

## ACTS MONDAY NIGHT STUDY Book Suggestions - 2017-2018

### 1. Marcus Borg

DAYS OF AWE AND WONDER: How to be a Christian in the Twenty-First Century

<http://tinyurl.com/k36hmtu>

Distilled into a single volume, here is the essence of Marcus Borg: the world's leading spokesman for progressive Christianity until his death in 2015, and one of the most widely respected and influential theologians of our time. In his many critically acclaimed books, Marcus J. Borg pioneered a new kind of Christianity: one that resonates with progressive, socially engaged Christians throughout the world. Now, two years after his death, comes Days of Awe and Wonder, a selection from his most important and enduring works, some of them hitherto unpublished, which explores what it means to be a Christian in the twenty-first century. Provocative and uplifting, this anthology will enlighten all who are meeting Marcus Borg for the first time, and amply reward those who would like to renew their acquaintance with one of the world's finest theological writers.

Suggested by: Wayne Holst

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### 2. Richard Rohr

THE DIVINE DANCE: The Trinity and Your Transformation

<http://tinyurl.com/ky2bmat>

Trinity is supposed to be the central, foundational doctrine of our entire Christian belief system, yet we're often told that we shouldn't attempt to understand it because it is a "mystery." Should we presume to try to breach this mystery?

If we could, how would it transform our relationship with God and renew our lives? The word Trinity is not found in the New Testament - it wasn't until the third century that early Christian father Tertullian coined it - but the idea of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit was present in Jesus' life and teachings and from the very beginning of the Christian experience. In the pages of this book, internationally recognized teacher Richard Rohr circles around this most paradoxical idea as he explores the nature of God - circling around being an apt metaphor for this mystery we're trying to apprehend. Early Christians who came to be known as the "Desert Mothers and Fathers" applied the Greek verb perichoresis to the mystery of the Trinity. The best translation of this odd-sounding word is dancing. Our word choreography comes from the same root. Although these early Christians gave us some highly conceptualized thinking on the life of the Trinity, the best they could say, again and again, was, Whatever is going on in God is a flow - it's like a dance. But God is not a dancer - He is the dance itself.

That idea might sound novel, but it is about as traditional as you can get. God is the dance itself, and He invites you to be a part of that dance. Are you ready to join in?

Suggested by: Wayne Holst

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### 3. Richard Rohr

FALLING UPWARD: A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life

<http://tinyurl.com/le982oh>

In Falling Upward, Father Richard Rohr offers a new way of understanding one of the most profound of life's mysteries: how our failing can be the foundation for our ongoing spiritual growth. Drawing on the wisdom from time-honoured myths, heroic poems, great thinkers, and sacred religious texts, the author explores the two halves of life to show that those who have fallen, failed, or 'gone down' are the only ones who understand 'up'. We grow spiritually more by doing it wrong than by doing it right.

Suggested by: Karen McKeown

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David Gibson and Michael McKinley

#### 4. FINDING JESUS: FAITH, FACT, FORGERY: Six Holy Objects that Tell the Remarkable Story of the Gospels

<http://tinyurl.com/kkxop6x>

Finding Jesus explores six major artifacts, including the Shroud of Turin, the True Cross, and John the Baptist, that give us the most direct evidence about the life and world of Jesus. The book and attendant CNN series provide a dramatic way to retell "the greatest story ever told" while introducing a broad audience to the history, the latest controversies, and newest forensic science involved in sorting out facts from the fiction of would-be forgers and deceivers. The book and the show draw on experts from all over the world. Beyond the faithful, the book will also appeal to the skeptical and to curious readers of history and archaeology, while it takes viewers of the primetime TV series deeper into the story.

Suggested by: Karen McKeown

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#### 5. Nancy Ellen Abrams

A GOD THAT COULD BE REAL: Spirituality, Science, and the Future of Our Planet

<https://tinyurl.com/mefy4bs>

A paradigm-shifting blend of science, religion, and philosophy for agnostic, spiritual-but-not-religious, and scientifically minded readers. Many people are fed up with the way traditional religion alienates them: too easily it can perpetuate conflict, vilify science, and undermine reason. Nancy Abrams, a philosopher of science, lawyer, and lifelong atheist, is among them. And yet, when she turned to the recovery community to face a personal struggle, she found that imagining a higher power gave her a new freedom. Intellectually, this was quite surprising.

Meanwhile her husband, famed astrophysicist Joel Primack, was helping to create a new theory of the universe based on dark matter and dark energy, and Abrams was collaborating with him on two books that put the new scientific picture into a social and political context. She wondered, "Could anything actually exist in this strange new universe that is worthy of the name ~God?" In A God That Could Be Real, Abrams explores a radically new way of thinking about God. She dismantles several common assumptions about God and shows why an omniscient, omnipotent God that created the universe and plans what happens is "incompatible with science" but that this doesn't preclude a God that can comfort and empower us.

Moving away from traditional arguments for God, Abrams finds something worthy of the name God in the new science of emergence: just as a complex ant hill emerges from the collective behavior of individually clueless ants, and just as the global economy emerges from the interactions of billions of individual choices, God, she argues, is an "emergent phenomenon" that arises from the staggering complexity of humanity's collective aspirations and is in dialogue with every individual. This God did not "create the universe" - it created the meaning of the universe. It's not universal, it's planetary. It can't change the world, but it helps us change the world. A God that could be real, Abrams shows us, is what humanity needs to inspire us to collectively cooperate to protect our warming planet and create a long-term civilization.

Suggested by: Ian MacDonald

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#### 6. Yuval Noah Harari

SAPIENS: A Brief History of Humankind

<https://tinyurl.com/mhrlsue>

Destined to become a modern classic in the vein of Guns, Germs, and Steel, Sapiens is a lively, groundbreaking history of humankind told from a unique perspective. 100,000 years ago, at least six species of human inhabited the earth.

Today there is just one. Us. Homo Sapiens.

How did our species succeed in the battle for dominance? Why did our foraging ancestors come together to create cities and kingdoms? How did we come to believe in gods,

nations, and human rights; to trust money, books, and laws; and to be enslaved by bureaucracy, timetables, and consumerism? And what will our world be like in the millennia to come?

In *Sapiens*, Dr. Yuval Noah Harari spans the whole of human history, from the very first humans to walk the earth to the radical -- and sometimes devastating -- breakthroughs of the Cognitive, Agricultural, and Scientific Revolutions. Drawing on insights from biology, anthropology, palaeontology, and economics, he explores how the currents of history have shaped our human societies, the animals and plants around us, and even our personalities.

Have we become happier as history has unfolded? Can we ever free our behaviour from the heritage of our ancestors? And what, if anything, can we do to influence the course of the centuries to come?

Bold, wide-ranging and provocative, *Sapiens* challenges everything we thought we knew about being human: our thoughts, our actions, our power... and our future.

Suggested by: Margie Oakander, Brenda Wallace and Deb Charnoski

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## 7. Trudy Govier

A DELICATE BALANCE: What Philosophy Can Tell Us About Terrorism

<https://tinyurl.com/kky9wwd>

Did the world change on September 11, 2001? For those who live outside of New York or Washington, life's familiar pace persists and families and jobs resume their routines. Yet everything seems different because of the dramatic disturbance in our sense of what our world means and how we exist within it.

In *A Delicate Balance*, philosopher Trudy Govier writes that it is because our feelings and attitudes have altered so fundamentally that our world has changed. Govier believes that there are ethical challenges we cannot ignore. From Plato and Aristotle on courage to Kant on revenge, to 20th Century philosopher John Rawls's views on justice, Govier mines the world of philosophy to reflect on terrorism. Govier argues that moral complexities such as victimhood, evil, power and revenge, if properly understood, can provide a basis for hope - not despair. Govier walks the reader through this shift, challenging us to construct a new sense of the world and our place within it.

Suggested by: Sally Hodges

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## 8. Jonathon Sacks

NOT IN GOD'S NAME: Confronting Religious Violence

<http://tinyurl.com/lbukrb7>

In this powerful and timely book, one of the most admired and authoritative religious leaders of our time tackles the phenomenon of religious extremism and violence committed in the name of God. If religion is perceived as being part of the problem, Rabbi Sacks argues, then it must also form part of the solution.

When religion becomes a zero-sum conceit, i.e., "my religion is the only right path to God, therefore your religion is by definition wrong" and when individuals are motivated by what Rabbi Sacks calls altruistic evil, violence between peoples of different beliefs appears to be the inevitable outcome. But through an exploration of the roots of violence and its relationship to religion, and employing groundbreaking biblical analysis and interpretation, Rabbi Sacks shows that religiously inspired violence has as its source misreadings of biblical texts at the heart of all three Abrahamic faiths. By looking anew at the book of Genesis, with its foundational stories of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, Rabbi Sacks offers a radical rereading of many of the Bible's seminal stories of sibling rivalry: Cain and Abel, Isaac and Ishmael, Jacob and Esau, Joseph and his brothers, Rachel and Leah. Here is an eloquent call for people of goodwill from all faiths and none to stand together, confront the religious extremism that threatens to destroy us all, and declare: Not in God's Name.

Suggested by Mike Grammer (Toronto)

9. Heather Menzies

RECLAIMING THE COMMONS FOR THE COMMON GOOD

**Commoning was a way of life for most of our ancestors. In *Reclaiming the Commons for the Common Good*, author Heather Menzies journeys to her roots in the Scottish Highlands, where her family lived in direct relation with the land since before recorded time.**

**Beginning with an intimate account of unearthing the heritage of the commons and the real tragedy of its loss, Menzies offers a detailed description of the self-organizing, self-governing and self-informing principles of this nearly forgotten way of life, including its spiritual practices and traditions. She then identifies pivotal commons practices that could be usefully revived today. A final 'manifesto' section pulls these facets together into a unified vision for reclaiming the commons, drawing a number of current popular initiatives into the commons and commoning frame - such as local food security, permaculture and the Occupy Movement.**

**An engaging memoir of personal and political discovery, *Reclaiming the Commons for the Common Good* combines moving reflections on our common heritage with a contemporary call to action, individually and collectively, locally and globally. Readers will be inspired by the book's vision of reviving the commons ethos of empathy and mutual respect, and energized by her practical suggestions for connecting people and place for the common good.**

**Suggested by Deb Charnuski**

10. Yuval Noah Harari

HOMO DEUS: A BRIEF HISTORY OF TOMORROW

**Yuval Noah Harari, author of the critically-acclaimed *New York Times* bestseller and international phenomenon *Sapiens*, returns with an equally original, compelling, and provocative book, turning his focus toward humanity's future, and our quest to upgrade humans into gods.**

**Over the past century humankind has managed to do the impossible and rein in famine, plague, and war. This may seem hard to accept, but, as Harari explains in his trademark style—thorough, yet riveting—famine, plague and war have been transformed from incomprehensible and uncontrollable forces of nature into manageable challenges. For the first time ever, more people die from eating too much than from eating too little; more people die from old age than from infectious diseases; and more people commit suicide than are killed by soldiers, terrorists and criminals put together. The average American is a thousand times more likely to die from bingeing at McDonalds than from being blown up by Al Qaeda.**

**What then will replace famine, plague, and war at the top of the human agenda? As the self-made gods of planet earth, what destinies will we set ourselves, and which quests will we undertake? *Homo Deus* explores the projects, dreams and nightmares that will shape the twenty-first century—from overcoming death to creating artificial life. It asks the fundamental questions: Where do we go from here? And how will we protect this fragile world from our own destructive powers? This is the next stage of evolution. This is Homo Deus.**

**Suggested by Deb Charnuski**

