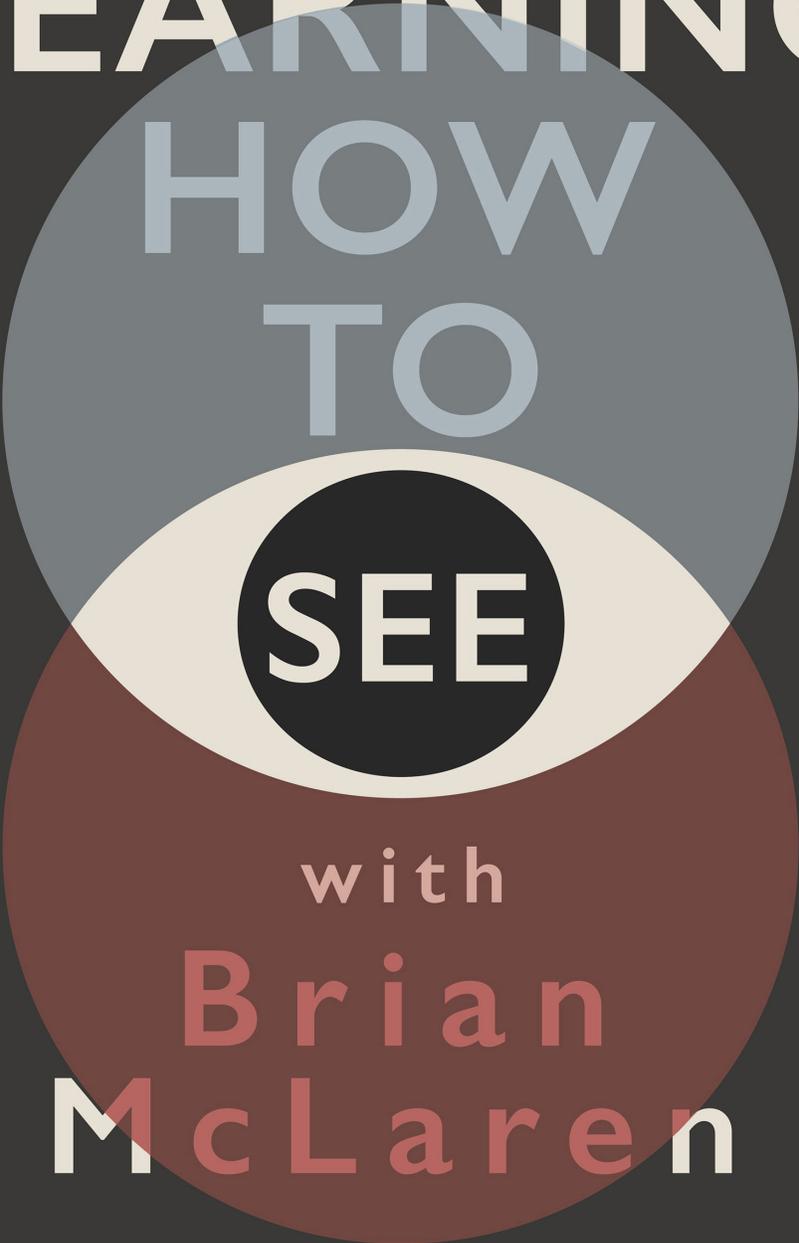


LEARNING

HOW  
TO

A stylized graphic of an eye is centered on the page. The eye is composed of a dark brown circular iris, a white sclera, and a black pupil. The word "SEE" is written in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters inside the black pupil. The eye graphic is overlaid on a large, semi-transparent, light blue circle that covers the middle section of the page. Below the eye graphic is a large, semi-transparent, dark red circle that covers the bottom section of the page. The background of the entire page is a solid dark grey.

SEE

with

Brian

McLaren

Brian: Many of you know, I was raised in a conservative Christian setting and my parents were wonderful, loving people, but when any kid grows up, you just think what is normal for you must be normal for everybody. I got old enough to go to school and found out that, no, not everybody has Bible reading at supper every night. I found out, oh, not everybody is not allowed to go to movies. I found out, not everybody goes to church three or four times a week, and I remember thinking, I'm not sure I wanted to know that. Life was easier when I thought that this is just what everybody does. I got older. I got interested in science and plants and animals and stars and I learned about evolution. It just made perfect sense, but then my dad told me it wasn't true and my Sunday school teacher said it wasn't true, and I loved science and I thought evolution made a whole lot of sense, and I remember feeling, gosh, I'm not sure I really wanted to know that. It complicated my life, and that same pattern happened many times as I grew up through the years.

Brian: I would reach things I would be on the verge of understanding, and I'd realize, wow, to understand this, to know this, is going to complicate my life. It would be a lot easier to unsee this. It would be a lot easier to forget this, and that brings to mind a story from the gospels, in Luke 18, one of the classic stories about Jesus healing a person who can't see. As Jesus approached Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging. When he heard a crowd going by, he asked Jesus what was happening. They told him, "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by," then he shouted, "Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me." Those who were in front sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he shouted even more loudly. "Son of David, have mercy on me."

Brian: Jesus stood still and ordered the man to be brought to Him, and when he came near, he asked him, "What do you want me to do for you?" He said, "Lord, let me see again." Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight. Your faith has saved you." Immediately, he regained his sight and followed Him, glorifying God, and all the people when they saw it, praised God. What do you want me to do for you? What an odd question for Jesus to ask. I mean, isn't it obvious? But no, it's not so obvious. There's a lot of people who don't want to see, and in today's episode, we'll see some reasons why.

Gigi: Before we look at our last two biases, let's see what we have as far as reflections from the season so far.

Brian: I'll just go first and mention, last episode we talked about catastrophe bias, and we talked about it only in relation to problems, but catastrophe bias is related to normalcy bias, and sometimes these biases not only keep us from seeing problems that develop slowly, they also keep us from seeing improvements that develop slowly, and often, they cause us to only think about the catastrophes and the problems and not see when we're actually making progress, and I just thought it was important to mention that, that that's one of the ways that biases work. We're all aware of how violent the world is today, but the truth is, we're considerably less likely to die from violence than people were 100 years ago or 300 years ago or 500 years ago, so, that's not to make any excuses. We need to reduce violence. I certainly believe that, but we don't want to forget that things aren't getting worse every year in every possible way.

Brian: They are getting worse in some ways, but in some ways things are also getting better and that's a bias that we have to overcome.

- Gigi: What I'm thinking of is avoiding the trap of using these biases simplistically, by having another simplicity/complexity bias, and that is that, in my experience, none of these biases happen in isolation. They tend to feed off of each other, feed into each other, grow from each other, overlap with each other, and so, for me, I think when I want to see where I am biased, I don't just go look for a bias. I just kind of sit and see what shows up, and that tell me where my bias is, and I think that might be a better way to work with these biases than trying to say, "Oh, I'm in this bias," or, "I am in that bias," because, as we said before, we're going to be biased.
- Gigi: The question is, how is it impacting ourselves, our lives, and other people's lives on the planet?
- Brian: Beautiful.
- Paul: That's so helpful, and I know for me, I'm just having this recognition of some biases that I thought I had really wrestled with and worked with, and as we've walked around this conversation that they've surprised me. They've jumped out from behind the three and said, "I'm still here. You're still interacting with me," and it just was that encouragement of, I'll be walking around all these biases my entire life, and what does it look like? How am I going to engage with eyes as open as possible and with friends in conversation so that I don't get a sense of, think I have mastery over these biases, but allow the learning to keep to unfold, and I think that's what I've so enjoyed, is just the way that this has surprised me and the way that these biases have come afresh and through our conversations and seeing things that I hadn't seen before.
- Gigi: Our next to last bias, confidence bias. The definition of this bias goes like this. Our brains prefer a confident lie to a hesitant truth. We mistake confidence for competence, and we are all vulnerable to the lies of confident people. This is the bias that empowers con artist, people who manipulate by lying or deceiving with complete confidence and sincerity. Any reflections on this bias?
- Paul: The immediate thing for me is I think of humor. I think of the confident fool. To me, that's like the funniest trope in the world is the fool who is so confident that he gets into all sorts of shenanigans, and we can kind of see ourselves in that at times. I see when I'm the confident fool, often that shows within parenting, but then when you see it in politics, I think, with our previous president it was really discouraging to see how that would play out and how that would rally folks into go down roads they probably otherwise wouldn't go down and it's funny to hold those two things, of something I love to laugh at in the humorist end, and then the political realm, something that I respond with a little bit of trepidation for how I've seen that play out.
- Gigi: Yeah. This is going to sort of tie in with cash bias. I think of the coaching when I was younger that I received from interviews, where you're supposed to sell yourself, that you're supposed to show up confidently in the cover letter, on the interview, even if you have no clue that you are good for this job, if you have a good interview, if you could come across as very confident, and I think there's something about confidence that plays into the way that in this American culture, it seems that image often has dominance over substance, and I think, in some ways, this confidence bias that we have in this culture plays out that way.

- Brian: I think you're so right, Gigi, about there being an overlap with cash bias, because confidence sells. Confidence makes a lot of money for a lot of people, and it gets rewarded and it wins elections and it gets people's jobs. Just as you say, it gets rewarded, and there's a certain sense ... Well, as you all know, I've been a student of the literature of authoritarianism, especially these last few years, and one of the characteristics of authoritarian regimes is that the people reach a point where they know their leaders are lying to them all the time.
- Brian: They know all those confident lies are lies, and they stop even evaluating whether it was true or false, and they start evaluating how clever the lie was or how well it was said, and imagine a whole country being reduced to the level where now they assume it's all lies and they just draw entertainment or amusement by how well the lies are said, and I realize, wow, we've gotten close to that at different times, and it just tells you how pervasive this confidence bias is, and of course, the con artistry that goes along with it.
- Paul: That's shocking to hear, just that thought of how clever that line is, being something that boosts the confidence in an authoritarian leader. It's a daunting foreshadow of what could be.
- Brian: Yeah, and of course, a lot of that research was done by a brilliant woman named Hannah Arendt and she had observed not only Hitler but in her lifetime, Stalin, and so she was basing this on firsthand observation, and I think there's a certain sense, we've had a bit of a chance at firsthand observation of that here for us in the US, as well as many other places, and we have to become savvy about confidence bias, and I think it's one of those things, just knowing that such a thing exists, then, helps us to be savvy about it, and then to be savvy about the longterm effects, one of which is people stop caring about what's true. They give up on being able to know what's true.
- Brian: Oh my goodness. Hannah Arendt describes how authoritarians barrage people with lie after lie. The lies they really want people to believe they keep repeating again and again, but they just throw out a bunch of other lies, too, because, whether it's conscious or unconscious, one of their goals is to make people stop thinking it's even possible to know the truth. The only thing you can know is what the dear leader says.
- Gigi: I wonder if that's a play in why people are willing to believe the lie, is I'm thinking about the flip side of confidence bias, is that, if a person seems hesitant, if they aren't bombastic and bold, we tend to disbelieve them, even though they may be telling the truth, and I'm thinking about how what we've been talking about plays into a couple of other biases, like, with the authoritarian leader, I'm thinking, if there isn't some catastrophe biases at play because it's just easier to let somebody lead you if there's a lot of trouble and turmoil, and then, with this one, I wonder if it's also one about trying to do the simple thing. If you can just have one way to gauge whether someone's telling you a truth or a lie. If they're confident, they're telling the truth.
- Gigi: If they're hesitant, they're telling a lie, and I wonder if you have any thoughts on why some of the people we most need to listen to are those who don't shout through a bullhorn.

Paul: Amen. That resonates for me, I know. In an era of ... What's the word? What's the trend word around influencers, those who've built platforms to influence, there doesn't seem always to be a lot of substance there, and often those that I have found great value in listening to are those who haven't necessarily have the shiniest pictures or have sought the biggest bullhorn but are speaking with a depth and integrity that is authentic with their life. It all aligns, and it also speaks to a deep place in me, and I think of, the deep recognizes the deep and calls to one another, and so, yeah. I think that's a beautiful question. That's something that I certainly resonate with, of where I'm trying to put my attention versus the bright, shiny lights of wherever popular culture may be trying to point me to.

Brian: Gosh, as soon as you said that, Paul, I was thinking of that verse in the gospels where the people listen to Jesus and they say, "He spoke with authority but not as the scribes and the pharisees," and I'm embarrassed to say this, but I never realized this until now. I always assumed that meant, he spoke with even more authority than the scribes and pharisees, but now I'm realizing, which shows how much a victim I am of confident bias, but maybe what it was saying is, he spoke with authority but it was a different kind of authority than the bombastic religious leaders who are certain about everything and threaten everybody if they don't believe it. It was a gentle kind of authority and it didn't hit you over the head.

Gigi: I think, a couple things. One, I wonder, those that we probably need to listen to the most are so busy doing things they don't really have a lot of time to waste on publicity and having a big platform and getting things out.

Brian: Yes.

Paul: Yeah.

Gigi: Whatever it takes to cater to the media to get into that spotlight, that's just not what they're about, so then, there's this catch 22, because we don't see them, therefore we don't know they exist, so we don't think they exist, which is another bias that we talked about, because I know one thing that I do, I try to make a practice of at least reading one good news story a day, and in those stories, you read about these people who, they're not seeking publicity. Somebody else thought they were doing something really good and told somebody and somehow they got ... One of the blessings of the coronavirus era is that, actually, the news media is seeking out more good news stories because things got so bad, so they're easier to find.

Gigi: I also think that many of the people that we most need to listen to who don't shout through a bullhorn are the people in our daily lives, and that maybe, I know from myself, personally, I find a lot of wisdom just in people that either I know them and we've become close friends, or they're just people I meet randomly in just the course of what I do, either in my job or other things I do during my day, and I feel that I'm more likely to get more wisdom from them because they don't want anything from me, than I am from someone who has to project this image of confidence in order to get me to believe something.

- Brian: That reminds me, I have a friend, I won't mention his name, who, he passed away not long ago, but he was once, through a weird set of events, he found himself in the White House as a guest of a famous and important person and was sitting in a meeting with the president, and this was President Jimmy Carter many years ago, and so this person I know was not famous, was not a politician. He was a minister who happened to be a guest of a politician who brought him into the White House, and President Carter saw this one person in the room who hadn't said anything, so he said, "Excuse me. I don't know who you are. Could you tell us who you are, and do you have anything to add on what we've been discussing?"
- Brian: This fellow finds himself saying, "Well, here's who I am, and I do have a thought," and he was the perfect person to be brought in to add some information at that moment, and it just makes me think, what a smart characteristic that was of President Carter to look not for all the people who are vying for attention, but for the one person in the room who had been quiet and to think, "Maybe there's some wisdom there that we all really, really need right about now."
- Paul: That's so good. I just love that image. I want to take us to the flip side of the flip side, is that, I'm thinking, just because a person who speaks with confidence, doesn't mean that he or she, they are trying to deceive you, so how do you think that we can think, that we can become more discerning when people speak, whether they're bold or not? How does that strike the two of you?
- Brian: Well, as you all know, I wrote a book recently called Faith After Doubt, and in that book, I have this statement that only doubt can save the world, and the reason I said that rather shocking statement is because, when authoritarian figures who speak with such confidence, when their lies and their bombastic statements go unchallenged, when people just say, "He said it so we'll believe it. That settles it," that can take us into really dangerous places. We need people with the courage to doubt, and the way I see it, doubt is not the opposite of faith. Doubt is the opposite of authoritarianism, and I think what we need is not a skeptical doubt that says if anybody's confident, we won't accept them. We won't believe them, and not a lack of doubt that says I'll believe whatever a confident person says.
- Brian: We need a kind of respectful doubt that says I'm not attacking you, but I'm going to ask for your resources or I'm going to think critically and I want to test everything that I hear. In fact, for folks like me who grew up memorizing a lot of Bible verses, there's actually a Bible verse that says, "Test all things and hold fast to that which is good," and I think that's what we need. It's discernment.
- Paul: Yeah. Gigi, I feel like you're the master of discernment. I would love to hear your thoughts on that. Sorry. If you were going to say something else, go ahead, but I'm curious.
- Gigi: yeah. I was actually going to do a play on words and use confidence in a different way, confidence meaning trust, and, I think there can be a problem with just putting all our trust in one human being, and we're talking about bias, so, when someone says something with full confidence that they fully believe, I can say, "Yes. They fully believe that," and I can also check in with myself and see how that resonates, and it takes more than that when it comes to discernment. True discernment happens in community. It happens by knowing your tradition, and so, we have all these other ways ... It happens by your experience and

looking at reality and what can actually happen, so, it's important to say, "Yes. I can trust this person," but that's different than saying that I'm going to believe everything this person says, because I know I can say things that I think are true and then I find out later down the line they're not, so that's a little different to me.

Gigi: When someone has confidence, it really isn't, for me, about whether they're telling the truth or not. It's more about that the confidence that comes when someone's sure of themselves because they're being authentic, and then there's the confidence that comes when someone's so insecure they have to pretend like they know what they're doing, and so, for me, it's being willing to, in some ways, kind of like what Brian said, be willing to accept what the person is saying, but also knowing that they're not the final word, that there are other places where I can verify and trust, and maybe it'll just take some experience down the line for me to even know, so it's kind of holding what people say lightly, including my own sense of what's going on, and being willing to have more information or another experience change that down the line.

Gigi: In my better moments, that's kind of how I operate.

Brian: Actually, Gigi, I have seen you operate where you invite a whole bunch of people to offer their insight, and you don't have to play one against the other. You just let it sit, and let the group, in a sense, hear what a number of people have said and then see what kind of rises to the top, so that seems to me to be a kind of practice that helps us take seriously the reality of confidence bias and the complexities that are involved with it.

Gigi: Thanks, Brian.

Mike: It's such an interesting thing. Growing up as a pastor's kid and then at one point in my life, four of my five nuclear family members were pastors, and so much is dependent in the world that I grew up in on having answers for everything, and really, no one would ever say out loud, "Well, listen. If you don't know the answer, just kind of fake it and say it with confidence and smile and make steady eye contact and people will believe you," but it really was an implicit narrative in everything that we did.

Mike: It was just hold the line, and I remember when I was going through my deconstruction, sitting in a religious studies class with a truly brilliant teacher, and I remember a student asked him a question and he said, "You know, I don't know. That's not my area of expertise. I really don't know," and I was utterly scandalized, and I thought, I was, like, waiting for the moment where all the other students threw their books on the ground and stood up and walked out, and people just rolled with it.

Mike: It took me a couple weeks to fully digest the reality that by admitting what he didn't know, this teacher had just given me increased confidence in what he could speak to with competence, and it's just so counterintuitive when we're programmed to always look for people who always have answers. It's such a shift in thinking, and it's extraordinary to me how much it still creeps back into my life, that I just want someone to tell me it's all going to be okay or to tell me that the answer exists, so I don't have to worry about it, so I think the confidence bias and the comfort bias are intertwined. At least in my life they have been.

Brian: Beautifully said.

Mike: Here's our prayer for addressing confidence bias.

Mike: Cosmic witness who cannot lie,

Gigi: Keep me vigilant against con artists for whom lies and truth are spoken with equal confidence,

Paul: And who tell me what I want to hear,

Brian: So that I will do what they desire,

Mike: Protect me from surrendering to others,

Gigi: My responsibility to think for myself.

Brian: Learning How to See will continue in a moment.

Gigi: Our final bias for this episode and for this season is conspiracy bias. When we feel stress or shame, we are vulnerable to stories that cast us as the victims of an evil conspiracy by some enemy other. Our brains like stories in which we are either the hero or the victim, but never the villain, so what are your reactions to this bias and where do you see it in our world today? Have you seen anyone you know to be drawn into a conspiracy theory?

Paul: No one in my immediate circle has been drawn into QAnon, but that's the first one that comes to mind for me. I know some folks, kind of friends of friends or partners of friends, and how that ties into the confidence bias, too, of uncovering an evil ring, and they're the heroes who are uncovering it, and what that does to the perception of it, anyone who tries to disagree with that or tell another side of the story, it becomes further evidence that they're the lone holder of this truth, and it's like a mole burrowing. It just keeps going and going and going, and I think moles are also blind, aren't they? That's going in one direction. That's just the obvious, I think, of what's happening in our culture now that I'm thinking of.

Mike: I grew up with conspiracy theories as kind of the bread and butter put out on the dinner table. There was always some narrative about the mark of the beast or the rapture, some new age conspiracy that was attempting to teach our children to meditate and therefore sell their souls to the devil, and so, I don't live in that world anymore, but a lot of what I hear and encounter, it just feels so familiar, and I think there's just something that's very comforting and something that's very helpful for some people to just have a narrative that casts you as the hero, as we've already said, and then also gives you a secret knowledge that no one else has. There's just something about thinking, well, I know the real truth and everyone else doesn't, but I have the skeleton key to reality, and that's intoxicating and it's something that encourages me, often, in my own studies, intellectual, spiritual, psychological, to remember that I still gravitate towards thinking I know the real system or the real theory that gives me the insight that everyone else doesn't have. Yeah. On one level, it is really, really appealing.

Gigi: I'm thinking of conspiracy theories that actually have some foundation in fact, and I'm thinking about the stories that are being used for, particularly, in my, because that's what I know best, black Americans to not get the COVID vaccine because of the way that, in the past, there have been actual instances where the medical institution has caused harm and

even death to African Americans, and so, when one says, “Be careful about this vaccine,” there is a ring of truth. It’s just a ring, but it is a ring of truth, and unfortunately, what doesn’t get told is the other side of that, is how many African Americans involved in making these vaccines happen, and so, there’s that, too, I think, another side of the conspiracy theories. It isn’t always so far fetched.

Gigi: There could be a ring of truth in it even though what’s being said itself isn’t true.

Brian: If you add one little dimension to that, it even becomes a little scarier, which is, when I was talking about authoritarians, one of the classic skills of authoritarians is to blame other people for the things that they’re actually doing, and so then, if someone blames them for doing it, they can say, “This is paranoid thinking,” so, yeah. This is where it really, really gets complicated, and I also think we can do this not just as individuals but we can do it as groups. The whole country of the United States has, in a sense, always had a conspiracy theory about somebody. For a while it’s the Russians. Then, it’s Islamic extremists, and then it’s the Chinese, and as you say, Gigi, there could be some grains of truth to this, but then we spin it into a story that all they are is evil, and all we are is good, and this conflict explains everything, and it creates a one master narrative.

Brian: When Dr. King was killed, a lot of people had been saying he was a communist, and there was this conspiracy that because he was calling for change in the United States and calling for civil rights, because they bought into this narrative, this conspiracy that the whole world can be reduced to this, they avoided the whole issue of race and all they talked about was communism.

Paul: Yeah, it’s that bypassing, and I’m thinking now of Father Richard’s teaching on the cosmic egg and that feels pertinent to this conversation where there’s the nested stories of reality, the my story, the our stories, and the story of everything everywhere, and having a relationship with all these different stories helps us kind of counter conspiracy theories or conspiracies and right size them into how does this narrative play into my story, our stories and the story of everything everywhere? Does it hold up? Does it speak truth and love or does it make life even more abstract that it can potentially feel? I think Richard’s teaching on that is a helpful tool to bring into this conversation.

Brian: It strikes me when you say that, Paul, how much trouble we’re in if we’re in a religious setting where we’re given a cosmic conspiracy theory, and we’ll interpret everything in relation to that cosmic conspiracy theory.

Paul: Well said. Well said.

Mike: Yeah. It’s interesting. That cosmic egg, the my story, our stories, cosmic story, it’s fascinating to me. If you look at it, it’s very similar to the kind of different layers of exegesis or interpretation, that in the early Christian church and early Christian mystics would teach people to use to interpret a scriptural story or to interpret, as well, reality, and the events of their own life, and so you have all these different layers of meaning, and the idea is that every single one of them should be a reality check for the rest. It’s not like you’re starting with one and then going to a higher one and then going to a higher one. All of them comment on each other to help keep us honest and to help keep us seeing deeper and deeper layers of reality,

and I wonder if there's something there to help us see through our conspiracy theories, but even to let our conspiracy theories enlighten the fact that we want to be suspicious of what we're told at times because, deep down, we know that there's probably a deeper truth.

Brian: I think, Mike, with your background in conservative evangelicalism and Pentecostalism or charismatic Christianity and mine in conservative evangelicalism, there's this certain kind of religious version of this where we're on God's side and everybody else is on the devil's side, and in a certain sense, it can turn God into, almost, reverse paranoia, meaning God is against everybody else but God is for us, but then, other people, God fits into their conspiracy story in that God is always the one against them and making everything go against them, and I just think, if we start by saying we know, and there's a whole lot of psychological research about this, that we are prone to accept stories that always cast us as heroes or as innocent victims and we never want to tell the story where we have more responsibility, it maybe can at least give us the right kind of skepticism, to be where, maybe our theology is right in what it's saying, but we better be careful because we would like to believe this even if it isn't true.

Gigi: It makes me think about, when we talk about discernment. Of the stories that we're telling ourselves, no matter which of those stories that we're looking at in the cosmic egg, who's at the center of the story? If I'm at the center of the story and the story is only going to happen because of me, then maybe I might want to re-look at that story and see what I'm missing, what bias is at play, and if God is at the center of the story and I'm not going to go into who God may be, but at least it's a start, no matter who God is, that there may be something more in that story that can connect me, not just because I'm all good or all evil but just connect me to all of creation.

Paul: Do you all know the song With God on Our Side? It's a Bob Dylan song. The first time I heard that in high school, it completely shattered me, the sense of everyone thinks God is on their side but not on the opposing side, and for my young evangelical mind, I did not know what to do with that. I still think of Bob Dylan as one of those artists, and this is the important of artists in the world, I think, to help change my perception of reality and call into question my assumptions and my biases.

Mike: That's so wild, because the assumption that God is on our side and then the way that predisposes us to just sidestep the suffering of others, be kind of detached from it, assume that people are bad, it's their fault, and assume that we really have God figured out, right? God, the hero of our story, keeping us the hero of the story in the center. It's interesting. I so appreciate that and I appreciate your comment, Gigi, whoever, whatever God is. Before we look at this next prayer for conspiracy bias, I do have a question for Brian. I noticed when you drafted these prayers, you avoided using our most common, direct addresses for God. Each prayer names God in a different way, and obviously you did this with intention. I wonder if you could give us a bit of the backstory on that.

Brian: First, I'm really glad to talk about this, and it fits in so perfectly with Paul, your comment, and Gigi, your comment, because God gets brought into our story in ways that support a whole lot of our biases, and I'm a little bit worried that if you think about how powerful these biases are, you could imagine how our understandings of God would be twisted over the years and over the centuries to tell us what our biases want to hear, and I worry sometimes, and I think this is why a lot of my friends have left faith entirely and they don't

even want to use the word God anymore, because they just have this sense that when that word gets used, it brings so much baggage with it and ends up tapping people into exactly these kinds of narratives that are causing so much trouble.

Brian: Many years ago I lived in a neighborhood where my next door neighbor was a Jewish woman who was part of reconstructionist Judaism, and Reconstructionism is a movement in Judaism after the Holocaust that said, "It is no longer possible for us to believe in the God we used to believe in after the Holocaust, the God who answers prayers, that God who protects innocent people. We can't believe in that God anymore, but if we were to give up our faith, we would in a sense be cooperating with the people who've tried to wipe us out." Do you feel that dilemma that they were addressing? They said, "However we carry on our faith, we can't do it the way we did before, but we can't give it up, either."

Brian: She invited me to attend Passover and she invited me to attend some services in the Synagogue, and I noticed that they would never use the same name for God twice. In other words, they would multiply the ways that they tried to refer to God as a way of not letting God become a static definition, and especially the old one that they felt was forever discredited, and so that was the reason in the design of these prayers. I thought, the Bible gives God so many different names, so why don't we allow ourselves some of that freedom, as well? That's the story behind that, and maybe as people use these on their own, that this will give them permission to decide, how do they also want to name God.

Brian: I think the first person, interestingly, in the Bible, who names God, is not a Jew. It's an Egyptian slave named Hagar, and she comes up with a name for God based on her own experience, and I wonder if there's a message there that will keep us out of trouble, because if we just keep using the same name and we assume we already understand what that means, yeah, we could be perpetuating some trouble.

Mike: That's really good, Brian, which reminds me, in Jungian circles, there's a saying that your theology is a confession, so tell me your religious beliefs and I'll tell you your life story, and this makes God so much bigger than that. In that spirit, here's that final prayer.

Mike: Companion who walks with me in light and darkness,

Gigi: Help me guard my heart from stories and theories,

Brian: That cast me as an innocent victim or virtuous hero,

Paul: While simultaneously casting someone else as a villain or enemy.

Mike: Instead, help me join in your cosmic conspiracy,

Gigi: Of kindness, justice, joy and peace for all,

Brian: Seeing myself and all my neighbors,

Paul: As equal beneficiaries of your boundless, merciful love.

Gigi: I'd like to invite each of us to offer a final reflection as we come to the end of this episode

and the second season of Learning How to See. Maybe you can offer something you will carry with you, something you learned, or if it's something you felt, something you've come to see more clearly through these episodes.

Brian: One of the things that I will bring with me from these conversations is just how rich it is when you bring together people who have a shared curiosity and interest and mutual respect and how much insight and wisdom bubbles up.

Gigi: I think one of the things I will carry with me is the fact that we're all human and that, looking at a bias and naming how it can be harmful, and sometimes helpful, but especially naming how it can be harmful, is an invitation to get rid of the bias, because I think we can't, because our brains are hardwired in that way, so maybe the invitation for us is to learn how, maybe those biases are messages pointing us in certain directions that we may not be looking at if it wasn't for that bias, and also, there may be some ways in which just knowing about that bias can help us better serve the whole.

Paul: I'm just reflecting upon the joy of doing a podcast without that windbag Richard Rohr getting in the way all the time. I'm just kidding.

Gigi: Yeah, Corey, you got to keep that one in.

Paul: I jest, of course. I think, one of the things I'm going to take away is that this is a conversation without beginning or ending and that having the gift of working with friends and colleagues like you all, like this inner churning and reflection and intention and questions began a long time ago, and I pray continues to work in our lives and our future conversations, and that my hope for myself and for those listening that how one approaches this type of relationship to biases where they see them in themselves and in the world and in their loved ones, that it is an invitation for inquiry and curiosity and wonder to take shape to show up and have an even more loving posture to one another and to ourselves as we seek to be whole makers in this world and see with the eyes of Christ.

Mike: I think, for me, I'm so filled with appreciation to get to be a part of this conversation and I'm so inspired to stay curious about my own certainties and the things that I so easily take for granted, and last but not least, Brian, Gigi, Paul, one of the things that I've really, really appreciated about every one of these conversations is the way that each of you have illuminated for me that every one of these biases, one way or another, is helping someone meet a need, so, so much of this is not enacted with malicious intent.

Mike: It's people trying to find their way in the world and find their place in their lives and in the universe, and feel safe in what can, at times, be a terrifying reality, so I think, more than anything, I'm inspired to have compassion for those, even when I see biases at work, because it's so much easier to see them at work in other people than it is to see them in myself, and to have patience and understand, it takes time to change and it takes time and sometimes some really bumpy circumstances to get a look at your own biases, and so I really leave this with a commitment to try to be a little more loving when all that's on the line.

Brian: Well, there's not much a better place to end than there. Let's now take a few deep breaths and as we do, let's recall that story of Jesus and the blind beggar who is beside the road, and

he finds out that Jesus is passing by and he starts calling out, “Son of David, have mercy on me,” and everyone tells him to be quiet, but Jesus doesn’t, and Jesus asks people to bring the man to Him, and then he asks Him, “What do you want me to do for you,” and the man says, “I want to see.” As we’ve done each episode, we’ll lead you slowly through a prayer so that you can echo each line aloud or silently and hold it in your heart, and then simply hold the words of that man by the side of the road. I want to see.

Mike: Source of wonder, help us see with wonder.

Gigi: Depth of mystery, help us find a light and truth so profound that they surpass all knowing.

Paul: Fountain of compassion, help us see with compassion.

Mike: Bringer of justice, help us see with justice.

Gigi: Revealer of truth, help us see what is real.

Paul: Holy wisdom whose presence fills our ever-expanding universe, help our horizons ever to expand.

Brian: Light of glory, help us to see with humility and awe. Amen.

Paul: Amen.

Gigi: Amen.

Mike: Amen.

Brian: Thanks so much for joining us in this important time of prayer. If you’d like to engage with these prayers or intentions even more, they’re available on a sister podcast called Practices for Learning How to See. You’ll find the link in the show notes.