

# The Future Is Calling Us to Greatness

with Michael Dowd + 56 Experts



## Global Wisdom and the Pro-Future Mission of en\*theos

with Brian Johnson

Big ideas from this session:

- The story of en\*theos as an evolving tool for optimal living and maximal legacy
- PhilosophersNotes and The Academy for Optimal Living
- Networking that promotes personal growth, social transformation, and global integrity

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Michael: Brian, as the heart and mind behind en\*theos it is just a true delight and an honor to have you as part of this series, The Future is Calling Us to Greatness.

Brian: Michael, I'm thrilled to be here, excited to chat.

Michael: Just confession, when we talked whatever it was, a year or year and a half ago on the phone, I fell in love with you as a soul brother. Then to have worked with your people, in fact I gave John and Travis both the feedback, and in fact somebody else, too, maybe it was Casey. There's an impeccability. I've come to so appreciate the way you all do things is really of top quality, top value, without a lot of the sort of breathless enthusiasm or breathless hype that I sometimes experience in some of the new age stuff. At any rate, it's just a treat so I'm glad that you can be part of this as well.

Brian: I have goosebumps and I appreciate that. That's the highest praise you can get. I'm really excited for the team to experience that and it's a reflection of what we aspire to, just a really deep sense of groundedness and the ancient wisdom and modern science and common sense and virtue and mastery and cool and just being integrated and living with as much impeccability as we can. Thank you so much for that.

Michael: You're welcome. One of the things that I may not need to do with you but I've done this with everybody so I'm going to invite you to do it as well, which is if there's anybody in this series, actually there probably will be because a lot of people that will come to this may not be familiar with other en\*theos programs.

For people who aren't already familiar with your work, they've never heard of PhilosophersNotes, they don't know anything about en\*theos or the other things you've been involved in, help us get Brian Johnson. Who are you? What are you known for? What are you proudest of in terms of what you've accomplished? What are you particularly passionate or committed to?

Brian: Well, I have to say on the top of my list of the things I'm most proud of is the praise you just shared. I'm the Philosopher and CEO. My wife and I started en\*theos together. We started it because we were just passionate about connecting to the highest within ourselves. En\*theos, God within equals enthusiasm, radiant enthusiasm.

When we connect to that thing, that essence that's bigger than us, whatever we call it, we tend to feel better. We tend to be able to just shine with that enthusiasm. Our highest goal personally is to do that.

Our business's purpose is explicitly to help people optimize their lives so we can change the world together. Not as a narcissistic check me out and my six-pack kind of thing, nothing wrong with six-packs, but not as an end in itself. How to make a difference, how do we become a better human being and make a positive difference in our communities. Our business is all about that.

We have this educational platform with events like this. We also have a social platform, which is my background entrepreneurially. That's what I'm most excited about. I've spent half of the last 15 years building businesses and half of the 15 years in philosopher mode, reading and writing and thinking and teaching. That integration and really creating a great business that can make a difference in the world and demonstrate how powerful of a force for good business can be from scratch.

Then be transparent about it, this is how we're doing it, and hopefully do some good work in the world that makes a difference. Honored to be able to partner with extraordinary teachers like you and amplify your wisdom and make a difference. That's the somewhat meandering overview of how I see myself in this moment.

Michael: Cool. Say a little bit about PhilosophersNotes and help us get a sense of how did you get to where you are now.

Brian: PhilosophersNotes was about seven years ago on the journey. A super-quick biographical sketch, first generation college student. Son of a blue-collar grocery worker. Went to UCLA, studied psychology, wound up getting a minor in business. Thought I'd get my PhD but they were only doing really the negative aspects of psychology at that point. Positive psychology wasn't around. This was the early 90s, mid 90s.

Went into Arthur Anderson, did consulting work, audit, tax, financial planning, consulting. Knew that wasn't it. Went to law school up at Berkeley and I knew before I went I didn't want to do that. Dropped out before the semester was even over.

The only inkling of bliss that I had to frame it in a way I couldn't then was to coach a little league baseball team, to work with kids. I did that and out of that I came up with an idea for my first business, which was called eteamz. The idea was every team in the league, this was 1998, will be using the web for everything. It would serve them and give them really cool websites and all these different things. We did that, won a business plan competition and then raised five million dollars, dot com boom, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera, sold that.

I spent several years, became a philosopher, a lover of wisdom. Read, wrote and traveled a bit. Created a second business which was basically a MySpace for people who wanted to change the world. We did some fun stuff with that. Wound up selling it to a company called Gaiam. That brings us to PhilosophersNotes. That's the context.

The PhilosophersNotes came after I sold my last business. Didn't know exactly what I wanted to do, it just wasn't that. I decided to give myself a PhD in optimal living, in how to live. I wanted to study ancient philosophy, divinity but also business and nutrition and all the aspects, positive psychology of course, that I think go into creating a great life in the 21st century.

The PhilosophersNotes were basically a Master's project en route to that PhD. Two years I distilled what wound up being 180 optimal living classics into mini Cliff's Notes. Six page PDFs, 20-minute mp3s, Marcus Aurelius, **Dmitri** and Emerson to the modern-day teachers. Tried to share how they all say the same thing and weave that together in a really practical, fun style that you can take into your life today. That's what PhilosophersNotes was for me in that phase.

Michael: I'm not sure they are all saying the same thing. I think that diversity is really healthy and leads to greater wisdom. Certainly they're all coming from a similar set of values and commitments. I just want to put in a plug because Connie and I both, my wife and I both, have found your PhilosophersNotes to be just gems of summation of some of the real wisdom classics throughout history. We've got them on our iPods and still listen to them.

Brian: You're awesome.

Michael: How did en\*theos get birthed? Help us understand this particular organization and what have you experienced already and where do you see this going?

Brian: My wife and I created it when we got married, four years ago. We thought about a non-profit, we thought about a for-profit, my background in the entrepreneurial side of things

and my deep passion for conscious capitalism. This idea of transcending and including and how do we integrate our spirituality with our business and our livelihood.

We decided to create en\*theos. We're now a public benefit corporation which I'm incredibly excited about. Our corporate charter has explicitly baked in these ideals, our commitment to something bigger than ourselves and our commitment to you and our other partners and optimizing each of our stakeholders.

Whereas a c-corp has the fiduciary responsibility to maximize shareholder value, period, that's what the Board is legally obligated to do, the b-corp extends that to the broader societal view. We're really excited about being part of that movement.

Created en\*theos with the explicit intention, as I mentioned before, of we want to help as many people as we can optimize their lives. Whatever that means for them. As you said, diverse viewpoints. Our mission is to inspire and empower people to be the change they want to see, to use that phrase, whatever that looks like. Then how do we work with great teachers to help them amplify their wisdom?

We found that if we want to change the world you do that by helping people be the change. How do you do that? You do that, we think in part, by helping people like you get your wisdom out. How do we provide the technology and the business infrastructure to help you get your wisdom out more and do that on scale where we can reach millions of people and really affect the positive change. Then connect those individuals to one another.

The reality is anyone listening to this or watching this in this event has more in common with the other attendees than almost anyone else in their life. How do they meet them? That's not how Facebook was architected. To create that social platform for connection is another big part of what we're up to and what drives us to do the work that you so graciously reflected that our team is inspired to do.

Michael: I don't know anything about frankly the social side of this. Share some about that.

Brian: That's my background. I built and sold two leading social platforms. The idea is very straightforward. There's Facebook, there's Twitter, there's Pinterest, there's Instagram and all these others. There needs to be a place that's all about this conversation. You go to those places and they're extraordinary technologically in what we can do and how we can connect. They're also very interesting energetically and often toxic.

How do we create an oasis, is what we call our community, how do we create an oasis where this is the conversation period? Rather than getting ridiculed when you talk about getting up at six AM or sunrise or whatever to meditate on Sunday morning, rather than I'm hung over again and, wow, that was a rough one on Saturday night and you get made fun of, or one like for it.

This is a community for people who are engaged in these practices and cultivating virtue and being engaged in this type of dialogue. We have the basic social tools that you would expect. Then we're also developing a lot of tools to integrate this type of content and the theory and the practice and then really drill in to build new habits. Meditation and exercise and nutrition and gratitude and love and rest and all the things that we know, just common sense and scientifically to improve our lives.

Let's gameify that in a way. Make it fun to create those habits in community, which is where almost all change occurs. That's the vision for the social platform and what we're so excited about.

Michael: That's cool because so much of what my wife and I, what Connie and I have focused on for the last six or seven years has been around what we call evolutionize your life. That is taking our best evidential understanding of our inner nature, our outer nature, our social nature and our interpretative nature. Then saying how can we take this knowledge and really move it into wisdom so that it helps us live much better lives, lives of integrity and compassion, of generosity, having the healthiest possible relationships.

Then, as you say, working together to ensure a just, healthy and sustainably life-giving future. Not just all the self-focus but really coming into right relationship with my reality such that I can be a blessing to my outer reality and ultimately we can be a blessing to the future. I think that's some of the most holy work that's happening on the planet right now.

Brian: Impeccably said.

Michael: It's interesting, I did two TED talks, two TEDx talks, both in Grand Rapids, Michigan. It's interesting, there's TEDx talks organized all over the world. The three most prominent that are most world class are Tokyo, Paris and Grand Rapids, Michigan of all places.

Two years ago I did one on evolutionary psychology and brain science at the TEDx in Grand Rapids. It was called Why We Struggle and Suffer Now. It was really the reason that we're tempted, the reason that with the best of intentions we sometimes shoot ourselves in the foot, the reason that we sometimes struggle with addiction or distraction or whatever is not, of course, because our great-great-great-great grandmother ate an apple. It's because we have mismatched instincts, instincts that are as compelling as any animal's instincts but they're mismatched for today's conditions.

We live in a world of what's called super normal allurements, that is things that we'd normally be allured to but now in concentrated dosages and presented in concentrated ways they're damn near irresistible. We've got a nation that's addicted to TV, news, video games, shopping, internet

porn, romance novels and on and on and on. If people are clueless about what's driving them and why, what's going on under the hood, then they're going to continue to struggle.

So many people in the West, conservative religion, keep trying to turn it over to Jesus and study their Bible more and that sort of thing. So many people in the East try to witness their troubling feelings and temptations to death rather than really understanding and honoring what's going on from a deep, evolutionary wisdom place such that then our instincts can serve us to have healthy relationships, to have a better life and ultimately to die a peaceful death and to leave a sweet legacy.

At any rate, I did this presentation in Grand Rapids and I had three evangelicals. Of course, Grand Rapids is a pretty conservative part of the world. I had three evangelicals come up to me within about a two and a half hour period after my presentation at this big social event. They came up to me independently and all three of them said basically the same thing which was, "I was a young Earth creationist until I heard your presentation. Now I've got to accept evolution, I've just got to do it in a God-honoring way."

One young man, he was in probably his mid-20s would be my guess, he said, "I always thought that evolution was about Darwin, DNA and dinosaurs. I didn't know it was about how to live a more Christ-like life around healthy relationships." It's that practical side of what's being revealed through science, through evidence.

At any rate, I don't know why I went down that one. My most recent TED talk was on reality reconcile of science and religion, that what we today call reality the ancients called God. Or if you lived in a polytheistic culture the Gods. We don't merely believe this, we know this. The evidence is compelling.

I find that what you're doing with en\*theos and of course there's other organizations that are also trying to do transformative adaptation. I'll be interviewing Stephen Dinan from The Shift Network as well as Craig Hamilton and Claire Zammit with Evolving Wisdom. There's others as well that are not just about transforming the individual or helping the individual become more fully who they are, but also to do so in the context of how can we use our gifts and our limitations, frankly.

The universe needs our flaws. The universe needs our shortcomings. How can we work together given our unique gifts and challenges so that we don't have to perfect ourselves first before they are of service to the future and a blessing to the world? Again, I just honor the work that you're doing with so many amazing teachers in this process.

This theme, the Future is Calling Us to Greatness, I've been sort of holding this mythic frame that the past is rooting for us and the future is calling us to greatness. Matthew Fox offered an interesting twist. He said, "The past isn't just behind us, the past is also in front of us. Our

ancestors are also in front of us drawing us forth so that we can do for our time what many of them did in terms of sacrifice for our time.” I thought it was a brilliant twist. Anything that you would be led to say on this theme, that the future is calling us to greatness?

Brian:           What comes to mind is my son. He turned two this week. Just the embodiment of the future and the opportunity to serve and create a world that I and we are doing our part for him to take the mantle and take the next step. For me, what comes to mind as you say that is the sacred opportunity and obligation to, it’s trite but true, to leave the world a better place.

                  Then the moral imperative for me, and I think those of us who are attuned to this whisper and that calling, to do the work and to do the practices and to embody the ideals that we know to be true, not with perfection but with a deeper and deeper level of commitment and embodiment and integration. That’s really at the heart of what we’re most passionate about.

                  The Greeks describe it as arete, this idea of virtue or excellence. Really expressing the highest version of ourselves moment to moment to moment. The whole architecture of our business is really around that. How can we set up the structures such that that connection to the highest within ourselves is a more consistent reality.

                  Then for us it’s not esoteric because it’s very pragmatic. It’s did you get a good night of sleep or were you up on your computer or watching TV until 10 or 11 or 12 at night, because guess what? Evolutionarily that option wasn’t available to you. Period. Anything that didn’t exist 100 years ago we need to question whether it’s wise to integrate deeper into your lives. I’m inspired by your work on this, the hyper stimulation that exists.

                  My personal commitment is to structure my life around these very basic rituals that allow me to be more connected more consistently, and then to create a culture in our business. We pay our team an hour a day, everyone on our team meditates on us. Fifteen minutes a day is our commitment individually. Once a week we can pull a one-minute card. Then exercise and journaling and nutrition, taking care of ourselves. Whatever it means for our team. That hour, the first hour of the day is on us.

                  Then, again, just creating that culture and letting that ripple go out where it’s cool to do these things. What’s more cool than being virtuous and to live a noble life? I think that’s the opportunity in this moment that the future is inviting us to and calling us to. Then greatness defined as I think in my past I’ve certainly had that manic pull to extrinsic greatness, if I’m the guy on the cover of the magazine. These extrinsic things of how famous am I, how powerful am I, how wealthy am I and how attractive am I.

                  We really want to pivot from that vantage point to the intrinsic, truly sustainable greatness of am I becoming a little better person day in and day out, are my relationships deeper, am I a good husband and a good father and a good friend and a good son and leader in our business? Then

can I make a difference in our community? Starting with did I open the door for the person at the movie theater, not did I make it on the top ten bestselling list or on Oprah and in the process ignore all these little things.

Reframing what greatness means is a big part of our effort. Then knowing that you do that one individual by one individual by one individual and family and community and you do it on scale. We can change the world, period. That's what leads to this level of enthusiasm, what I'm so excited about, what I'm so excited about with your work and how I respond to the theme of what you're putting together.

Michael: Well, it's that attention to local detail, the local people. One of the things that I feel that spirituality really should be all about is, as you say, not necessarily the esoteric. It's what is the quality of my relationship to my mother, to my father, to my siblings, to my children, to my ex-wife, to her husband? What is the quality of my relationship to my neighbor over there and my neighbor over there and the people that I work with?

One of the tools that I gained years ago from I think it was Jack Canfield, the first time that I encountered it it was in his book *The Success Principles*, is this notion of just asking the people in my life on some frequency on a scale of zero to ten, zero meaning it couldn't be worse and ten meaning it couldn't be better, how would you rate the quality of me as a father, as a husband, as a co-worker, as a whatever? How would you rate the quality of my preaching or whatever?

If it's less than a ten what would it take to make it a ten for you? Get that kind of constructive feedback that's not about griping or complaining, it's about inviting people to step into giving you the most useful feedback possible. It's not that I necessarily will always be able to act on it in such a way that it does produce a ten for that person, but there's a certain what I call the DNA of integrity, the DNA of right relationship to reality. For me, integrity is the practices and habits and mindset, the heartset and mindset that help me live in right relationship to reality, my inner reality and outer reality and so on.

I've identified in my book *Thank God for Evolution*, I identified what I consider the DNA, the four bases, the four core essential aspects of right relationship to reality. If you think you can be in right relationship to reality and ignore one of these four you're kidding yourself.

These four are found in every religious tradition and every spiritual tradition, recovery program and so on. They're real simple. Humility rather than arrogance. Authenticity rather than deception. Responsibility rather than the blame game. Then being of service to something larger than yourself.

Those four: humility, authenticity, responsibility and service, I see as essential. There's other things, too, of course. Those four I see as at the heart of you're not going to live in right

relationship to reality and thrive and have others around you thrive if you're not growing. Not perfect but not growing in humility, authenticity, responsibility and service.

Of course, even in the 12-step program the first three steps are about humility, higher power, larger reality, whatever you want to call that. The next three steps are all about authenticity, living integrously, authentic, telling the truth, stop keeping secrets. The next steps are all about responsibility, make amends. We've all left awake simply by being alive and following our instincts, we've all left awake. Going to those people and saying I'm sorry or, "I don't expect you to forgive me but I just want you to know that I know I was a real shit back then and if I could do it differently I could." That kind of communication, which is so relationship healing.

Then, of course, serving something larger than yourself. Serving a larger vision, serving the future, being a blessing. Again, that's one of the reasons why I'm excited to partner with you all. I feel like institutionally, organizationally, you have and are continuing to try to find ever more effective ways of embodying those and other character traits, other virtues.

I remember when we first talked, whatever it was, a year and a half ago, I remember feeling at that time that I looked forward to the day, in fact I think I probably shared this with you, when we would find a way of dancing together or cross-fertilizing or co-creating something. It feels like this is just the beginning of that. I'm excited.

Brian: Just to echo, too, to be in relationship with you and your commitment to these values, I love your explicit articulation of those. For us, some of those are explicit, some are more tacit and expressed in different ways. To have that resonance and the joy that we feel in partnership with you and to be able to create together. Again, how do we create more of that in the world with the work that we do together and with the ripples that come from that is just so deeply inspiring.

Michael: For people who don't know, people who may not be familiar with en\*theos or en\*theos, however you pronounce it, I've heard it pronounced both ways.

Brian: Yes.

Michael: Enthusiasm, full of God, full of inspiration is the way I interpret it. You've also got part of it is these conversation series like this, these seminars, these sort of virtual symposiums or symposia, I guess. Also there's the academy. Say a little bit about that.

Brian: The academy, the idea for that came out of a conversation I had with a guy named Steven Pressfield who wrote *The War of Art*, a fantastic book on creativity. He also wrote *The Legend of Bagger Vance*, the screenplay. Will Smith and Matt Damon, I think, are in that. It's the **bog of agita** on a golf course, Bagger Vance. It's amazing. He's very into classic Greek virtue.

Michael: How do you spell that? I want to watch that.

Brian: It's so good. The Legend of Bagger, as in like a caddy bagger. Vance, V-A-N-C-E. So B-A-G-G-E-R. Great stuff. He's really into classic Greek virtue. We were having breakfast a few years ago and just talking about where is classic Greek virtue in modern culture and what's going on with that.

He asked me something about my background that just connected. He said, "Have you ever considered creating a modern day Plato's academy?" It was one of those kind of choir of angels moments of literally my whole body was, "Whoa, that's a really good idea. What would that look like, a modern day Plato's academy?"

We've been really tinkering and experimenting and testing what would that look like and testing different things over the past few years. The basic idea is clearly it would be virtual. You would have the opportunity to have not just Plato speaking, and symposiums by the way. You can go either way on that, too, we've looked it up, symposia or symposiums. They were really drinking parties. Symposium is to drink together. Same word as sympathy, but on a given theme.

Our symposiums are on a given theme, kind of virtually. Our academy classes are particular classes on a given subject and are really fun, compact-style, 30-minutes, super practical. We currently have almost 300 professors on our faculty. We'll have 1,000 next year. We currently have 400, we're approaching 500 classes. We'll have 2,000 or 2,500 classes at the end of next year.

The idea is to create the greatest collection of optimal living wisdom ever. How do we do that and from a business perspective, make that unbelievably affordable? That's another Greek Latin word, astonishing, to strike with lightning, to astonish. How do we create that much value where we give the best to the most for the least for ten bucks a month? If you can't afford that, get a scholarship. It's a non-issue.

The idea of bringing a ministry, we thought about how do we create a 21st century church as part of our dialogue where money never gets in the way, that's never the issue. Of course, any organization needs wealth flowing through it in order to succeed and to thrive and to expand. How do we do that in the construct of a public benefit corporation that is profit-driven yet oriented around these stakeholders, and serve as profoundly as we can? That's the idea of the academy and how it relates to the symposium.

Then the interesting thing with Plato's academy is he did two sessions, as I understand it. An advanced one early and a more public one later. What really occurred at the academy was social interactivity. It was the dialogue among the participants where the real

education occurred. That's where our social platform comes in, is it's really the extension of that, the virtual academy and just the virtual meeting place to discuss these ideas, go into life, come back and see what we've learned together and have that professional, academic, professorial wisdom. Also, the aspiring peer-to-peer dynamic, which is so robust in itself.

Michael: I'm excited about it because I just learned about it just maybe a week ago. I was invited by Katrina on your team to basically create an academy and to formulate sort of ten. In fact, the game that I'm playing with myself in the formulation of this, we haven't even decided quite on the title, I'm sure it will have something like how to step into the future's call to your greatness or something like that, we don't know.

What are the ten big ideas? What are ten? This is the game I'm playing with this because I've been working on this the last two days. If this were the last contribution that I had to the world, if I were to die as soon as this was done and this is Michael Dowd, the essence of what I feel called, empowered and gifted to communicate to the world, what would the ten most important things that I would want to pass on, the means that I'm carrying that would be of most benefit to others and to the future? That's the game I'm playing in terms of trying to articulate these ten.

I love the fact that it's forcing me to do it in a half hour and to have ten actionable steps or at least ten big ideas. The game I'm playing, of course, is if these are the last ten things I communicate to the world what would it be? I just love this exercise of doing it.

Then also to be able to then, as you say, make it accessible to anybody. I think that's so vital because so much wisdom gets packaged in ways that some people just can't afford for whatever, especially in economic challenging times. Again, this is another place as the more I learn about what you're doing, what you and your team are doing, the more delighted I am by that and the more honored I am to participate in it myself.

Brian: It's amazing. Again, the feeling is so mutual. We were actually talking about you in our team call this week and just that passion with which you're approaching the creative challenging. It's near identical to how I've framed my work with my son, again, of if I was going to pass away what would I need to share with him and how do I distill this?

We actually talked about yours. It's almost like your first class is here's the introduction to the ten big ideas and let's do a series of further mini-classes on this particular idea and ten ideas on that.

I, again, appreciate your reflection. That's the idea. How do we inspire as many great teachers to teach with that same energy and passion and wisdom and, again, give the best to the most for the least?

We think the future of business is calling us and the future of greatness in business is calling us. Really, we see an opportunity to revolutionize kind of the space of taking the best of a church orientation where no one is sitting at the front of a church giving a ticket or taking in money before you come into a church. That's just now how it works. It goes around and people chip in and everyone gets it. That's just part of the dynamic.

How do you take that with the business dynamic and bring it online and scale it? Our vision is very straightforward. We want to create one of the coolest, most virtues-based, impactful and profitable businesses on the planet and demonstrate that living with a high level of integrity and virtue is not only the right thing to do in and of itself as an end to itself, but it also just so happens to be the best thing to do.

I get goose bumps when I say that. How do we prove that and inspire the next generation of entrepreneurs? I've been inspired by John Mackey and Patagonia and The Container Store and all these great businesses. How do we play our role in doing that so that the next generation looks at it and says, "I don't need to compromise. I can be purpose-driven. I can integrate my deepest passion for service with my desire to create something of scale and to experience beauty and luxury and affluence in the world while being of extraordinary service and changing the world." Using business as a construct to do that.

This is, obviously, what fires me up and, again, what our team is so committed to. Of being that change individually. We say all the time our business is just the context for them to optimize their lives so they can actualize their potential in greater service to the world. I've said that dozens of times. Then, again, model that as a possibility for the future of what business can look like.

We're just at the beginning phases. We've got all of the nuts and bolts and blocking and tackling to do to be a worthy messenger. That's the intention. That's what we feel called to in that form.

Michael: That's great. That is such an inspiring vision, en\*theos. It really is an inspiring vision but it's more than just a vision. This is the thing, so far everything I've tasted, everything I've experienced, everything I've watched or listened to or read that's coming out of your organization feels like it's got that integrity. It's got that right relationship to reality that's an allure.

I think there's something inherently alluring to that type of impeccability, that type of integrity. It's not about just doing the right thing. It's showing that the right thing can be done in a way that scales and in a way that reaches deeply as well as broadly.

One of the other things that you mentioned that I find inspiring, two things actually. One is that I keep death, I keep my mortality. The fact that I am a mortal being. I visit

graveyards all the time, Connie and I visit graveyards. We do it in part to remind ourselves that it wasn't very long ago that a lot of women died in childbirth and a lot of children under the age of five died. We're in a very privileged context in that sense because it's much rarer now in most parts of the world.

Also, I'll stand in front of a gravestone and I'll look at the person's name and dates and all and usually their wife or their children or whatever. I'll say to myself something like this, "Whatever it is that this guy right here, whatever he may have believed about his soul or his spirit or his consciousness or whatever might have survived, whatever his beliefs about whatever survives death, and of course there's a multitude of beliefs around that, whatever he inspired, that's great. That's cool, I've got nothing but a deep bow of respect for that."

From the perspective of every life form in the universe, this guy's everlastingly dead. I'm soon going to be just as everlastingly dead as him in that sense. That motivates me. That inspires me to prioritize my life in a way that I don't put off the important things. I often will ask myself if this were the last message, the last whatever, what would it be?

Connie and I personify. For me, God is a personification of reality. My relationship to God is my relationship to reality. For me, Christ is a personification of the future, to serve the future is to serve Christ. Connie and I personify our relationship. There's Connie, there's Michael and there's Jasmine. Jasmine is the mythic whole, the mythic personification of us or we.

Angel is our van. Nora is our personification of North America. We don't call this continent North America as an it. We call this continent Nora. We've got this intimate, personal relationship with this amazing continent.

One of the things that we do is personify the seasons. Towards the end of every season we'll hold each other, looking at a sunset or something, and one of us will say, "Thank you, summer, for being such an incredible blessing. If one or both of us dies before you come around again we just cherished what an amazing gift you've been." We're silent and one or both of us will often tear up.

It's like that personal relationship, that I-thou relationship as Martin Buber used to speak about it, with reality, with nature, with time. I find that that's the juiciest way to live. You reminded me of that, what you were sharing.

Also, I keep a picture of my four-year-old granddaughter right by my computer. When people ask me what inspires me in the face of scary stuff or when I ponder that, my granddaughter. My granddaughter is the embodiment of the future calling me to greatness.

Any last things, Brian, that you want to say on this theme? Or just anything at all? Actually, before you do that there's one question that Connie has asked me to ask all my guests in the series and I've only forgotten a couple times. That is that if you could invite any three people in human history to a dinner party where all four of you were together, with a universal translator of course so you could all understand each other, or if you were to have a one-on-one, a beer or a glass of wine or a meal or a cup of coffee or whatever, a glass of tea with any three people in human history, who would those three people be and why would you choose them?

Brian: What an awesome question and an easy one for me to answer because I actually reflect and kind of personify the archetypes of individuals who I'm inspired to embody, their most beautiful characteristics. Three people for me, and I'd actually enjoy the group setting but then I'd really prefer the one-on-one, that's where I'd have my fun. We'd go on a hike or we'd do something where we could really connect, one of these kinds of chats.

The three people are Marcus Aurelius, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Steve Jobs. For me, it's really what I feel called to integrate in my life. Marcus Aurelius, for me, is the leader, emperor philosopher who was such a passionate student of stoicism and of right living and just a humble, noble, beautiful soul who inspires me deeply. Aurelius, and that's why.

Then Emerson as the evangelist who left the church yet extended the church and is transcending and including and integrating the East and the West and doing so in such a heroic way. That drive of self-reliance, that God is within us and our biggest challenge is to trust ourselves. We named our son Emerson. Emerson's the second one.

Then the third is Jobs.

Michael: Also, Emerson had such a deeply ecological consciousness.

Brian: All of it. Just that transcendental, true transcendent includes all of it, our connection to everything. In both a mystical and a very practical sense. All of it.

Then Jobs, I like to qualify Jobs with heart. That creative genius with a really big heart and just a deep sense of the multiple stakeholders. It's not just creating fiercely and making a dent but doing so in a manner that those who interact with you feel your deep connection with something bigger than yourself.

There's integrity throughout the ecosystem of the business. Society is served, the partners are served, of course the investors are served. The customers are served and the employees are served. Everyone is looked at as not a means to an end but just a beautiful opportunity to work together and to make a difference together. Those three are kind of my three archetypes that I really admire and strive to embody on a daily basis.

Michael: Given how highly I hold those three, I would like to be invited to that as well. I'll let you have your own one-on-one with them hiking or whatever, but I want to be part of the dinner party.

Brian: What do we do? This is part of my contemplation, to really look at it and say how would Aurelius address this particular challenge and how would an Emerson, how would a Jobs? To really just, again as you so beautifully described, kind of bring that archetypal virtue into a real embodied sense in my own mythological way and then how can I be that in this moment.

Michael: I do that with historical figures as well. I will embody. I'll actually imagine that I was then but yet with the knowledge that we now have, how would I speak. Charles Finney, the great revivalist, is one of the inspirations for me in that regard.

Brian, this has been fabulous. Any last things that you want to say on this theme or just anything at all? Anything that you'd love to share in conclusion here?

Brian: Just thank you. I appreciate you and your energy and your embodiment of en\*theos and the opportunity to have this conversation and to be creating together and making a difference together. As you said, just the beginning. I look forward and deeply appreciate and respect and admire you and excited about all we're doing.

Michael: Ditto back to you, brother. Thanks. Blessings on you and especially now that you've got a young son. My three children are now 31, I've got a 31-year-old daughter, a 29-year-old son and a 24-year-old daughter. I've been really blessed and graced with an amazing relationship with all three of them.

My oldest daughter now has this four-year-old or she'll be four soon, a granddaughter. I'm beginning to experience that next generation as well. There's no more holy spiritual path than parenting in my experience. No more challenging one in some ways, but also no more holy and rewarding. I don't envy where you are because I'm glad I had that experience but I honor both you and your wife for this time in your lives and what it can be. There's nothing like children to really motivate you to ensure a healthy future.

Brian: You be in integrity, beautiful.

Michael: Amen, Amen. All right, brother, you're awesome.

Brian: Big hugs.

Michael: You, too. Bye.

