto, which is a progressive community of faith growing out of the Christian tradition. She is the author of *With or Without God: Why the Way We Live Is More Important than What We Believe*.

1. What do you see as the pros and cons of preaching or modeling “non-exclusive” faith?
2. What is your experience of local faith congregations? How might local churches best serve the needs of individuals, communities, and the evolution of faith in this busy and interconnected culture?
3. In what ways do you agree or disagree with Gretta’s statement that, “The way we live is more important than what we believe”?

Episode 29: [Philip Clayton](#) – “The Emergence of Culture, Mind, and Religion”

Philip Clayton is a philosopher and theologian at Claremont School of Theology, whose focus is the intersection of science and religion. A leading process theologian, he has held visiting professorships at the University of Cambridge, the University of Munich, and Harvard University. His books include *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Science*, and *All That Is: A Naturalistic Faith for the Twenty-First Century*.

1. What opens up for you when you reflect on the universe *itself* as a billions-of-year-old *process*, rather than as a *thing* or a *place* in which things evolve and events happen?
2. What new insights have you gained about the process and importance of “emergence”? How is emergence different from “design” or “engineering” approaches to problem-solving and the birth of novelty?

3. How might the “big history” perspective invite you to deepen your own ways of viewing individual and collective challenges, and advance in your own faith journey and tradition?

Episode 30: [John Polkinghorne](#) – “Science and Faith in Understanding Reality”

John Polkinghorne is a physicist and Fellow of the Royal Society, which is Britain’s most distinguished science society. He is also an Anglican priest and theologian who was awarded the Templeton Prize in 2002. His 32 books include *The Faith of a Physicist* and *Belief in God in an Age of Science*.

1. How might an evolutionary context enhance your understanding and experience of both divine immanence and transcendence?
2. Do you, like Sir John, see Jesus’ life and message as still our best way of learning about God’s nature? If yes, how so? If no, why not?
3. How does science enrich or expand *your* spiritual life? Do you agree that thinking of science and religion as friends, not foes, is important?

Episode 31: [Joan Roughgarden](#) – “Deconstructing Darwinian Selfishness”

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. She is the author of *Evolution and the Christian Faith*; *The Genial Gene*; and *Evolution’s Rainbow*.

1. Did you appreciate Joan’s suggestion that scientific exploration is a form of prayer?
2. If mutually beneficial teamwork is indeed important for the evolution of social behavior, where in your life and work do you see opportunities for catalyzing more teamwork?
3. Did this conversation shift the way you have been viewing the New Atheists? What do you think about Michael Dowd’s suggestion that, despite their anti-religious stance, the New Atheists may actually be helping religion itself to evolve?

Episode 32: [Kevin Kelly](#) – “Faith at the Leading Edge of Technology”

Kevin Kelly is co-founder and “senior maverick” of *Wired* magazine and former publisher and editor of *The Whole Earth Review*. Author of *New Rules for the New Economy*; *Out of Control*; and *What Technology Wants*, Kelly blends his Christian experience with his leading-edge ideas of evolution and the human future.

1. What do *you* see as the theological lessons we might learn from our role as creators (of technology) with “free will”?
2. Kevin has a very different take on the crucifixion than many other Christians. Were you able to step into his shoes and sense why it has become a central feature of his faith — and why it propels his life work? Does his perspective open new possibilities for you?

3. Does an evolutionary view of reality expand / magnify your understanding of God?

Episode 33: [Linda Gibler](#) – “An Evolutionary View of Sacraments”

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, science editor for the Collins Foundation Press, and author of *From the Beginning to Baptism: Scientific and Sacred Stories of Water, Oil, and Fire*.

1. Linda tells the story of a profound spiritual shift that began when she viewed the Hubble Deep Field photo in 1995. What aspects of your own growing scientific awareness have carried the most profound implications for your sense of who you are, what this Universe is, what (or who) God is, and how you relate to the divine?
2. What, if anything, do you find inspiring in thinking about sacraments cosmologically?
3. Where and when have *you* experienced divine blessing calling forth grateful response?

Episode 34: [Spencer Burke](#) – “The Emerging Church: A Heretical Guide”

Spencer Burke is a former megachurch pastor and now an Emerging Church leader. Creator of TheOOZE.com, an international online community for Christians to connect through articles and social networking, he is the author of *A Heretic's Guide to Eternity*.

1. How does thinking about “heretics” as insiders who love their tradition and are committed to its evolution shift things for you, if at all?
2. Do you agree that love, compassion, and grace are at the heart of an evolutionary view of the gospel? If yes, how so? If no, why not?
3. Given what you know about the Emerging Church phenomenon, what do you see as its gifts and growing edges?

Episode 35: [Ursula King](#) – “Evolutionary Spirituality and the Power of Love”

Ursula King is professor emerita of theology and religious studies at the University of Bristol, and vice president of the World Congress of Faiths. She is the author of *Spirit of Fire: The Life and Vision of Teilhard de Chardin*; *Religion and Gender*, and *The Search for Spirituality: Our Global Quest for a Spiritual Life*.

1. Are you inspired by Ursula’s sense that the power of love and the story of cosmic evolution are transforming humanity? Can you step into her perspective and grasp why she is so enthusiastic about these prospects?
2. What, if anything, does thinking about the trajectory of life’s complexity and the evolutionary significance of religion do for you, personally?
3. What are some ways that humanity might be seen as a cosmic expression of grace?

Episode 36: [Joan Chittister](#) – “God and the Evolutionary World”

Joan Chittister is a Benedictine Sister and author of more than 40 books. She co-chairs the U.N. Global Peace Initiative of Women and writes a column for *National Catholic Reporter*. She is also co-author with Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury, of *Uncommon Gratitude*, which reveals a face of reality that can *only* be experienced in a state of gratitude.

1. Do you find helpful Joan’s suggestion that “good theology is more about asking wise questions than parroting old answers?” Does her perspective offer comfort for those regions in your own faith perspective where the “answers” are still unclear?
2. Why do our views of God as “Creator” matter, and how does evolution improve our understanding of the divine?
3. Do you agree that evolutionary theology expands and deepens our moral responsibility? And is this a new or challenging perspective for you to ponder?

Episode 37: [Paul Smith](#) – “Expanding the Trinity: God in 3D”

Paul Smith is co-pastor of Broadway Church in Kansas City, Missouri, where he has served for 47 years. Author of *Integral Christianity: The Spirit’s Call to Evolve*, and *Is It Okay to Call God Mother? Considering the Feminine Face of God*, he and his church were expelled from the Southern Baptist Convention in 2003 for blessing gay and lesbian unions.

1. Paul’s story of how he and his congregation have significantly evolved in their faith walk includes some immensely challenging periods. Did his storytelling assist you in any way? Did it perhaps help you to reflect on your own challenges or life story in more generous and hopeful ways? Might it serve as a model for how you could be mindful of speaking of your experiences in ways that benefit the listeners?
2. What can *you* gain from reflecting on Jesus’ speaking *about* God, *to* God, and *as* God?
3. Do you agree that an evolutionary celebration of the Trinity can transform our lives? If yes, how so? If no, why not?

Episode 38: [Michael Dowd](#) – “Evidence as Divine Communication: REALizing Faith”

Michael Dowd is an itinerant evolutionary evangelist and outspoken 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 a half-dozen Nobel Prize–winning scientists and dozens of religious leaders, liberals and conservatives alike.

1. Michael is known for taking an “ecosystems approach” for how diverse (and even discourteous) voices can all serve the evolution of culture and religion. As host of this series, his own positions were usually muted. But in this final episode he steps out as a forceful advocate for significant shifts in Christian doctrine and interpretation. How did you respond to this shift in style? Where in your own life and work is your ability to shift between facilitator and full expression an important skill?

2. Michael talks about the “tragic cost” of viewing religion mostly in terms of “unnatural people, places, things” and “magical events, back then, up there, or someday”? Is that assertion helpful to your faith walk — or is it just too contrary to your worldview?
3. What is your *emotional* reaction to the possibility that we may be in the early stages of an “Evidential Reformation” — where religious people of all faiths experience scientific, historical, and cross-cultural evidence as “scripture,” “divine guidance,” or “God’s word”?

When you finish — *Next Steps ...*

1. Which of these thought leaders most inspire you in your own faith journey? What next steps will you take to learn more of what they have to offer?
2. Which aspects of the scientific perspective do you want to learn more about? What next steps can (will!) you take for learning more of the science?
3. Are you affiliated with a church or other institution where you could organize (and possibly lead) a discussion series around this material? (See below)

TO BRING THIS SERIES INTO GROUP DISCUSSION . . .

TO BRING THIS SERIES INTO GROUP DISCUSSION: If you find this audio series so helpful that you would like others to benefit from it, consider organizing a listening/discussion group informally or at your church or other institution (similar to a book study, where people listen on their own time and come to the group prepared to discuss the dialogue). An in-depth study guide and syllabus have been prepared for group leaders. There, the questions are designed to encourage discussion and to assist the group leader in setting the context by reading aloud short extracts from the transcripts.

Click to **learn more about the [GROUP PACKAGE](#)** and to preview samples.