

# animate FAITH

## SESSIONS

### **GOD** | FAITH IS A QUEST | BRIAN MCLAREN

“If you ask me, ‘Is God real?’ I first have to ask, ‘Which God are we talking about?’” With these words, Brian McLaren gives voice to a common struggle among people of faith—who exactly is this God we worship? Is God a mighty fortress, solid and unchanging? Is God a mystical, unknowable force that floats around us like a vapor? How can we speak of faith if we can’t even speak of God with any certainty? How can we chart a course through the often-murky waters of Christian tradition and find our way to God?

### **RELIGION** | SPIRITUALITY IS NOT ENOUGH | LILLIAN DANIEL

What does it mean to be spiritual? Is it the same as being religious? Lillian Daniel pushes back at this question that has been stirring up the cultural conversation for a while now. She asks us to consider how the seeds of faith take root and thrive. What role does organized religion play in helping—or hindering—growth? If religion is the problem, why has it held fast for thousands of years? In this age of religious pluralism, is it possible or even desirable to stick with our age-old traditions?

### **JESUS** | THE REVOLUTION OF LOVE | MARK SCANDRETTE

What does it mean to walk in the way of Jesus? To explore this question, Mark Scandrette looks to the ancient Japanese concept of the Dojo. What if our churches became places where we practiced being like Jesus? What if we were serious about joining in with Jesus’ Revolution of Love? What if we took the kind of social and economic risks Jesus took, and reshaped what it means to be a Christian? As Mark invites us into the Dojo, we find ourselves looking at a Master who might be asking us to walk down a path we never imagined.

### **SALVATION** | ABUNDANT LIFE NOW | SHANE HIPPS

The cross of Christ stands as a symbol of God’s saving work. But what, exactly, does it mean to be saved? From what? For what? Is salvation a reward we claim at death or something meant to change our lives right now? For Shane Hipps, these are the questions we need to answer if we are to truly receive the release that comes with salvation in the here and now.

### **CROSS** | WHERE GOD IS | NADIA BOLZ-WEBER

The cross sits at the center of our faith, and yet our understanding of what exactly happened on that cross remains conflicted and confusing. Was Jesus our proxy? The payment? The only way to appease an angry God? Nadia Bolz-Weber reminds us that our theories about the cross tell us as much about ourselves and our view of God as they do about Jesus and salvation.

### **BIBLE** | A BOOK LIKE NO OTHER | LAUREN WINNER

Why read the Bible? This is Lauren Winner’s central question. For Lauren, an avid reader, there remains something odd about the way Christians read the Bible. Why do we keep turning to the same stories in search of some new revelation? What is it about the Bible that makes it worth repeated reading? What gets in our way as we read the Bible and try to make sense of it? These are issues the church has wrestled with for centuries and yet we keep at it. We keep coming back to this book and its strange narrative full of plagues and miracles and destruction and rebirth. So why do we do it?

### **CHURCH** | AN IMPERFECT FAMILY | BRUCE REYES-CHOW

Bruce Reyes-Chow knows he’s not inventing the metaphor of the church as family. So he suggests we take our changing notions about what it means to be a family and let them seep into our understanding of the church. For Bruce, it’s the messiness, the dysfunction, and the joy that comes from complex relationships that make church worth hanging on to. So how do we stay connected to this sometimes-broken family system? What does it mean to commit ourselves to the church family, for better or for worse?