

# The Future Is Calling Us to Greatness

with Michael Dowd + 56 Experts



## Evolving Wisdom in Service to a Healthy Future

with Craig Hamilton

Big ideas from this session:

- Integral Enlightenment and the Academy for Evolutionaries
- Evolving Wisdom: Transformative Education for a Changing World
- Awakening the Impulse to Evolve: the Birth of Evolutionary Spirituality

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Michael: Craig, it's great to see you again, brother. I've been looking forward to this conversation—this series, in general, but your participation in it called *The Future is Calling Us to Greatness*. Welcome.

Craig: Thank you, Michael. It's great to be here. Good to see you again.

Michael: Yeah, so I'm noticing that we've got a little bandwidth issue, so when you're speaking, I'll probably shut my video off just to save bandwidth, and then when I ask a question or whatever, I'll come back on and we'll see what that does.

Just a little background. I've been interviewing now—it'll be a total of 50. I've interviewed 42 so far of really amazing leaders regarding peak oil, climate change, sustainability, and a variety of spiritual leaders in terms of how to hold some of this scary stuff in ways that inspire us to work together and to be in action and to really be a blessing to future generations. This theme, "The future is calling us to greatness," is sort of the unifying theme.

What I've been doing at the start is just asking all my guests to introduce themselves. I don't want to assume that everybody that's viewing this or watching this will be familiar with you and your work, even though we've been friends for a decade, and I deeply value your work. Some people won't be. Don't be bashful. Help us get who Craig Hamilton is and what you're most proud of and also in terms of how did you get to this place, so a little bit of your journey. Feel free to take five, seven, eight minutes, but help us get who you are and your work in the world.

Craig: Well, the work I'm doing right now in the world is really the culmination of a lifelong spiritual journey. I was born and raised in a kind of agnostic, Unitarian family. We didn't have any—God was not really a topic of conversation at our dinner table, and I didn't really have any particular spiritual or religious worldview shoved down my throat growing up. It was left pretty wide open for me to find out.

In my teenage years, I started to feel a calling, I guess I would say, a spiritual calling. I just started to get a sense that there was something deeper going on here than met the eye and that I was learning about in school and from my parents. There was a deeper layer to all this and a series of mystical experiences that started to happen for me probably when I was about 14, I would say, would really be the first time, I would say, started to have kind of breakthroughs to the other side where I would begin to sense a kind of deep awe and reverence for a kind of profound mystery that would come over me and a sense that this cosmos wasn't just dead, inert matter, but there was an inherent kind of care, presence, an intelligence in the fabric of reality itself in some way.

I began to follow that calling. I began to respond to those experiences by studying and learning more about spirituality. I studied, like a lot of us, I studied a lot of the Eastern stuff because that seemed to be a little more alive with the mystical, the enlightenment dimension was a little more visible at that point through the Eastern teachings, even though now a lot of the mystical teachings of the West have come to the forefront as well.

Michael: Sure.

Craig: So yeah, I became a spiritual seeker. I tried a lot of Eastern things. I learned to meditate, began meditating intently in my early 20's, traveled to the East, did my pilgrimage to Asia when I got out of college and was just very much really starting to organize my life around my spiritual quest. But I would say the shift that has led to where I am now and the work I'm doing now really began when I met my spiritual teacher, who was a Westerner named Andrew Cohen, and had an organization called EnlightenNext. We published a magazine called *What is Enlightenment?*

I met him and in that encounter had just a—I would say my spiritual experience just broke through to a much deeper level. Instead of just having high, kind of what we might call high mystical state experiences, I began to have these experiences of what's known as "non-duality" or Satori or enlightenment where suddenly everything I had been reading about all these years in all these spiritual books was suddenly becoming visible to me in my own experience, and I was starting to understand it from the inside instead of from the outside.

I got very interested in what he was teaching. I got deeply involved in a community, and we lived together in what I would only call a laboratory of evolution, of which I

participated in for 13 years. We were really attempting to live a holy life, live a spiritual life, but in a modern, post-modern, contemporary context.

In other words, we weren't attempting to replicate the traditional model even though many elements of what you might call a "traditional guru model" or "guru system" were in play there, but we were really trying to find out what does enlightenment mean now in our lives? To the topic of your series here, what does it have to do with evolution? What does it have to do with the future? What's the relationship between the timeless transcendent dimension of being and this miraculous process of becoming that we find ourselves in?

That really was the focal point for that chapter in my journey. I left there about nine years ago this month, actually. About yeah, October, nine years ago this month. I felt I had come to the end of my participation in that experiment and it was time to move on and find out what was next. In a sense, the inkling was that there was a way to bring a lot of the insights we were having in our laboratory out to life outside the petri dish, in a sense, to people who were living—because we were a spiritual community and in spiritual community, so much is facilitated and made easy. You've got a context for doing intensive spiritual practice. You can do communal meals, make everything communal, which takes a lot of the burden of life management off of your plate because you're sharing it with so many people. It creates a kind of little utopian environment that's hard to replicate when you have a full-time job and a family and whatever.

Michael:     Yeah, sure.

Craig:        I really felt I had a job to do, which was to translate the learnings from our evolutionary laboratory to life in the modern world and wasn't sure how I was going to do it, and then about five years ago in October, I started offering a series of online courses teaching how to live what I call "an evolutionary relationship to life."

I wasn't sure how many people would be interested in this. It was an experiment for me, but really straight out of the gate, when I started offering these programs, the interest just took off like wildfire and the first program filled up in one day. Second program filled up in a few days. Then I expanded the offering, and pretty soon it was going from 300 people in the course to 800 people in the course to 1,200 people in the course, and I was running graduate offerings for the people who had taken the nine-week introductory course.

It kind of took over my life. I wasn't really expecting anything of it at first. I thought I would just be offering a little online course, and maybe I'd have an assistant helping me out, and it would be very small scale. Suddenly I found myself having to build a rather large organization to support the work I was doing, and so I ended up being an organizational leader, sort of a reluctant organizational leader along the way.

The organization we built to do online education, not just for myself, but offerings for other teachers, including a program we did with you at one point. Grew really fast. We reached #83 on the Inc.500 two years ago, which is the list of America's fastest-growing companies.

I've been through quite a journey the last five years, both in terms of really feeling the expansion in my teaching work, also learning what it is to hold a large organization and be an entrepreneur, a spiritual entrepreneur, a social entrepreneur, in a sense.

Where I am now is yeah, I have a large graduate community of people who've been committed to the teaching work, which I call "integral enlightenment." I've got—yeah, so I have students who've been with me for up to five years, intensely involved in this work, and who are themselves taking a lot of leadership now and sharing it with others and I'm continuing to offer online courses in both meditation, but particularly in this evolutionary piece and how to not just have spiritual practice be something we do for an hour a day or half an hour a day when we sit down to do our contemplative work, but how to make our whole life into a spiritual practice.

Michael: Yeah, amen.

Craig: How to have every minute be a form of practice, meaning a way of becoming more conscious, more awake, less of a conditioned automaton, etc.

Michael: Yeah, amen, amen! I mean that's one of the things that I've appreciated about you and your work ever since I met you. I mean you actually first introduced me to Andrew Cohen and his community and Carter Phipps and so many other people I count as dear friends and colleagues now. It's precisely your blend, your integration of both a traditional form of spiritual practice and a deeply ecological, deeply evolutionary understanding of our inner and outer nature that both drew me to you as a person, but also to seeing you as a close colleague in this—what Thomas Berry called the "great work," the great work of humanity coming into a mutually enhancing relationship with the larger body of life upon which we depend and of which we're a part. We're an expression of that. Say a little bit, if you will, about your wife and mission partner, Claire.

Craig: Oh, well, so yeah, she plays a role in that story, too. She was the one who really prompted me to go and offer my online course five years ago. She is a real evolutionary leader herself. She's the founder and leader of a global spiritual community of her own called The Feminine Power Global Community. She teaches a series of online courses for women. She's had 10,000 women graduate from her seven-week course and trained hundreds of coaches. She's got an enormous body of work that is parallel to mine. It's different than what I teach, but we influence each other a lot, so we both learned a lot from each other.

She's an incredible human being. I met her about eight years ago, eight and a half years ago, I guess. We got married a year later and have had an incredible life together as evolutionary partners. It's funny. Often when we reflect back to when we first met, all kinds of sparks were flying, but only some of them were sexual, romantic sparks. We would both say the majority of the sparks that flew were about our shared mission.

Michael: Yes.

Craig: There was really a sense that we were life partners, mission partners. I know you have described that similar feeling when you met Connie, that you knew you were together for a mission. So yeah, Claire—she's been very instrumental because she was doing the online education, transformational education before I was, and she's the one who, I think, saw that I had a piece to offer there and kind of shoved me off the cliff into the free fall I've been on the last five years.

Michael: Amen! Thank God for partners that'll do that.

Craig: Absolutely.

Michael: Yeah, that's one of the things that I just so appreciate about both you and Claire is that you have—it seems to me that you have, and of course, when we've stayed with you, we've talked a little bit about this—something very similar. Connie and I are primarily mission partners. Yes, we fell in love. Yes, we've been married. Yes, we've been together 13-1/2 years. Yes, we love each other and have a really yummy relationship, and still to this day, it's our shared sense of life purpose, our mission, where we can contribute to a healthy future, what we're here on the planet to do. Given our unique gifts and limitations, the synergy of us working together and not having identically the same mission.

She has her ministry that she's doing with assisted migration and trees and I have my ministry working to transform sort of traditional religion along ecological and evolutionary lines, and yet we synergize with each other so powerfully that I wish for everyone the kind of mission partnership that we have and that the two of you have.

Craig: Yeah, it's a wonderful thing. By the way, if anyone is curious, her last name is different than mine. It's Zammit. So Claire Zammit if anybody was like, "Oh, who's that?"

Michael: Yes, exactly.

Craig: Look her up. Yeah.

Michael: That's great. Craig, say a little bit about some of these memes, these concepts that we've both been associated with. Obviously, evolutionary spirituality is a meme that we've both

found value in and have used at times. Say a little bit about sort of your take on evolutionary spirituality as well as the name of your organization, Evolving Wisdom.

Craig: Well, I'll take them separately because I mean different things by them. Evolutionary spirituality is a very—it's an increasingly kind of big tent term, funny enough, excitingly enough, I guess we could say. It's become something that really can hold a lot of different perspectives.

I recently got to spend some time with a mutual friend and colleague of ours, Steve McIntosh and Carter Phipps, who you also mentioned, who wrote the book *Evolutionaries* and Steve wrote *Evolution's Purpose* and *Integral Consciousness*. We were hanging out together for a few days here in California and just talking about this movement and saying, "Well, wow! It's not a religion, but it's certainly brought together a lot of people, and there's a lot of diversity under it."

I mean there are people whose version of evolutionary spirituality, quite, from one point of view could almost say it's a form of secular spirituality, meaning it's really fundamentally science-based. It doesn't really take there to be any of the things that sort of tradition religion and spirituality were pointing to, like a transcendent dimension or something known as "spirit," that's conscious and intelligent and not something that's just part of matter. There are people who would hold that side of it.

All the way on the other end, probably folks like myself who you would say are kind of radical mystics in a traditional sense, but we're holding a mystical evolutionary worldview where we're really, in a sense, talking about what it means to incarnate and embody the impulse of evolution, which could be seen as another word for spirit as one's self.

So here we've got this big wide field, and I'm excited to have so much under it. Of course, when you have so many different versions of something, everybody kind of is a little worried about the other versions because they think, "Well, I don't want people to think evolutionary spirituality is just about that, because to me it's about this."

I always notice those tensions when I talk to people who are kind of holding different places on that spectrum, but fundamentally I think from just the health of it, what's great about it is that I think what we all share, in a sense, is that we're all seeking to find a way to resurrect the inherent, innate value of a spiritual worldview and a spiritual orientation to life on the other side of modernism.

Michael: Yeah.

Craig: On the other side of modernism and post-modernism, which both played a role in kind of taking the spirit out of spirituality. In other words, so to get to your question about how I

hold evolutionary spirituality, I mean the part of it that I'm particularly excited about is the—it's really bringing down to earth a form of spirituality where we are—that's 100% life positive and world embracing.

Michael: Beautiful.

Craig: Because a lot of, again, not all, but broadly speaking, all of the religious, mystical, spiritual traditions arose at a time when the fundamental worldview was either kind of static, like there's nothing new under the sun. This is the way it's always been since it was created in some moment, and then it's just been this way and it'll always be this way. Or there was a belief that it was cyclical. Things just kind of went around in circles.

So in that world and then you start discovering these higher spiritual potentials which are so elevating, the emergence of our higher nature, and we start to say, "Oh, well, this must be the way out of this suffering, horrible world, the way out of this cycle that just goes round and round. Or the way off of this flat, static world that's basically so full of pain and suffering." Spirituality naturally, I think, got conceived as the escape from this world in some way.

Now here we are on the other side of the modernist revolution, the scientific revolution, and we now have so many ways of really beginning to understand and see what's going on here, really, not just making stuff up, but we're starting to understand where we came from, understand this cosmos, understand our own true origin story to the degree that we can, and we say, "Oh, it's not just going around in circles and it's not just standing still. It's moving. It's a process. It's an evolutionary process that started 13.8, 13.7—people are using numbers these days. So anyway, 13.8 billion years ago this thing burst into motion. It's been unfolding ever since.

There was the Big Bang of the universe. The big bang of life, when life burst out of this, and then there was the big bang of the human mind and hopefully other similar minds and other planets, perhaps, but at least here we had the big bang of human consciousness come on to the scene, and it's just been one evolutionary dynamic after another getting unleashed, and now we look around at this amazing world that we've created in a very brief period of time in human history.

You realize, "Wow! This is all part of this evolutionary unfolding, and if that's the case, that what the universe is is a process of evolution, it's not even a thing that's evolving. It's evolution itself." That's probably the best way to describe it. "Then that means I'm a process of evolution and humanity is a process of evolution. What does it mean for me as a human being to let go of my—" to come back to the spiritual conversation, then it's about, "Oh, I want to go beyond. I want to let go of all of my false beliefs and assumptions about who and what I am and discover my true nature," which, in the way I'm speaking about it now, I'm not just speaking about your true nature as a transcendent being, infinite beyond time and change. I'm talking about your true

nature as the evolutionary impulse itself in motion and what happens when we start to realize we're a process, that we're evolving, that we have the energy of the Big Bang alive inside us, and that we now can become conscious agents of the evolutionary process and contribute to and begin to guide where this whole thing goes.

What an extraordinary life to be living, that we're at a time when we can actually recognize all that and begin to embrace that. Then in my case, build a spiritual practice around those insights that is fundamentally transformative, still helping us evolve beyond ego, but for an evolutionary reason, for a reason much bigger than ourselves, not just because I want to get out of my personal suffering, but because I want to help contribute to laying down the pathway for future humanity to follow to really living in a much different way, living in a way that embodies all of these emergent virtues and potentials that have been bubbling up in human consciousness for several thousand years, but now there's this invitation to own and claim and step into that fully.

Michael: Yeah, yeah, amen. Well, that was great! One of the things—toward the end, you were leaning into—I was hoping that you would go because one of the reasons why I particularly wanted a variety of spiritual leaders to be part of this series is because so oftentimes the critique from the secular world is that spiritual and religious people are all self-focused. It's all about me and my enlightenment, my salvation, my wholeness, my healing.

I think that does a tremendous disservice to, in my experience, the vast majority of religious and spiritual people because it's not just about perfecting the individual, but it's about empowering the individual to not be encumbered by some of the things that traditionally have limited us so that we can truly be a greater blessing, of greater service, so that we can be evolution incarnate, in a divine way, helping to ensure a healthy future for all of us. So anything that you'd like to say in terms of how you see spirituality in that process?

Craig: Yeah. Well, you were making a very interesting point there. When you say that's the critique from the secular world of a lot of spiritual people, it's fascinating because that's probably really a critique of what's going on in kind of contemporary, progressive, post-modern spirituality, which really has become quite self-focused.

You're pointing to the very thing I meant when I said resurrecting spirit on the other side of post-modernity, which I didn't speak much about. I was really speaking there about more how we discover a spirituality that can embrace modernism, embrace the insights of science, but then on the other side of post-modernity what does it mean to rediscover the sacred? Post-modernity is where we sort of dismantled every metanarrative, every larger meaning story and said, "Oh, there's no true story. There's just your story and my story and whatever story we make, that's the story. Don't tell me—don't shove any truth on me, man. There is no truth. There's just perspective. There's just my take and your take."

That's, of course, been a liberating insight for human beings to realize, "Oh, well, we do all make our own meaning out of things. We do all see through distorted lenses. Let's not pretend that we're just—because I'm seeing it, it's true." That's been an evolutionary move, but the other part of that, as some have pointed out, is it's led to just a—in a sense, well, what's left then is just the individual and their story. Then what's left of spirituality when you dismantle all the super structures, if you will? What's left of spirituality is just well, me and my quest for self-fulfillment, me and my quest to have a happy life.

If you look at a lot of what's kind of being touted, look at some of the spiritual "magazines" that are out there, that are mostly kind of centered around the yoga world. What's the story they're telling? It's about you and your practice, your happiness, your liberation, and everybody is talking about me and my self-expression.

There is a way—on the one hand, again, that's an individuating movement in human consciousness, but from another point of view, it's kind of like, "Yuck!"

Michael: Yeah, exactly.

Craig: Eww!

Michael: Exactly.

Craig: I think that's the critique you're pointing to because we all sense, "Well, hey, it's not about you. Don't you know that?" Not even just from a spiritual or religious point of view, but just from a kind of humanistic point of view, like you were saying.

Michael: Yes, right, right.

Craig: Secular humanists would just be like, "Well, come on. We're all in this together. It's about society. It's about the underprivileged and it's about elevating this whole human project." I think it's a true critique. It's a fascinating critique, and again, I feel that this is where this evolutionary insight and this embrace of a truly evolutionary worldview can help lift spirituality out of the kind of narcissism that it's a bit mired in in the contemporary kind of spiritual scene where we start to realize, "Oh, actually, I'm evolving my consciousness not just so I can have a better life. I want to help evolve human consciousness." Because let's face it here.

Michael: And the paradox is that's where we find a better life.

Craig: Absolutely! That's what's going to make you happy, by the way, but don't seek that because it'll ruin the whole thing.

Michael: Exactly!

Craig: And I know this is something that you've thought a lot about from the evolutionary and psychology point of view, too, but really what we're up against as human beings in terms of finding the creativity and the will and the care to solve the many problems that we've created as human beings, in many ways, we're up against our own unevolved human nature. We're up against our own instinctual nature to be self-interested, to be short-term thinking, just out for me and what I'm going to get in the short-term and the fear-driven and kind of tribalism and ethnocentrism.

There's all this unevolved kind of—some of it's just animal instincts. Some of it's deeply socially—social instincts, etc. things that have developed as we've been humans. Some of it came from our early animal path. What if those of us with the eyes to see and the ears to hear took on the project of evolving human nature, because human nature isn't given. They used to think that in the religions, right?

Michael: Yeah.

Craig: You had your good side and your bad side. But it's like no, human nature evolved over time in response to certain life conditions.

Michael: Exactly.

Craig: It's still evolving. We can evolve it consciously. It doesn't mean we can necessarily root out the deep biological drives, but we can become conscious of them in such a way that we gain freedom from them, and we can now make healthy, constructive, positive, life-giving, evolutionary choices in the face of everything no matter how powerful our instinctual drives are trying to throw us off course when there's sufficient consciousness, which is what the spiritual path has always been about. It's always been about expanding our consciousness, deepening our self, meaning our interiority to a place where we have freedom in the face of all of our conditioned, programmed, instinctual drives so we can make free, highly evolved, creative choices that are in line with something else.

I would say that something else is this evolutionary impulse I'm talking about which is none other than spirit, which is something we can tune into. But whether we accept that or not, we might say, "Well, I don't know about that part, but certainly we could all say, "Wow! Human nature needs to evolve." We're still very primitive beasts.

Michael: Yeah, yeah.

Craig: We're making really bad choices now individually and collectively that could have implications for tens of thousands or hundreds of thousands of years. More. Yeah, so that's

where, to me, we potentially find the sacred and spirit again in a new incarnation, in an evolutionary context that really takes us beyond the self-centeredness that is so prevalent.

Michael: Amen, brother! Well, one of the things that I've—the way that I've begun languaging it that I find works in Western religious circles, Eastern religious circles, and secular circles is to talk about right relationship to reality. By my reality, I mean what's real whether we believe it or not. What's true and inescapably, fundamentally, undeniably real?

I think there are three things that, at least as I see it, are real whether we believe in them or not. Time is real. The past is real. The present clearly is real, and if we act as if the future is not real, we'll condemn the future, so in some very real sense, time is real regardless of our beliefs.

Nature is real. Our inner nature, our outer nature, our social nature, and our interpretive nature. Nature is real. But mystery is also real, and whether you think of mystery in transcendent terms or not, it's not just the realm that we don't know. It's the entire realm that we don't even know that we don't know and we'll never know.

There are many different ways of thinking about that, but I think to be in right relationship to reality: time, nature, and mystery, whatever else it means. It can't be less than living in right relationship, in a mutually enhancing relationship, in an honorable relationship with time, nature, and mystery.

This leads, actually, to that other phrase that I was asking you about, which is the name of your organization or one of your organizations, Evolving Wisdom. Speak to that.

Craig: Well, Evolving Wisdom is really a—well, gosh, I mean I think I just want to acknowledge what you just shared because I mean that itself is a wonderful contribution to think about right relationship to reality. I mean I just want to say I would agree with that as fundamentally—if we would say, "What's the goal of spiritual life? What is enlightenment for?" It's to bring us into right relationship to reality.

Michael: Amen.

Craig: We might disagree about whether or not we believe it to be—we might have disagreements about what the content of all of that is and that's part of the human journey is continuing to explore all those things, but fundamentally I'm a big yes to that framing.

As for Evolving Wisdom, I mean this is an organization that really grew—my teaching work is called "Integral Enlightenment." It's a path of enlightenment that is about awakening us to both our true nature beyond time and change, so both the transcendent

dimension of who we are, but also the evolutionary dimension of who we are, both of which are dimensions of spirit and the sacred.

That's that work and then Evolving Wisdom was really an organization that grew out of that because as I was building this, what I call the "Academy for Evolutionaries," I was building this online training academy to teach people all of this.

I started to have other people, other teachers who were teaching different offerings, some of which were in line with that, others which were totally different than that, and some which my wife was teaching on different topics and friends had come to me and said, "Well, gee, you're building this whole online university, in a sense. Maybe I could teach a course under that umbrella," and we looked at how to do that.

That's when Evolving Wisdom was born was really as a metaorganization. I'm glad you like the name of it. I mean naming anything is always a major creative project in itself, but when we came upon Evolving Wisdom as an idea, we said, "Wow! That really captures it because it flies—" the word "wisdom," in and of itself, very often conjures up this kind of, "We're trying to discover the unchanging, the timeless, fundamental truths about reality, the deep wisdom traditions that we—truths were discovered long ago and they'll never change."

Yet, clearly as part of becoming an evolutionary and embracing an evolutionary worldview, we realize everything is evolving and wisdom is definitely evolving. I mean the wisdom, meaning the applied knowledge, that we need to meet the challenges of today's world and to meet the call of the future, as you're pointing to here, is so vastly different than the wisdom we needed to live in an Agrarian society.

Michael: Yes.

Craig: So wisdom is evolving. Let's help it evolve by, in this case, offering courses, trainings, programs to help people make those leaps and meet all the challenges of today.

Michael: Yeah, yeah, exactly. One of the things I love about it also is that you come from this solid grounding in evolutionary spirituality, of lucid enlightenment, and your wife has done such fabulous work in terms of women and bringing women's wisdom.

Most people know that in most cultures wisdom has been personified as the feminine. When different cultures have spoken of wisdom, they've often done so with a she and that sort of thing.

Craig, what gives you hope? You're obviously aware of some of these big challenges, both currently that we're beginning to deal with. I've often heard it said that we are the first generations to experience the sting of climate change, and we're the last generation to be

able to do anything about it, because what gets done in the next 15 years or so will lock in space and time certain patterns, earth patterns that are, from the human standpoint, practically irreversible.

What gives you hope? What inspires you to wake up on a day-by-day, week-by-week basis in the face of some pretty scary stuff? Climate change, peak oil, the growing gap between the rich and the poor, species extinction, on and on. How do you stay engaged, in action, centered without sort of numbing your heart, but in a way that allows that pain to motivate you to be of service?

Craig: Well, I don't know. Now that you named all those bad things that are happening, I just think I want to crawl under my desk here and give up. No. No, Michael. It's an interesting thing this question of hope and optimism and possibility that you bring up because I'm sure you encounter this, and as a spiritual teacher who's interacting with thousands of people, I run into it constantly. There's often a kind of despair operating.

Michael: Yeah.

Craig: There's a sense of it's not possible. I don't know if we could get through it. The systems are too powerful. The power interests are too entrenched. The lack of political will, take it all apart and it can seem pretty daunting. I mean there are people who are doing good work to try to pull the hope right out of the facts, like people who are focusing on the—like *Yes Magazine* doing the *Journal of Positive Future* saying, "Hey, look at all the good things that are being done to address these issues. Let's bring our attention there," because there's an amazing amount that's being done.

Michael: Yes, exactly.

Craig: And incredible creativity at every level of this human system trying to tackle these challenges even though there are a lot of entrenched structures that are in our way. Yeah, we can get a lot of hope just by studying the good things that are happening, but when I think about where do I really get my own sense of optimism and then hope, I guess, too and where I would encourage people to look for that is really it's in the evolutionary worldview itself. It's in a deep time perspective itself, because it's sort of like take anything that's happening right now and it could be in your personal life. It could be in your community. It could be in the world as a whole. Take anything that feels totally stuck. Pick something because any of us can find lots of them. "I'm stuck in this way. I can't seem to change it. The planet is stuck. This gap between rich and poor. How are we ever going to?" So whatever it is.

Now just pull back a little bit from it, in other words, back like you're now looking at a longer timeframe, and just realize that whatever that thing is that right now seems so stuck, so the way things are, it hasn't always been that way.

In fact, not that long ago I'm sure it wasn't that way, whatever you chose. You don't have to look very far back to a time when, "Oh, it wasn't like that. It was the opposite." Maybe the opposite problem was happening. Then you go, "Oh." Now the pendulum swung in an attempt to solve that problem. Now it's gone way over here, and that's really bad, but just allow yourself to extend out. How far do you have to let your imagination stretch out into the future to see a time when it's not happening anymore?

Michael: Yeah.

Craig: It's going to change. If there's anything we learn from looking at this 13.8 billion year journey we've been on is that everything always changes.

Michael: And chaos keeps driving creativity. I mean one of the things that I find hope in is pointing out how invaluable, how absolutely necessary chaos, breakdown, destruction, I mean these are the primary drivers of creativity and transformation for not just thousands or tens of thousands, but even millions of years.

Craig: Absolutely. Positive change never happens because it's a good idea. I mean rarely.

Michael: Yeah, yeah, right, right.

Craig: Maybe once in a while, but it almost always happens because it has to.

Michael: Yes, exactly.

Craig: Because, as you said, the life conditions, the chaos, whatever, the breakdowns force us to come up with a creative solution. So that's another part of it, and so that's maybe two points because I'm saying just the fact that evolution is going on, change is happening, means nothing is stuck, really. Everything is going to change to something, and then the question becomes, "Oh, if it's going to change, if this thing that I hate about the world right now isn't really going to be this way forever, then what's it going to change into and how am I going to help it change into that?"

Michael: Yeah, amen.

Craig: Then you just become an agent of the change process helping take it in the most positive direction possible, and then you don't even—it's almost like we don't have the luxury to be pessimists.

Michael: Yeah, right.

Craig: We don't have time to be pessimistic. We just have to be engaged. We just have to be moving. We just have to be being part of the solution, and then are some bad things going to happen? Maybe.

Michael: Mm-hmm, yeah.

Craig: They are happening now, for sure.

Michael: Yeah, exactly.

Craig: Might certain things go too far and have really tragic consequences? Sure, I'm not naïve. Maybe they will. But there's a fundamental—I think when you start to tap into this evolutionary impulse in yourself and you start to see it active in other people and you see it operating in society as a whole, there's a certain fundamental faith in that that starts to form where you just—I guess you just get more inspired to play a bigger game.

Michael: Yeah, yeah.

Craig: You realize—and this is an important one because a lot of us kind of go, "Well, what impact could I have? I'm just one person. This big world. All these structures, power interests. What impact could I have?" But the reality is very often it's one individual with a big idea that ends up having the big impact or certainly a small group to mobilize around something.

We don't get to have the excuse that, "I'm too small to make a big difference." The other thing I want to say about that, though, is doing big things is generally much easier than doing small things.

Michael: Oh, say more about that.

Craig: Well, so you think about—let's say I'm in this, "I want to do something about climate change, but I'm just little 'ol me, so what could I really do? Not much. So maybe I'll do a little thing like I want to try to get a few people on my block to recycle more." I kind of have a really small project I want to try to do.

Then you run around and tell everybody about your small project. How excited did they get? Not that excited because they kind of know, "Well, that's not a very big idea. It's not going to have that much, but yeah, sure, I'll help your project."

But come up with a really big idea that has big sites and big potential and is a really inspired vision that's not embedded in your own beliefs of limitation, but it's embedded in your sense of possibility. Now go around and start telling people about it from a place of confidence and you notice—what do they do? They go, "Wow! That's a big—tell me more."

Wow! How could I help you? I've got some of this and I have a friend who that. I know the head of this organi-board and da-da-da." Suddenly resources are gathering and mobilizing around that person who kind of has an unstoppable vision and is taking on something that maybe is bigger than anybody really thinks is totally possible, but they're still much more interested in betting on that and hitching themselves to that than that little thing that obviously...

The deeper point here is that when we take on a project that is bigger than we think we could really realistically accomplish, but we go ahead and we set our sights on something big and we stretch toward it, it brings a lot more out of us personally. It brings things out of me that I didn't know were in there, and it also draws other people in at a much higher level of interest and engagement than anything small.

And some would even say forces of the universe conspire to support that. I don't know if I believe that or not. Sometimes it sure feels that way.

Michael: That's exactly—yeah, exactly.

Craig: But whether or not we believe that, just science quickly speaking, socially speaking, and that's why I think big ideas get traction and we need big ideas, and we need big visions and big projects. I think I'm just saying this to kind of encourage anybody who's feeling, "Oh, I want to make a difference, but how?" I'm saying, "Pick something big."

Michael: Yes, exactly, amen!

Craig: Don't do something too small because it probably won't happen.

Michael: Amen! Amen!

Craig: But big things happen.

Michael: Yeah, exactly. Oh, Craig, this is so great! Let's see. Let me look at my notes here. There's a question that Connie has been inviting me to ask all my guests, and it's been really fun because I purposely don't let folks know ahead of time. That is if you had the opportunity to have dinner, like a dinner party where any three people in human history and you or you and Claire or a one-on-one where you go for a hike together or over a glass of wine or a cup of coffee or whatever, if you had the opportunity to be with any three people in history in a really relaxed, warm, comfortable setting where you could understand each other, like universal translation so they don't all have to speak English. Who would those three people be and why would you choose them?

Craig: Wow! That's so interesting. Okay, I only get three. I get that.

Michael: Yes, exactly. I know you'll wake up tomorrow morning probably with somebody else in mind, but that's okay.

Craig: A different list. Yeah, yeah, no, it's good. It's a fun thought experiment. Well, let's see here. I mean the first two that jumped immediately to mind were I would want to have it be the Jesuit priest and paleontologist, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin.

Michael: Yes, yes.

Craig: Who's one of the sort of progenitors of this whole evolutionary spirituality movement. The other one that was right there with him was Sri Aurobindo, who was really the other kind of core driver of the evolutionary spirituality movement, I would say. Those two were just boom.

Then I was sort of like, "Okay, who's the third? Who's the third?" Jesus or the Buddha. I don't know.

Michael: Right, right, right.

Craig: Which one? Interesting. Yeah, I bet I can get—you know what? I bet I'd pick Jesus just so I could find out what he really thought because the Buddha is less controversial. Gosh, yeah, but I know those are all men. I was trying to think, "Well, how typical, right? I'm a male leader. I want to talk to all these men." I think it's probably an unfortunate piece of reality of our history that when we look back that the most visible, impactful figures are men. I think if we were asking that question a thousand years from now, there'd probably be—I'd probably be saying people like some of the leaders who are emerging now, the powerful women who are alive today.

Michael: Yeah, yeah, no, exactly.

Craig: Anyway. And you said why? Well, I think the deeper why is because I guess I want to, particularly for Teilhard and Aurobindo, really sense into the heart of the impulse that they were experiencing, that was, for them, so original and new and fresh and revolutionary in the face of everything they had come out of was so traditional, and yet there was this bursting forth of a new mean, really, and new possibility. It would just be to sense into them as human beings and what their experiences of this coming online. I don't know. That's my answer for today.

Michael: Yep. No, that's great. I mean the way you talked about Aurobindo and Teilhard reminded me of what Thomas Berry used to say about Teilhard, that he was the most, in the Western tradition, that he was by far the most significant theologian since the Apostle Paul,

because he was the first one to identify the human story with the universe story, that we're an outgrowth of the universe rather than separate from it. That changes everything.

In fact, speaking of this changes everything, I just have to recommend—I don't know if you've seen this yet. It just came out last week, but I'm going to mention it anyway because it's the most significant book I've read in the last decade. Naomi Klein's new book *This Changes Everything*. It truly is the best book I've read in a decade, and I just listened to the whole thing, and then now I bought the hardcover because probably 50 times throughout the listening of it I kept thinking, "Oh, I've got to write that down." I mean as a preacher I'm always looking for good material. There are just so many great quotes and little powerful memes, ways of languaging things. For anybody, not just to you, but to anybody watching or listening to this, I highly recommend Naomi Klein's book *This Changes Everything*.

Craig: Yeah, a lot of people are talking about it.

Michael: Yeah.

Craig: Thank you.

Michael: Any last things that you want to say on this theme, "The Future is Calling Us to Greatness," or just anything at all? Then how do people go more deeply into your work?

Craig: Well, I think maybe just to take the theme itself just for a second, so this notion that the future is calling us into greatness. I mean we've talked about a lot of—and you could say most of what we've talked about in some way feeds into that theme, but I guess in and of itself what I would just maybe want to highlight about that is that I do think those of us who have the privilege and good fortune to be able to spend our leisure time listening to, participating in dialogues and series like this one, reading books like the one you just handed—that have the time to be educating ourselves, evolving ourselves, doing spiritual practice, going on retreats, just who really have the privilege to participate in this evolutionary process in the ways we're speaking about.

It's not only an opportunity for us. It's a profound obligation that we have, and I think there are many layers to that obligation that are worth pondering. One is our obligation to all those who came before us who sweated and toiled to make the world a little bit better for the next generation. Often in bloody warfare and horrible disease and just very difficult life conditions. There's a way we're living this incredibly luxurious, comfortable, contemporary lifestyle because of all that's come before, and I feel there's a kind of sacred obligation to the past.

I feel similarly if we look around and realize that we are a very—those of us who are ever going to participate in anything like what we're doing today are a very tiny percentage of

those who are alive today, who are going to have the freedom, the luxury to think about things, to think about our lives, to reflect, to grow. It's not something most people are ever going to have the opportunity to do who are alive today right now because, again, the life conditions for most are not supportive of this, and even those who have, you could say, their creature comforts taken care of that don't have the educational opportunities or born into traditional cultural structures that are very rigid and old, that they'll never break out of.

I'm just saying as the ones who have the opportunity to do this, we have an obligation to everybody who never will to help move the whole thing forward, because any movement forward exerts a positive—it's exerting a positive gravity on the whole system.

I feel there's that level and I think—I'm sure you're talking a lot about this here, but there's an obligation to the future because, as you said, we're at a very pivotal movement here. The emergence of science and technology made so much possible for us to have this incredible world, and it's had some cataclysmic impacts on the biosphere and the system, from species extinction to climate change to burning through all of our fossil fuel resources, etc., etc.

It seems pretty comfortable still right now, but there's a lot we have to turn around and a lot we have to evolve. Even though we seem to have the luxury to sit around and talk about bigger things, I guess I'm saying we all need to really take it seriously. I'm not making the point that a lot of people make, which is, "Get off your meditation cushion and get into action." I'm not making that point at all.

I'm actually saying—well, I'm including that point, but I'm more saying, "Make the time on your meditation cushion count because you're evolving consciousness. You're helping evolve human nature. Let's make our own transformational work count. Let's bring it out to the world in all the ways we can so that not just future generations can live, but so that this higher potential of our emergent nature and really the utopian possibilities that actually are very real if we could evolve can come to pass, and we will have contributed to this great project of evolution and not just stemmed the tide of carelessness and destruction."

Michael: Yeah, amen. Wow!

Craig: I guess that's my response to your title. In terms of how to get in touch with me and my work, I would encourage you to go to—there's a free audio seminar where I give a deep-dive into what my integral enlightenment process is and what it means to evolve beyond ego, what it means to evolve human nature. It's called "The Key to Evolving Beyond Ego." You can go to [beyondego.com](http://beyondego.com), I think is the right one. I actually should know that, but I'm not the best promoter. Let's see. I think [beyondego.com](http://beyondego.com) gets you there.

Michael: Okay.

Craig: Oh, no. It doesn't. Sorry, let me say that again.

Michael: That takes you to a porn site. No.

Craig: Yikes! Let me see. What is it?

Michael: Well, if they put just your name and living beyond ego or something like that...

Craig: No. Very interesting. Okay, well, I'm not quite sure what happened to that webpage, but if you go to [integralenlightenment.com](http://integralenlightenment.com), you can find it all there, and that's my main website. Just check out [integralenlightenment.com](http://integralenlightenment.com) and yeah.

Michael: That's great.

Craig: To learn more about it. I look forward to meeting you in one of my programs, perhaps.

Michael: Yeah, well, I just want to go on record. I recommend Craig as a spiritual teacher. I recommend him as a fellow evolutionary and whether you come from an Eastern or Western orientation, I don't think you can go wrong with grounding that spirituality and spiritual practice in a deeply evolutionary understanding of reality so that we can all work together to ensure that future generations experience reality as the blessing that so many of us have had the chance to experience it as.

Craig: Thank you, Michael. I appreciate it.

Michael: Craig, love to you. Love to Claire. I look forward to seeing you the next time we're out in the Santa Cruz area, and just thank you for being part of this series. I really appreciate it.

Craig: Love to Connie as well and thanks for your great work and for this series and all the other things you're doing to help move the dial forward. So blessings on your work. Thank you.

Michael: You too, brother.

Craig: Bye.

Michael: Bye-bye.

