

LEARNING

HOW

TO

SEE

with

Brian

McLaren

Season 7, Episode 7

Seeing Nature as a Visionary

feat. Philip Clayton

Brian McLaren: I'd like to let you all in on a little bit of a secret. Most of the books I've written have been nonfiction, although I have written some fiction. But my next book that will come out in 2025 is a work of science fiction. It's the first part of a trilogy, and this is the first time I've ever written science fiction. I've been intrigued by science fiction since I was a teenager and discovered that genre. Science fiction in many ways, it's often about a distant planet or the distant future, but really, science fiction often is a way that we use a distant planet or a distant future to really talk about what's going on here and now. Somehow by placing ourselves in a different world, we find ourselves able to better see what's going on in our world.

Brian McLaren: There's a whole new genre of science fiction that's often called cli-fi, or climate fiction, and it's trying to help us face and understand what's going on with the changes in our own climate because of human interference with the natural systems of this earth. And a lot of cli-fi is very, very dark. It tries to help us see where we're going, and that is a kind of scary experience, and I think that kind of sci-fi and cli-fi is very, very necessary. We need to be awakened from our slumber to see where we're heading, we need a warning.

Brian McLaren: But there's another kind of science fiction and cli-fi that doesn't stop at helping us see the trouble that we're plunging into. It also tries to help us imagine what life could be like on the other side. It's a kind of visionary literature or film or whatever media it takes. It's a way to help us imagine a better way of life that we could walk toward and create. I think that's one of the reasons many people loved Star Trek, it gave them a vision of human beings spreading out through the stars. Finally learning the prime directive, which has a lot in common with the great commandment to love others as yourself, to not interfere, dominate control, use others, but to respect them in their own journey. And that's part of what I'm going to be trying to do in this science fiction trilogy that begins coming out in 2025. I want to help us face the danger we're in, but I also want to help us imagine some safe landings on the other side of the stormy weather that we are now facing.

Brian McLaren: There's one person on this whole planet who I know who has the job of helping us imagine safe landings on the other side, imagining a civilization that has become ecological, and that is Philip Clayton. Philip is a theologian, a philosopher, a scholar, just an all-around brilliant, fascinating, fun human being, who I'm honored to count as a friend. And I hope that all of us can be enticed and lured into this important work of imagining better futures, imagining sustainable, livable, ecological futures, different ways of living that actually will be better because they won't be self-destructive and planet-destructive. And these ways of life and these visions of the future are what I hope we can see as we see like visionaries in this episode of Learning How to See.

Brian McLaren: Welcome, everyone to Learning How to See. You get to meet one of my favorite people in the world and one of the most interesting people. Philip Clayton, you have an interesting career. I don't think that you guessed you would end up doing what you're doing now when you started. I wonder if you could just introduce yourself and tell a little bit about that career and what brings you to what you're doing now.

Philip Clayton: Hi, Brian. Thanks for having me on the show. My name's Philip Clayton. I spent most of my life as an academic. I was fascinated the whole career, between the relationship between science and religion, science and values, science and spirituality. And what led to that, in

terms of my relationship with nature is I'm sure something that we'll get to. I had the chance to teach at an elite liberal arts college on the East Coast. I had the chance to teach at a state university with first-generation students, and then for a number of years at Claremont School of Theology, where we were in daily contact with the five Cs, the five Claremont Colleges and their students, with future ministerial candidates, but also with doctoral students who were studying a variety of things. And due to the growing environmental crisis, that's a great story to talk about, I felt at some point I couldn't write abstract books any longer.

Philip Clayton: I left teaching and moved to ground an international nonprofit called the Institute for Ecological Civilization, or EcoCiv. We work in 13 countries. We help provide sustainable access to food, water, and work in many contexts. But at the same time, we're always asking that big question, how does humanity make this transition from where we are today, to that place where we live in a sustainable, just, ecological way and ecological civilization?

Brian McLaren: And I should just let everybody know, I love your books, I love your writing. I love the kinds of things you're attracted to. You're my only friend who's written a book on Marxism, a great fascinating book called Organic Marxism, that has its own story. Your writings on science and faith, your kind of philosophical, your integration of philosophy and theology, your integration of your own Christian identity with deep interest and respect for and collaboration with people of many different faiths around the world. All of these to me are so important, but you described your own trajectory as kind of being intersected with the ecological crisis. I remember the day I first heard of climate change. I wonder, do you remember when you first learned about it?

Philip Clayton: I absolutely remember the day that it sunk in. I had taught early in my career, environmental philosophy, environmental ethics, from that more spiritual place maybe we'll get to later. But it was at Claremont School of Theology in 2008, I had set up a nationwide series called Faith and the Future of the Planet. Although it was in a sense all about climate change and responding to it, it was one lecture in particular that got through. It was that my mentor at CST, a theologian named John Cobb, activist in many ways. John was speaking and in the midst of this brilliant 40-minute lecture, he said, just in passing, "You have to realize that what we're talking about here are millions of deaths from this change." And the words got through in a way they'd never done before. And I said, I actually interrupted him sitting in the front row and said, "Wait, John. You mean millions of people are going to die from climate change?" He said simply in his understated southern way, "Hundreds of millions, if not billions."

Philip Clayton: I remember walking out into the dark that night and just walking around campus for a long time and it finally sunk in what I read about in the sciences before, that this was the most serious challenge that humans had probably ever faced since civilization began. And I realized I could not continue with work as normal. So, EcoCiv was born that night.

Brian McLaren: Isn't that something? I'm going to imagine we have so many listeners from so many different backgrounds, and for some of them what you just said, the way you just said that is maybe the first time they've ever heard this. It might help folks, for me to just tell very briefly a similar experience I had. I had heard of climate change in about 1999 or 2000. I may have heard it said but it never registered, but that's when I first heard about it.

Brian McLaren: But fast forward several years, I was writing a book called Everything Must Change. So this is probably 2006, 2007. And along the way I met an economist, I think you know David Korten. I lived in Washington DC area at the time. David invited me to a meeting. There are so many high rise office buildings in Washington, DC and the surrounding suburbs that house lobbying groups and different nonprofits. And so I was with him in one of these nondescript conference rooms in an office and I realized I was the only person who didn't understand what these other people understood, and here's what all of these people shared. They all shared a conviction that there was no hope for reforming our existing economies and political systems. And they shared, for them it wasn't even up for debate. David might be an exception to this, although he was familiar with it, I wasn't even familiar with it.

Brian McLaren: What the rest of them shared was, there is going to be a collapse and that we should put all of our effort into picking up the pieces after the collapse or sowing seeds for what might be able to be resurrected after the collapse. And the term that they used in that meeting that day was a collapse will mean billions of deaths. So this, I remember how shaken I was walking out of that office into the light of day on a sidewalk in Washington DC. It really is quite a thing when we realize that we're not just talking about polar bears going extinct, as tragic as that would be. But we are talking about things that threaten our civilization as we know it.

Brian McLaren: What I'm so impressed about your work, and of course I was introduced to this also through John Cobb's work, there are a whole lot of people who are trying to tell us how bad the situation is and they're trying to wake us up, which is super important work. And there are a whole lot of people that are solving technical problems, both in research, understanding how ocean currents are changing, understanding how the Amazon rainforest is used to suck in carbon and now it seems to be exhaling carbon, we've stressed it beyond its capacity. Incredibly detailed and difficult and important research. And then we have other people working on technological fixes. How can we get more solar panels? How can we improve battery storage capacity? How can we make better heat pumps? And all of this is so important, but there aren't that many people who are trying to imagine the big picture of an ecological civilization, and to me that is such important work. I would hope that the smartest people in the world are focusing on it and you feel to me like one of them.

Brian McLaren: So talk to me about what it's like to be with people who are trying to imagine whether we could steer the ship without it crashing and collapsing, or whether on the other side of this, what kind of civilization we would imagine.

Philip Clayton: We saw exactly that challenge in 2010, soon after the lecture I talked about. John Cobb brought together some of his closest advisors in Claremont, a little bit east of Los Angeles and said, "I want to do my final conference of my life. I want to do a global conference. I've asked my four children if I can give away their inheritance." They were all in their 50s by this point and he and his 80s. "I can invest almost a million dollars through friends and through what I have. I'm going to put it all into a single conference. June 2015, we have five years and here's what I want to call it, Seizing an Alternative Toward an Ecological Civilization." Long story short, five years

of work, we pulled this off in June, plenary sessions with 2,000 people at Big Bridges Auditorium in Claremont College.

Brian McLaren: I was there. I was there, yes.

Philip Clayton: Right, and you remember the energy. And then 82 breakout groups. Most of it was not plenaries, but people working on some concrete part of seizing an alternative. Is it science breakthroughs? Is it agriculture? Is it religion? Is it cooking? Almost anything was covered. Out of that grew a publishing house, two international nonprofits, a whole series of books and activities have come since then. We can do it. It's complex, it might take 82 categories. It might take the best minds in carbon capture or electrification of the grid or whatever it might be, but bit by bit we can do it.

Philip Clayton: I think the thing I most want to say is, what's often missing is that overarching knowledge. But how do we consolidate the vision from a subjective feeling to something that draws us together into action? For me, that's the driving question. We are so torn by this conflict that we inhabit a system. The first all encompassing system in the history of humanity, call it the late modern global economic system. There is a global culture that spans every nation now. When a nation tries to stand outside, they get crucified by the system.

Philip Clayton: How do you change an all encompassing system? And that's where people will give up, turn hopeless, turn inwards, turn cynical, but we actually can do it because the old system is in many ways beginning to crumble. That's one reason. Another is, there are many who are never actually fully incorporated in it. Above all else, indigenous peoples who retain lifestyles, modes of being in the world that go back to the dawn of humanity. And then there are these alternatives that like a leaven inside the loaf is beginning to leaven the whole loaf, and those are the areas that produce hope. As we get involved with communities in some aspect of that change, we could do dozens of examples. We find ourselves energized, we find ourselves living differently, thinking differently, and beginning to hope again.

Brian McLaren: In fact, as you know, my most recent book is called *Life After Doom*. And I think there are so many people who have the experience of doom. In some ways it means that they're paying attention to the data enough to be disturbed the way you were that night and the way I was that afternoon. And then what happens? After that rushes through us and we have this immediate reaction of terror and panic and all the rest. But then we say, okay, what am I going to do? How am I going to live? How can we start working toward the best options that are available to us?

Brian McLaren: And Philip, in the time that we have, there are two different tracks I'd like to explore with you and I'd like you to choose which we do first. I would like to talk nuts and bolts about how you as a person engage in this work. What you imagine, you as a visionary imagining an ecological civilization. I'd love to talk about the nuts and bolts of that.

Brian McLaren: Just to give you an idea, I think when we talk about changing from a fossil fuel based economy, I think the big four are how we generate electricity, because we're

going to need a lot of electricity other than fossil fuels. What we do for food, our whole agricultural system. Third, industry, including construction, everything we do in the industry world. And then fourth, transportation. And then there are a number of other things I think that we could maybe put in a fifth category of other. But someone in your situation is trying, especially because I'm sure you're working with specialists in different areas who are just focused in different specific silos in some ways, but someone has to be thinking, how does it all fit together? So I'd love to hear your thoughts about that.

Brian McLaren: And then second, I'd love to explore with you what we might call the spiritual dimension of this. Which should we talk about first?

Philip Clayton: As always, we see it in the same way. Let's do the first first, and then the second next.

Brian McLaren: Okay.

Philip Clayton: And as a framework, maybe it would be good just to mention a few titles where people can go to do this more slowly and in depth and in their own way.

Brian McLaren: Yes.

Philip Clayton: I've written it up in a book called, What is Ecological Civilization? A little tiny book with my co-author, Andrew Schwartz, and it gives you a sense of how one would make it in that direction. During COVID we published a collection trying to bring hope during the darkest months of COVID, and linking COVID and climate crisis together. And that book is called The New Possible. The New Possible: Visions of Our World Beyond Crisis. Some of America's top commentators, but also a 17-year-old at a Florida high school, six articles written by indigenous peoples around the world. So The New Possible would be one.

Philip Clayton: And there's a novel that I think is really worth reading. It's by the great novelist, Kim Stanley Robinson, and it's called Ministry for the Future. It's a fascinating story, which I won't give away any parts of it, no spoiler. But it is at the same time based on the research and shows in a fictional narrative, what it would be like if we succeed in each of these different areas to get there.

Brian McLaren: Let me just say before we go on. Yes, we'll put links to those books in the show notes. I remember when I read Ministry for the Future, I just realized for example, wow banking is really a big deal if we're going to get through this. There are insights that Robinson brings out that are really quite important.

Philip Clayton: And another insight, because we won't probably get to it today, is that there will be crisis and there will be losses, and it will be the increasing losses that bring us to our senses. We are like a teenager who gets access to, I don't know, a car and money and prestige and alcohol and whatever, and just goes crazy in a splurge, an orgy of consumption and damage. And somehow as a species, we are that teenager driving at 100 miles down the freeway, out of control and no sense of braking. And that means that there are going to be some accidents. Kim Stanley Robinson starts with one of those, and there's no way of thinking, this is what the collapse theorists have right. There's no way of thinking of the coming decades, and it's going to be shorter than people realize without knowing that that will happen. And I hope and pray that it will shake us to our senses again.

Philip Clayton: I'm going to start answering your beautiful question in a way you might not expect. And the first word is community. A community can be formed in many different ways. We'll get to spiritual and religious community, but a community can be a group of people biking to work, a group of people doing organic cooking, or making a commitment to be vegetarian and helping each other through, a group that looks at alternative modes of transportation that's involved in protest actions like Fridays for the Future with Greta Thunberg. Community is central and what happens is we begin to get involved in living in a different way. There's no way to step outside the system except by beginning to live in an alternative way.

Philip Clayton: The lifestyle change becomes an art. It was actually a friend of mine who's from the Jane tradition who talked about just one aspect of that, becoming vegetarian or vegan, and said he had a friend who would eat meat seven days a week and he said to his friend, "Hey, have you ever thought about not eating meat on Thursday dinners?" And the guy said, "No, but that doesn't sound so hard." "Okay, why don't you just try that?" And then he came back, bumped into a week later and said, "So how'd it go?" "It wasn't so bad." "Have you ever thought of not eating meat Tuesdays and Thursdays?" Is creative, it's an art form. It's a form of play and joy to begin to live differently. The religions of the world know that when you begin to live differently, you begin to believe differently and hold different values.

Philip Clayton: And so as we've gone off cars, as we've changed our ways of eating, brought simplicity into our lives, together with a community that we belong to, some are face-to-face, some are spread around the globe, that's the beginning of the change. I can go into any of the details of the technologies or politics or economics, but I want to make sure that people realize everyone can find a few friends.

Brian McLaren: I think that's such a good place to start. You make me think of what Bill McKibben often says when people ask him, "What can I do as an individual?" He says, "Stop acting as an individual." Yeah, start thinking of yourself as part of communities and do things in connection with others. I think that's beautiful. Learning How to See will be back in a moment.

Brian McLaren: Here's what I think would be fun. Let's say that we get through this in ways that we would hope. Not unrealistically, in other words, we're not going to shortcut around a lot more pain because people aren't awake enough. We have half of the US population who would gladly vote for somebody who has promised to drill more, and I think one of his short two word quotes is, "Kill wind," and who calls climate change a hoax. So we aren't ready, in terms of we, the whole human civilization. But describe what it might look for us. You can pick your number, 100 years in the future, 200.

Philip Clayton: I won't accept the 100 or 200. It needs to start looking different for small groups in five to 10 years, because they are the mustard seeds. They're the ones that start this cultural change. Think of it in an industry level. So we are, the experts say on the verge of the shift to electric vehicles, we are so close. It slowed down a little bit with some recent news, but we are not even five years from the point where that is the major car industry in the world. And once you go over the top, then the rest is market forces, habits, cheapness for people. So the communities have to be sooner.

Philip Clayton: And what we often will do is imagine a circle divided into something like 12 sectors. Anyone can fill in the 12 sectors that they're most aware of, and that's as about as many as you can track. So you definitely want to talk about the energy transition, transportation. You want to talk about food, housing, what we do with our free time is crucial. I mean, Europe is more packed with tourists than perhaps any summer ever. We still have the sense that to be a tourist, to vacation is to use a lot of carbon, and it is completely possible to make that kind of commitment to change.

Philip Clayton: The next aspect is, if we find ourselves with some group of people, whether through the internet or face-to-face, where we share these values in common, we talk about them and we talk about our lifestyles. The next step then is to begin to recognize that we're not alone. And here we have access through the internet to firsthand pictures of the transformations that are happening around the world. You can see it on the website for EcoCiv.org. You can see it in nature conservancy, World Wildlife Fund. Over and over again, you can see these changes happening.

Philip Clayton: The way humans work is we do something small in our family or friend group, and then we see the broader horizon with our big brains of what's happening elsewhere. And we recognize that what's happening here and what's happening there are part of the same movement. That's the tipping point, Brian, when we can start to go over that top and recognize, oh no, we are the future. Hey, this is it, and the other one is over. It's on its way out. When people believe that, humans act that way. There's a pushback from a basically dead way of living on this planet, and the majority are now recognizing they can do it. It actually, I'm wrong, it doesn't take the majority. What's the figure that we hear? It's something like when three or 5% of a population are really invigorated about something, that's often already indication of a tipping point. Is that how it goes?

Brian McLaren: Yeah. What I'm really not only hearing from you Philip, but I'm feeling from you, is that the first change we should expect is that many of us who feel we're pushing a heavy rock uphill, will feel that we get to the top and it actually starts rolling in the right direction. I think that's very hard for a lot of us to imagine, because I live in Florida, I live in a state where our Governor has made it a fire-able offense to use the term climate change. And where our state government is actively opposing laws to help workers who have to work out in the heat of the day as the temperatures today, our heat index temperature is between 107 and 110, and we've had days where it was 117 in recent weeks. So there are many of us who feel that rock will never start rolling in the right direction, but you're saying that's something that we should expect.

Philip Clayton: There are hundreds of anecdotes, but just a couple to put in your mind. Merck is the world's largest shipping company, based in Denmark. It has more emissions each year than the country of Denmark. And we worked for two years with Merck in both the change in the fuel that they use, which highly reduces emissions, but what's called the first and last mile. That means is getting, say the coffee beans from a plantation in Costa Rica to the boat and from the boat to the stores. There are now electric trucks with 180-mile range that only need to be able to recharge and they can take those to the supermarkets and get back to the port with virtually no emissions. Merck is now involved in experiments in multiple ports to see if they can take that dirtiest mile, that last mile, or it might be 100 miles, and do it purely on electric.

Philip Clayton: Paul Polman was the CEO of Unilever, one of the largest distribution companies in the world, and decided to move it in the direction of environmental transformation. After leaving Unilever, he published an idea and has now formed a for-profit with billions of dollars in assets to make the transition sector by sector. Huge and rapid transformation, and Paul said, "What we need is a new Marshall plan. A Marshall plan for the future." Remember, the Marshall plan is after the second World War, everything comes together, government and industry and cultural organizations, together to make this happen. Paul says, "We can do that with business not as an enemy, but an ally."

Philip Clayton: Oh, I could give so many more examples from farmers changing crops in the countries we work in, Uganda, Ghana, and Ethiopia, to new forms of water preservation. The technologies that are available to us are phenomenal. And I'll close with Bill McKibben's vision in a book that everyone needs to read, *Eaarth* spelled with two A's, because it's not the same planet anymore, a classic work. In the last chapter, if you only have time to skim that, it's probably on the internet somewhere. He imagines a city of the future where our individual emissions are extremely low and that we have entertainment coming to us with no carbon, virtually no carbon from around the world. Lets us imagine that it's not that far off. We are close, Brian, we are really close.

Brian McLaren: Let me make an analogy as we move to this kind of spiritual question. I devoted a lot of my life to working on renewal in our churches, individual congregations, denominations. And I remember when it hit me, would I be for the renewal of our churches if that renewal did not include a greater sensitivity to racism? In other words, would I be happy if our churches were full and thriving and young people coming, but our churches were avoiding the issue of racism the way they have in this country criminally for the whole history of this country? And European churches through the whole history of colonialism, and so on. And I remember thinking, I think that would make the world a worst place if Christianity got reinvigorated without a change in its heart about racism.

Brian McLaren: And sometimes I look at the very necessary efforts that I agree with, where people are working to decarbonize different industries and so on, but it feels like it's the same mentality. It's not dealing with a change in heart. It's really still about making people happy, we just have to find a way we can do it, and we still see the earth as a tool to be used. And I think you understand what I'm saying. I'd love to hear your thoughts about how important to connect it to this podcast, how important the way of seeing, the way we see and understand our relationship with the earth, how essential is that in this process?

Philip Clayton: It brings to mind an anecdote that says it more powerfully than I could in many words. For many years, we set up sessions at each meeting of the World Parliament of Religions, on science, spirituality, and ecology. We were in Melbourne in 2006, I think, and had a huge session, hundreds of the world's religious leaders, colorfully dressed, all the skins and sacred objects of the world, gathered in a room.

Philip Clayton: A Nobel Prize was speaking, set up the data slides, gave people the reasons from science to take climate change seriously. At the end though, he set aside his notes, he walked up to the very front of the stage and looked at these religious leaders in the eye and said, "I'm not a religious person. I'm a scientist. I've been traveling the world since I won the Nobel 10 years ago, trying to get people to hear the facts about climate change, but people aren't

responding.” And there was a catch in his voice and he said, “Religions are about changing the heart. You are experts at having people to live differently because of their convictions. Would you please join me in a partnership? If you guys get on board, we can win this one.” And I’ve never forgotten that moment.

Philip Clayton: Religion is about transformation and at their roots, every religious and spiritual tradition is about a harmonious relationship with the world around us. There are very few that are utterly world denying. And it doesn’t really matter which religious tradition is home to you. It can be the great religions of the book, the Abrahamic face or the face of the East. It can be indigenous or neo-pagan traditions. But a tradition of spiritual belief and practice in community is the transformative power.

Philip Clayton: And I’ll just close by saying, this started for me earlier than my exposure to Christianity and I now recognize was in some ways the deeper motivating factor. Living in the hills of Northern California, walking through the grass, sitting, playing guitars on the beach, watching the sun go down over the Pacific. I felt, well, how does Wordsworth say it in the famous poem? “I felt a sense sublime of something far more deeply interfused, whose dwelling place is a setting sun and the round air and in the mind of man.” If we can have that sense of connectedness, the animals are akin, brother, son, sister Moon says to St. Francis, then we can find that thing that motivates us and that gives us hope.

Brian McLaren: So interesting, those words from Wordsworth have come up several times through this season. Fascinating. Philip, as you describe that, I think our shared background in the Christian tradition, we’re both aware that major sectors of the Christian tradition have really been at the forefront of the problem, and they are today. They will happily teach people to avoid certain personal sins, but they would be happy to vote for a political candidate who says, “Drill, baby, drill,” and calls climate change a hoax. So you’re right, there are wings of each religion, we might want to say a core of each religion that gets this, that traces it to its depths. And there are major sectors of each religion that are a part of the problem and not in denial about the need for a solution.

Brian McLaren: What would you say to people of Christian faith who are trying to make this change? What would the change look like for them? When I say trying to make this change, they’re aware there’s something in my faith that is not in sync with this needed human earth mutually enhancing relationship.

Philip Clayton: We have a mutual friend named Doug Pagitt, and what is the organization? Common Good?

Brian McLaren: Vote Common Good.

Philip Clayton: Vote Common Good, and I was moved in a recent post by Doug by a billboard that they’re putting up in one of the swing states. And you have on the left the picture of Jesus, it’s a quote from the Sermon on the Mount and on the right, a picture of Donald Trump saying, “Kill them or I’ll knock them down.” And just that contrast is so effective to me in reminding me the heart of what the Christian gospel is about. And we could say the same about other religions.

Philip Clayton: What is interesting about a form of Christianity that let's say denies climate change, denies the necessity of care for the earth, it's as if you start down a long landslide that just grows and grows and grows. You give up that, and then you see you give up the love of neighbor, you give up the importance of community, the importance of spiritual values as compared to materialistic values, and the whole thing just becomes an avalanche crashing into the valley or the ocean. By contrast, when religion remains truest to the sense that God created the world and behold it was good or behold it was very good, that God created a beautiful environment for us to live in and a sense of our connection with the world around us. All of it is God-breathed, all of it is pervaded by the spirit of God. That brings with it a whole range of living differently toward my family members, toward my neighbor, toward my enemy. Living in a simple way like Jesus walking the dusty roads of Galilee with dirty sandals on his feet.

Philip Clayton: Religion, each spiritual addition is a whole, and when you corrupt one part of it, it tends to drag the whole thing along. Human beings, every one of us, regardless of educational level or theological training, recognize that. We really recognize when there's something that resonates with goodness. Vote Common Good. And we recognize when we pause and open ourselves, we recognize when something's being led to serve a violent or damaging or hateful purpose. So Brian, I really think that we have the capacity to see what's going on if we're Christian, Jew, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, Sikh.

Brian McLaren: Well, I think we both feel the reason we do podcasts and write books and lead organizations is that we want to help promote that process and be part of that change so that a vision of an ecological civilization will not be impossible to imagine or difficult to imagine, but will seem inevitable and obvious and natural. And my gosh, what a thought that a few hundred years from now, people could look back and think that the forms of religion and economics and politics that now are normal to us will be unthinkable to them because of the change that will have happened.

Philip Clayton: There is something I do think we intuitively recognize. I've had the privilege of speaking on these topics in many, many different countries around the world. I remember a place early in China, decades ago when religion was not allowed very much or not spoken of. And talking to a room full of students, 200, 300 students, about walking on their campus and finding a peaceful place where you could sit by flowers or by the lake and feel your connection with nature. And I could feel from 300 students through the translator who had no awareness of religion whatsoever, utterly secular, that they resonated with that sense of their connection with the beauty of the nature around them. And Brian, I hold that as a kind of sacrament, that human beings at our basis are just made to feel connected to and care for an environment around us. And that's why in the end, I think the environment will win. That's why in the end, I think we'll turn back from the insanity of these last decades or centuries and become the species we were in the beginning.

Brian McLaren: Thank you, Philip. What a perfect place to conclude. Thanks so much for this time and your work and keep it up. And yeah, we're in this together.

Philip Clayton: Thank you, Brian. Thanks so much.

Brian McLaren: We hope that this season of Learning How to See will inspire you to vote wisely, to

walk upon this earth reverently, and to speak up with grace and clarity whenever you can about our need for a mutually enhancing human-earth relationship. We hope you'll become part of the growing movement to celebrate our participation in the sacred web of life. This we believe is holy work, it's what Jesus meant when he spoke of the kingdom or kinship or ecosystem of God.

Brian McLaren: Special thanks to our guest, Philip Clayton. I'm so glad he is engaged in this important visionary work. If you'd like to learn more about why Philip and I both care so deeply about learning how to see our place in the natural world in a new way, I hope you'll check out Phil Clayton's new book, *What is Ecological Civilization?* And my book's *Life After Doom*, and also *The Galapagos Islands: A Spiritual Journey*. You'll find more in the links in the show notes.

Brian McLaren: Big thanks to Corey Wayne and Dorothy Abrams who produced *Learning How to See*. Thanks to April Stace for her musical support, and SoundOn for their help with post-production. Thanks to the Center for Action and Contemplation for making *Learning How to See* possible. Thanks to each of you for your interest and investment of time, and thanks for sharing *Learning How to See* with others, if you find it meaningful.

Brian McLaren: As a parting moment of contemplation, I'd like to ask a question. Before you try to answer it, I invite you to hold this question unanswered for a few moments. Just see what comes to you when instead of forcing an answer, you allow some answers to arise, to bubble up, to come into view. Here's the question. I'll repeat it four times. When you contemplate the idea of an ecological civilization, what picture comes to you? When you contemplate the idea of an ecological civilization, what picture comes to you? When you contemplate the idea of an ecological civilization, what picture comes to you? When you contemplate the idea of an ecological civilization, what picture comes to you?

Brian McLaren: If you'd like to share one of the pictures that has come to you, you can email us at podcasts@cac.org, or you can leave a voicemail at cac.org/voicemail. We need your responses to be brief, a maximum of 175 words in writing or under a minute spoken. Thank you.