

**LEARNING
HOW
TO**



SEE

with

**Brian
McLaren**

**Season 6, Episode 1
Introduction**

feat. Ada, Ella, and Lucas (some of Brian's Grandkids)

Brian McLaren: When I was a little boy, I lived in upstate New York, not too far from the Great Lakes. We were way, way out in the country, and I had this primal memory. I was no more than four years old, and I would go along the edge of our house, the cement foundation of our house, and I would pull back the grass at the edge of the cement. There would be these little salamanders called red efts.

They were the larval stage of salamander that would later move into the water, but these little beautiful orange, brick red creatures would be there between the grass and the cement. I just have this primal memory of the wonder of seeing one of these creatures. In my yard there in the country in New York, there were lots of rocks that were filled with fossils, and if those rocks were in the water, I would go pick them up and study the fossils, and maybe under the rock would be a crayfish, or a dusky salamander.

If I lifted those same rocks that were on land, there might be a garter snake, or red-bellied snake, or milk snake under them. I think those little red efts and those fossil rocks made a lifelong impact on me. They gave me a sense of curiosity and wonder about nature, non-living and living. When you start to see the world with that kind of curiosity and wonder, it gets very hard to be bored. Your life is just filled with constant opportunities to be amazed.

I think I had a feeling often in school, that maybe you've had as well, this feeling that education involved explaining away the wonder. I would see this amazing snake going through the grass, and I'd be amazed by it, but maybe I'd be told, "Oh, that's nothing but a *Lampropeltis Getulas*." In other words, by giving a Latin name to it, it now was nothing but, nothing but an example of this category of scientific phenomenon. It's so strange that by naming something, we think we actually understand it and we've removed its wonder.

I think I had this same feeling in church. I was taught to see the natural world as God's creation, and in that way, it was only important because it either proved how great God was to make it, or it was more evidence for culture war battles between evolutionism and creationism or whatever. It just felt like heaven and hell were really the important items in the universe, and a red eft, or a fossil in a rock, or a crayfish, they just weren't so important.

I remember there was a song I really loved to sing in church. It was called *Fairest Lord Jesus*. One of the verses said, "Fair are the meadows, fairer still the woodlands robed in the blooming garb of spring." I still remember those lines from that hymn. Of course, what came next though was, "Jesus shines fairer. Jesus shines purer." I remember thinking, well, it's nice that you at least for a minute acknowledged how beautiful the meadows, and woodlands, and springtime can be, even though you needed to then sort of demote them by contrasting their fairness with Jesus.

Years later, I came upon another song. It was called, *Have You Seen Jesus, My Lord?* In that song there was a verse that said, "Have you ever stood at the ocean with a white foam at your feet, felt the endless thundering motion? Then I say you've seen Jesus, my Lord." Instead of putting Jesus and nature in competition, saying that Jesus was fairer, or better, or whatever, this song said, "No, the same beauty that you love and are drawn to in nature is the beauty that's in Jesus."

I think in part, this is what attracted me to contemplative spirituality. Instead of dismissing

the natural world, contemplative spirituality invited me to see the divine in the natural world, to enjoy it for its endless depth of meaning and insight. There was a great 19th century philosopher who wrote a multi-volume work called *Modern Painters*, interesting that a philosopher would take painting so seriously. John Ruskin, this philosopher, said, "The greatest thing a human soul ever does in this world is to see something, and tell what it saw in a plain way."

Let me say that again. "The greatest thing a human soul ever does in this world is to see something, and tell what it saw in a plain way. Hundreds of people can talk, for one who can think, but thousands can think for one who can see. To see clearly is poetry, prophecy, and religion all in one." I hope those words from John Ruskin help you feel why I think it's so important for us to learn to see, to learn to see this beautiful natural world around us.

Listen, as I read from *Life After Doom*, this is from chapter four of *Life After Doom: Wisdom and Courage for a World Falling Apart*, the chapter is called *Send in the Poets*. I think of a wetland I used to explore as a boy growing up in Maryland, part of the Rock Creek Watershed. I spent hours exploring that wetland in every season, sometimes barefoot, sometimes in boots that nearly always overflowed and filled with cold water because I ventured in a little too deep.

How could I stay dry when trilling toads and wriggling tadpoles moved among the cattails in the spring? How could I stay away in summer and miss a chance to see that single great blue heron or mammoth snapping turtle, who both hunted their resident dinosaurs, to my boyhood imagination? How could I not search for newts and crayfish in its cold waters in autumn, its sky mirroring surface dappled by yellow tulip, poplar, red maple, and orange amber sweet gum leaves?

How could I not return in the winter to slide out on the ice, and peer through to see painted turtles moving in slow motion along the leafy bottom? How could I not return again as soon as the ice melted, to search among the brown soggy layers of decomposing leaves, where spotted salamanders gathered for mysterious slow motion mating rituals, while red-winged blackbirds called *conk-la-ree* from the nearby willows.

Several years ago, I was in the old neighborhood again, and I parked my car at the same dead end street where my friends and I used to follow a narrow trail to the swamp 50 some years earlier. The trail was still there, but now it was broad and paved for bicycles. The wetland had disappeared. In the place where I remembered it, I found a shiny green tractor parked, its operator, taking a rest from mowing the grass between the metal picnic tables and park benches in the now civilized public park.

As I sat on one of the benches and looked around, I was overcome by a sweet grief for the delight I once enjoyed as a boy, a lost magic boys and girls today never know, at least not there. In writing these words, do you see what I'm doing? I'm returning to this precious place in my memory, this sacred swampy ground. I'm appreciating it, praising it for what it was, all the more because it has been lost.

Once again, my echoing experience of the place, my love for it, my life interwoven with it and its life interwoven with mine, all are being intensified through the conscious experience

of grief. I recall the words attributed to William Butler Yates, things reveal themselves passing away.

I have five amazing grandchildren. I'll be glad to show you all pictures anytime. Three of my grandchildren are going to be my guest today. They are Ada, Lucas, and Ella. You'll be meeting them soon. Something that we share together is a love for nature. I thought in this conversation, you may start to just get a little taste of the child's eyes looking at the world that all of us had at one point. It might've been being at the beach and seeing a flock of seagulls in flight that suddenly made you aware of beauty in a way you'd never felt it before, or it may have been the first dog that you really knew, and loved, and connected with.

It helped you think of intelligence that was different than your own, and beautiful in its own unique way. It might've been some other scene where you felt sacredness, and holiness, and depth in the natural world. It's easy for us, being so busy as adults, torn in so many different directions, to forget that childlike wonder at this beautiful world. I am so happy you're going to get to eavesdrop on this conversation. Thanks for being part of this adventure, Learning How to See Nature.

I am here on this conversation with three of my favorite people in the entire universe, my three grandchildren, Ella, Ada, and Lucas. I am so happy we can have this conversation. We're talking about nature, and we're talking about loving the natural world, and seeing, and appreciating, and enjoying different parts of the natural world. You three are three people who do that every single day of your life. You don't even have to try. It just happens to you.

I want to begin. I want to start with you, Lucas, because I think all of us would agree that you're way out ahead in total love for nature, and you have super high amount of passion about nature. Could you first tell us about yourself, and how old you are, what grade you're in, and then a little bit about how that happened to you? How did you become this kind of a person?

Lucas: Yeah, my name is Lucas. I'm in fourth grade. I'm 10. I think it started when actually, in your backyard, I've been going there since I was one or two, right? You have a bunch of turtles and tortoises back there. I think just seeing all of them, watching them, it was so cool and I found it super cool. I started noticing all these different cool and fun characteristics about them. Then when I went back home, I just started noticing that about more and more animals, and it just sort of evolved into a loving it of them, all animals, maybe.

Brian McLaren: You're crazy about animals. Let me ask, I'm just curious. I don't even think I know this, do you feel like you're equally crazy or crazy in the same way about stars, or weather, or trees, or plants, or rocks and that sort of thing, or does it just feel like animals is where your passion is?

Lucas: Well, yeah, I think they're all really cool, but I'm really, really, I love watching animals, seeing their characteristics, hanging out with them. I really like that.

Brian McLaren: Ada, what is it like to be the sister of somebody like Lucas who really, really

loves animals like that? First, tell us who you are and how old you are.

Ada: My name's Ada. I am seven, and I am in second grade. It feels really amazing to have Lucas as my brother, because it feels really good when I like to go outside in nature too, and I like to find fun games to play with him. That feels really special to me.

Brian McLaren: Tell me, what do you think his very favorite animal is?

Ada: Well, I think he really likes newts, but I think he especially likes his newts that he has his in room. I think he really likes those.

Brian McLaren: Yes. I wonder, do you find that you have some favorite kind of animals too, Ada?

Ada: Well, I don't exactly have a favorite animal, but I really like dogs and cats.

Brian McLaren: Tell me what you like about them.

Ada: I've lived with dogs almost all my life. Cats, I think, are really nice too, because they're kind of like dogs' cousins, I feel like. That is what I think about them.

Brian McLaren: Yeah, that's fantastic. Ella, you are the older sister in the family, and you've watched your brother and younger sister march off into a creek and flip rocks to find salamanders. Tell me what it's like to observe that in them, and tell me of how that affects you. If you'd also begin by just telling us your age and anything else about you.

Ella: Yeah, so I'm Ella, I'm 12 years old, I'm in seventh grade. I feel like Lucas, he's always had this love of nature from when he was really small, and I think he probably got that from you, just going to your house and being able to interact with animals. It's brought him closer and closer to nature.

I think as he's grown up, that love has got stronger, and he'll always call me over and show me something cool he found, or he'll rattle off fun facts about animals. I think he has affected Ada in that sense. I feel like without him as her older brother, she would not love nature as much as she does.

Brian McLaren: How has it affected you?

Ella: I would love to go outside, but I was never a super nature kid until my brother was born. I love to be outside, but I wasn't an animal person, necessarily. When Lucas got into our family, just so many opportunities for me opened up, and I got to see more of the nature world.

Brian McLaren: You welcomed it, you accepted it. You have so many interests, you're an incredible singer and musician, and you're a great athlete, a fantastic basketball player, but you have kind of a new nature passion as well. Could you talk about that a little bit?

Ella: Yeah. I love being outside, but recently, I've gotten into horseback riding, which I think has upped my connection with nature even more. I used to ride western, and

now I read English, and I'm getting more into the competition state. It's a new passion of mine.

Brian McLaren: I want to ask you a tough question, and I'm going to ask a similar question to Lucas and Ada, but why horses? Why have horses grabbed your attention that way? What is it about them? How would you describe what it makes you feel? I'm really interested in that.

Ella: It makes you feel like you're on top of the world. It's not just that it's super cool to control a thousand pound animal with your thighs. That's amazing in itself. I feel like I saw something so human in horses. Any horse that you get on, you're literally trusting them with your life.

I feel like to be able to trust them, like you know that they're going to take care of you, and you know even when you can't talk to them, I feel like it's just this connection that I don't get with many other animals.

Brian McLaren: I'm so impressed by that. First, you do, in a certain sense, control them, but then you went right from control to you see some human-like quality in them. It sounds like that's something you connect to. It's not just about control, it's about there's like a two-way street, and the other part of it is you might have some control over them, but you have to trust them.

Ella: Yeah, 100%.

Brian McLaren: That's so interesting. It's like a deeper connection and relationship. You've worked with a lot of different individual horses. Tell me, how does a 12-year-old young woman make friends with a horse? How do you get to know a horse? Tell me about that.

Ella: Well, for some horses, when you walk up to them, you know what their personality is right away. Some horses, when you approach them, they'll spook. Some of them will turn their butt to you and make their ears flat, and they'll make it clear that they're sassy. They don't want you coming near them. Some of them, they'll let you approach them and they'll ask for pets.

Some of them will rub their head against you. You can just tell their personality so much from their body language. I think that's also what attracts me to them. In humans, you tell their personalities from talking to them, and from horses, you can just tell from their body language.

Brian McLaren: It's like a deeper kind of communication. Well, maybe not deeper like in better, but a different kind of communication and understanding.

Ella: 100%, yeah.

Brian McLaren: Do you think a horse is making a similar kind of assessment of you, like, "What kind of human is this walking up to me?"

Ella: Definitely. If you're super loud when you approach them, they'll probably start to make assumptions about you. If you're super quiet and not... You have to be firm with them, because they will act out if you're not. Yeah, as soon as you get on them, there's a saying

that's like, "Once you get on the horse, you set the tone for the whole ride." If you are super chill with letting them eat things if you're going on a trail ride, they'll keep doing it the whole ride.

Brian McLaren: They're waiting for a mutually established relationship.

Ella: Yeah.

Brian McLaren: Yeah. That's interesting. Lucas, your passion, as your sister Ada said, has always... You love all animals, but you have a special passion for salamanders. Now, when you think about a horse, it's a furry creature that you can ride. There's not much in the way of salamander back riding that's possible for people.

Some people wouldn't even understand why a little amphibian is so fascinating to you. Could you share a little bit about that? If you wanted to introduce people to why salamanders are interesting, what would it be?

Lucas: Well, yeah, I've always been interested in the different characteristics of animals. I really think it's fun to observe them and watch them. I think they're really cute. Yeah, it started with tortoises, which then evolved into my whole animal world, but also kind of turned into reptiles as the main thing, and then amphibians within that. Then I found salamanders. I really like holding a lizard in my hand and stroking it, but also observing them.

Like Ada said, the two in my room, which are Iberian-ribbed newts, they're super fun. They're always swimming around the rooms. They have these pokey poisonous spikes that are really fun to look at, super colorful, they swim around. When I feed them, they swim around wildly and nip at things. I think they're just so fun to watch, because they're so lively and interactive to watch.

Brian McLaren: What do you think happens inside of you as you're watching a different creature like that? You know what I'm saying? How do you feel? How do you think it changes you as a person because you take those animals seriously?

Lucas: Well, one thing that I'm always realizing is sometimes I'm randomly in school, and I realize these past couple of years, while I've been sitting here, my animals have been sitting in that same area for the past couple of years. It makes me sad. I always wish I could get them a bigger thing. It also just affects me and makes me more think about all the different things, like the animals stuck in smaller cages, all of that, and it makes me more considerate of that.

Brian McLaren: Tell me if this makes sense. As you said that, I thought of what Ella said about how when she gets on a horse, she has to trust the horse. In a sense, those animals are trusting you when they're in your care for you to take care of them. Taking care of something changes your relationship with it, doesn't it? Does that make sense?

Lucas: Yeah, it does.

Brian McLaren: Ada, what's interesting to me, of many things about you that I am so intrigued by, you have a big collection, not of live animals, but of stuffed animals. Have you ever thought about that that's maybe a kind of love for nature, because they are different stuffed animals?

You're not collecting huge amounts of money or machines. You're interested in stuffed animals. Why do you think that is?

Ada: Well, I think it's just because I can't have too much animals, but stuffed animals are more of what you can have more of. If you have real animals, you can't get too much, because you have to have other stuff to take care of them. What I think is just stuffed animals really take me into my own world, where I can make up stuff, and make more things that maybe can't happen in real life, but could happen if I try.

Brian McLaren: It sounds like those stuffed animals are part of what makes your imagination be more alive, that they connect with you with your imagination. Is that right?

Ada: Yeah, they do, because I can make up my own things and have a lot of fun with different types of things.

Brian McLaren: Let me make an observation. Tell me, I'm interested from Ella and Lucas, if this makes sense. Ada uses her imagination with these stuffed animals, and she loves animals, cats, and dogs, and all the rest too. Ella, you have to use your imagination every time you interact with a horse because it can't talk. You have to find the things that you have in common with a horse and you build some sort of relationship.

Lucas, you have to deal with an animal that has its own kind of intelligence. Every creature has amazing intelligence to survive so well to help it live in its unique environment, but you are trying to get to know animals on a very different kind of intelligence, that these are animals that lay eggs, and they don't care for the babies growing up like a horse cares for her foal.

You're having to use your imagination to think, what do they need? What would make their lives better? Let me hear first from you, Ella. Any thoughts on how that imagination plays a role in your relationship?

Ella: Yeah, I think it's just as much imagination as it is an educated guess on what they're trying to portray to you with their body language. You have to just make an educated guess on what they're trying to say. That takes imagination too, because you don't know, they could be in pain if they're acting differently than they usually do. You have to use empathy, try to figure out what they're trying to say.

Brian McLaren: Instead of saying, "What's wrong with this animal for not doing what I want?" You have to actually imagine there are things I don't know about this animal.

Ella: Yeah, there's usually things that you don't know. If they're acting weird, there's probably something that's off.

Brian McLaren: Yes. Lucas, what do you think about that, that you have to try to imagine what it's like to be in such a different creature's skin?

Lucas: Well, yeah, definitely with cats and dogs, people can train them. They hear words, they do this. I have a pet crested gecko. Sometimes I hold her, she climbs around everything like it's the same material, but sometimes she just sits on my arm or something and looks up at me.

Whenever she's on me, she's looking into my eyes. I think though she climbs around me just the same as she does my wall or a plastic plant in her cage, I think she can understand that I'm a living being.

Brian McLaren: How does that make you feel?

Lucas: Sometimes I feel like it's fun to interact with an intellect that works a lot differently than mine.

Brian McLaren: Here's a question. I would love to hear each of your thoughts on this, because what you just described, Ella, when you talked about an educated guess, you have an educated guess, that leads you to some behavior, and then the horse's reaction tells you whether your educated guess may have been right, or it was very clearly wrong.

Here's the question I want to ask. In what way do you think animals and nature have become your teachers? Let's start with you, Lucas. What do you think animals have taught you? How do you think animals have been your teacher? How do you think your love for animals has had some effect in your own life?

Lucas: It really makes me, it's a lot easier to be grateful, more thankful. I think of all the animals, like I'm in winter, I think of all the animals out there in the cold, and it makes me so much more grateful for being able to be in this house, having electricity, plumbing, all of it when the animals are out there. It's also, I think I have better empathy, because I can feel it helps me practice feeling bad for them. Yeah.

Brian McLaren: Fascinating. Thank you. Ada, anything come to mind for you?

Ada: Well, one of the things I think is I think that I, like Lucas said, I'm really lucky to have this place, house and stuff, but I also think about how some animals, we don't exactly know what they have. They could have something better than us. I just kind of try to think in the mind of an animal, and try to think of what they might have, and what they might not have, and what I could give them to help their community, or to help them survive it.

Brian McLaren: Ada, what you just said, I think, has a lot of insight to it, because most people think they're better than animals in every way, that they're just so much better, and smarter, and more important than animals. You're saying animals might have something to teach us too, or they might have some abilities that we could learn something from. Is that kind of what you're saying?

Ada: Yeah.

Brian McLaren: Ella, how about you? In what way do you think animals in general, and I'm especially thinking of your relationship with horses, tell me how in some ways, you feel it might teach you something, or be in the process of teaching you something.

Ella: I feel like any animal, big or small, they teach you responsibility. If you find, I don't know, I'll take Lucas for example. We found some turtles out in the street. It takes a lot of responsibility because their life is in your hands, and you have to figure out what's the smartest decision to benefit them.

Whether that's keeping the turtles and caring for them, or giving them to a rehab center, or when you own a horse, making sure you have the money and the care to provide for it. If you don't, then it's going to struggle, and it's not... I think they teach us a lot of responsibility.

Brian McLaren: That brings me maybe to my last question I'd love to hear your thoughts on. I'm pretty sure each of you know that people aren't using their responsibility to take care of all of the earth, all of the plants and animals. People aren't using their responsibility very well to do this. We have to figure out a different relationship with the earth that we're going to have going forward.

I'd love to know, first, could each of you tell me a little bit about what you know about the problems that people have in taking care of the earth? One of them that really concerns you a lot,? Then I'll ask you a follow-up question. Let's just start, let's go with Ada, then Lucas, then Ella. Ada, have you ever heard of climate change?

Ada: Yeah.

Brian McLaren: Tell me what your idea of that is. What do you think that is?

Ada: Well, I think climate change, I guess it's kind of like when the area changes a little bit, and when things are changing outside, and when things are just changing, maybe the weather would change. It could be sunny to rainy. I think it's a lot about how it's just changing the earth a lot. That's what I think about climate change.

Brian McLaren: You are seven years old, and you've been around for seven years, but some things maybe change so slowly that you wouldn't notice the changes in seven years. Some things might change more quickly, and you could notice those changes in seven years of life. How about you, Lucas? Talk to me about what you know about ways that human beings are causing problems with the earth.

Lucas: Well, first, what you said about climate change, we moved to the house we're at two years ago, I believe. The year we came, there were heaps and heaps of snow. Every couple of days, we got a foot of snow. Two years later, we had one major snowstorm, a bunch of snow, that's about it. One major snowstorm. I think that's climate change because the earth is overheating.

Brian McLaren: Let me just interrupt you for a second there, Lucas, and say, yeah, I think we could all see maybe you just have one weird winter, but if you start to see a pattern over many, many years, and you can take measurements, and then you see things are really changing, that would be an example of not just weather change, but climate change.

Now, what's normal is changing over time, and that would be hard for a kid to know, right? You haven't been around that long. It takes people who really study to know how those changes work. Keep going, though.

Lucas: All three of us are actually vegetarians, and I really don't like the thought that there are hundreds and hundreds of different animals, some chickens, they spend their whole 20 years of life sitting in a box that they cannot move around at all, just being fed and laying eggs all

day. As soon as they lay eggs too slow, they get their head chopped off.

Brian McLaren: That makes you feel we ought to have a better relationship with animals than treating them in such a terrible way.

Lucas: Yeah.

Brian McLaren: That's a great example. Ella, how about you? You're a little bit older. You probably heard more about this, thought about it a little bit more.

Ella: Yeah, so actually, for my global studies class, I'm writing an essay on climate change. I have some statistics. It's gotten me super into this whole thing, because it's very... So far since, I don't know, since the climate gradually started changing somewhere in the 1900s, the globe has heated up from, I think, between 1.2 degrees and 2.2 degrees Fahrenheit.

That's probably a rough estimate, which it doesn't seem like a lot, but I think... It's not a lot, but when it's in a place like the North or South Pole, where the temperatures are so consistent and it just changes a little bit, it causes miles and miles of icebergs to melt. There are a lot of things that it affects. It's releasing diseases, which I think there were reindeer carcasses that were found, and they released a breakout of some virus. I can't recall what it is.

Then it also affects... The weather patterns, I'm sure everyone's noticed, are getting super wacky. The summers are in the hundreds, and the winters are either they're very minimal, or they're getting extreme. It also affects agriculture, which at some point, I think might be one of the biggest problems, because I think it's just supposed to crash and burn. At some point, it's going to get so hot that our crops are all going to die.

I think that's going to cause a lot of havoc in the food industry. Not only that, but if we don't have enough crops to feed ourselves, we also won't have enough to feed the animals that produce meat and dairy. It's like this whole cycle.

Brian McLaren: I really appreciate this conversation with the three of you. I want to tell you a feeling I have, and then I'll let each of you make one last statement that just is on your mind. The feeling I have is that a lot of people, they don't even notice what's going on in the world that much, in the natural world. They're focused on video games, they're focused on their cars, they're focused on furniture, or bank accounts, or something.

They're focused on a lot of other things. They don't even notice the natural world. You three notice it and you care about it, and it makes you feel a sense of responsibility that a lot of people don't seem to feel. I wonder if each of you just could offer a final word about how you feel about caring about the earth, and how important that is to you. Let's start with you. We'll go Ella, and then Ada, and then Lucas.

Ella: Okay. I definitely feel like it's this generation's responsibility to turn around with what we've started to build on. From my essay, I've learned that it's actually too late to erase all of the damage that we've done, but if we start now and we stop emitting so much greenhouse gas into the atmosphere, we can avoid the major blow of global warming, but I don't think people understand how big of an impact that's going to have.

I think we just need more people who care, who notice what's going on, and who want to help turn it around. If we don't, then it's kind of like everyone's just going to let it pass, and then it's going to hit us one day. There's nothing we can do about this now.

Brian McLaren: Beautifully said. Thank you so much, Ella. Ada, any thoughts from you on how people should care about the earth and notice it? Yeah, any thoughts from you?

Ada: Well, I just think sometimes, I am walking around, and I maybe find some cans or something. I think to myself, if I'm on the beach and something might roll up on the ocean and it might not be a shell or something, it might be like a piece of trash. Sometimes, I think that that piece of trash could be an exact piece of trash that could kill an animal or something, because animals, they could have something smarter than us, but maybe they don't know the difference between trash and what is food.

They might think that trash could be food. I just really think that if we keep on littering, we're really not going to have any more animals. I just have been thinking about that. If we don't have any more animals, then we won't have... Some animals make stuff for us. I just am thinking about how if we don't have any more animals, we may not be able to survive. We also want to take care of animals so they can survive too. Yeah.

Brian McLaren: Beautiful, Ada, not too many seven-year-olds that I know would express that so sharply and beautifully. Lucas, the last word from you?

Lucas: Well, yeah. One time I remember I was younger, and I told my dad when I was thinking about global warming, maybe when some of those gorillas evolved, a lot of people say primates and stuff, they're pretty close to us, intelligent as us. I said, "Maybe they're more smart than us, and the reason they don't have all these electronics and devices is because they didn't want to kill our earth."

I'm not sure that's true, but I remember younger me was thinking that a lot of animals might be a lot smarter than humans to just try to go without destroying the entire planet and everyone along with them.

Brian McLaren: I am so grateful for that fascinating insight from you, that makes us really ask what real intelligence is. That is a very insightful statement. You three are amazing. I love you so much, and I'm so glad that we share a deep love for this beautiful earth. A lot of times, if you ever walk into a really beautiful church building and you feel, "Wow, this place is really special," I think that beautiful feeling there, we feel when we're walking along the beach, seeing starfish and hermit crabs in the water, or if we're walking through the prairie on your property, and we're seeing the incredible wildflowers.

Aren't honeybees amazing? Just all those honeybees and all the rest, we're so blessed. We've shared so many great times together in this beautiful, natural world. You know what? I think the three, even though I'm so much older than you, I feel like something all four of us have in common is that we're all still learning from the beautiful world of nature all around us. Thank you for this conversation. I love you guys.

Lucas: Thanks, love you.

Ella: Thank you so much, Papa.

Ada: Love you so much, Papa. Thanks.

Brian McLaren: Thanks so much for investing your precious time and attention in Learning How to See. I'm especially grateful to have you along this season as we learn to see nature in new and deeper ways. I believe a transformation in the way we see the earth and all her creatures will deeply enrich your life personally. I also believe that our shared future and the future of our planet depend on more and more of us learning how to see nature in a new way. This change in seeing isn't just a matter of enrichment, it's also a matter of survival.

As a result of our being part of this season of the podcast, I hope we will learn to see ourselves not only in relation to nature, but also as part of nature. I hope we will learn to encounter the spirit, or presence, or glory of God incarnate in nature, to see the divine in all creatures, and all matter and energy, including ourselves as part of one sacred web or cosmic dance of life. I hope we will all be converted from destroyers or consumers of the web of life into its lovers and healers.

If you're interested in learning more, be sure to check out the show notes for links to our guests and the resources they offer. You may also be interested in my upcoming book, *Life After Doom: Wisdom and Courage for a World Falling Apart*. Thanks as always to Corey Wayne, the skilled and kind producer of this podcast, and to the whole CAC community: staff, faculty, students, and supporters.

If you'd like to leave us a question, brief message, or story, you can write us an email or send us a voicemail, and you'll find instructions in the show notes. If you enjoy this podcast, I hope you'll share it with some friends. Again, I thank you.