

EMBRACING EMERGENCE
CHRISTIANITY

Phyllis Tickle
on the Church's Next Rummage Sale

A 6-SESSION STUDY BY PHYLLIS TICKLE WITH TIM SCORER

© Copyright 2011 Tim Scorer.

All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America. *Embracing Emergence Christianity* is copyrighted material. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

Morehouse Education Resources,
a division of Church Publishing Incorporated
Editorial Offices: 600 Grant Street, Suite 400, Denver, CO 80203

For catalogs and orders call:
1-800-242-1918
www.ChurchPublishing.org

Photos on pages 11, 26, 40, 58, 70 and 84 © Copyright 2011 by Dirk deVries. All rights reserved.
Photos on cover and page 95 © Copyright 2011 by Kelly Photography. All rights reserved.

ISBN-13: 978-1-60674-071-2

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Quick Guide to the Handbook	4
Beyond the “Quick Guide”	5
Pointers on Facilitation.	9
Session 1: Emergence 101	11
Session 2: Where Now Is Our Authority?	27
Session 3: The 20 th Century and Emergence.	41
Session 4: Gifts from Other Times	59
Session 5: How Then Shall We Live?	71
Session 6: Hallmarks of Emergence	85

QUICK GUIDE TO THIS HANDBOOK

TEN things to know as you begin to work with this resource:

1. HANDBOOK + WORKBOOK

This handbook is a guide to the group process as well as a workbook for everyone in the group.

2. A SIX-SESSION RESOURCE

Each of the six sessions presents a distinct topic for focused group study and conversation.

3. DVD-BASED RESOURCE

The teaching content in each session comes in the form of input by Phyllis Tickle and response by members of a small group; just over 30 minutes in length. A DVD Index is included to enable you to go directly to the section of the DVD you need.

4. EVERYONE GETS EVERYTHING

The handbook addresses everyone in the group, not one group leader. There is no separate “Leader’s Guide.”

5. GROUP FACILITATION

We based this resource on the understanding that someone will be designated as group facilitator for each session. You may choose the same person or a different person for each of the six sessions.

6. TIME FLEXIBILITY

Each of the six sessions is flexible and can be between one hour and two or more hours in length.

7. BUILD YOUR OWN SESSION

Each of the six sessions offers you between five and seven OPTIONS for building your own session.

8. A FORMAT WITHIN EACH OPTION

Each of the options has four consistent elements: *Opening Essay*, *Beginning Conversation*, *The Teaching*, and *Group Response to the Teaching*.

9. BEFORE THE SESSION

Each session opens with five questions for participants to consider as preparation for the session.

10. CLOSING AS IF IT MATTERS

For each session there is an option presenting a way of closing that emerges naturally from the content of the session.

BEYOND THE “QUICK GUIDE”

Helpful information and guidance for anyone using this resource:

1. HANDBOOK + WORKBOOK

This handbook is a guide to the group process as well as a workbook for everyone in the group.

- We hope the handbook gives you all the information you need to feel confident in shaping the program to work for you and your fellow group members.
- The work space provided in the handbook encourages you...
 - to respond to leading questions.
 - to write or draw your own reflections.
 - to note the helpful responses of other group members.

2. SIX-SESSION RESOURCE

This resource presents Phyllis Tickle’s insights on Emergence Christianity framed as six distinct topics of study:

1. Emergence 101
 2. Where Now Is Our Authority?
 3. The Twentieth Century and Emergence
 4. Gifts from Other Times
 5. How Then Shall We Live?
 6. Hallmarks of Emergence
- Although there are places of significant overlap between the six topics, we have presented each one as distinctively as possible. We hope that, by the end of the six sessions, you will have been led to fresh insights on the transformation that Christianity is undergoing in your community and country and in many other parts of the world today.

3. DVD-BASED RESOURCE

The teaching content in each session comes in the form of input by Phyllis Tickle and response by members of a small group; just over 30 minutes in length.

Phyllis Tickle’s unique presentation and accessible academic authority stimulates thoughtful and heartfelt conversation among her listeners.

The edited conversations present group sharing that builds on Tickle’s initial teaching. They are intended to present to you a model of small group interaction that is personal, respectful and engaged.

- You will notice that the participants in the DVD group also become our teachers. In a number of cases, quotes from the group members enrich the teaching component of this resource. This will also happen in your group; you will become teachers for one another.
- We hope that the DVD presentations spark conversations about those things that matter most to those who are walking the transformational way of Jesus in the 21st century.

4. EVERYONE GETS EVERYTHING

The handbook addresses everyone in the group, not one group leader. There is no separate “Leader’s Guide.”

- Unlike many small group resources, this one makes no distinction between material for the group facilitator and for the participants. Everyone has it all!
- We believe this empowers you and your fellow group members to share creatively in the leadership.

5. GROUP FACILITATION

We designed this for you to designate a group facilitator for each session. It does not have to be the same person for all six sessions, because everyone has all the material. It is, however, essential that you and the other group members are clear about who is facilitating each session. One or two people still have to be responsible for these kind of things:

- making arrangements for the meeting space (see notes on Meeting Space, p. 9)
- setting up the space to be conducive to conversations about the things that matter most
- creating and leading an opening to the session (see notes on Opening, p. 9)
- helping the group decide on which options to focus on in that session
- facilitating the group conversation for that session
- keeping track of the time
- calling the group members to attend to the standards established for the group life (see notes on Group Standards, p. 9)
- creating space in the conversation for all to participate

- keeping the conversation moving along so that the group covers all that it set out to do
- ensuring that time is taken for a satisfying closing to the session
- making sure that everyone is clear about date, location and focus for the next session
- following up with people who missed the session

6. TIME FLEXIBILITY

Each of the six sessions is flexible and can be between one hour and two or more hours in length.

- We designed this resource for your group to tailor it to fit the space available in the life of the congregation or community using it. That might be Sunday morning for an hour before or after worship, two hours on a weekday evening, or 90 minutes on a weekday morning.
- Some groups might decide to spend two sessions on one of the major topics. There’s enough material in each of the six topics to do that. Rushing to get through more than the time comfortably allows, results in people not having the opportunity to speak about the things that matter most to them.

7. BUILD YOUR OWN SESSION

Each of the six sessions offers you from five to seven OPTIONS for building your own session. How will you decide what options to use?

- One or two people might take on the responsibility of shaping the session based on what they think will appeal to the group members. This responsibility could be shared from week to week.
- The group might take time at the end of one session to look ahead and decide on the options they will cover in the next session. This could be time consuming.
- You might decide to do your personal preparation for the session (responding to the five questions), and when everyone comes together for the session, proceed on the basis of what topics interested people the most.

8. A FORMAT WITHIN EACH OPTION

Each of the options has four consistent elements: *Opening Essay*, *Beginning Conversation*, *The Teaching*, and *Group Response to the Teaching*.

- *Opening Essay* by Phyllis Tickle provides a way of receiving the essence and some detail concerning the main themes of that session. In a number of cases the paragraphs of the *Opening Essay* are numbered for easy reference in the options.
- *Beginning Conversation* provides an opportunity for people to think about the topic prior to seeing the DVD presentation. This “tilling of the soil” prior to the planting of seeds of learning creates in learners a deeper readiness for new ideas. It also makes it more likely that this new information will be

connected to the body of knowledge that the learner already brings.

- *The Teaching* refers to the new input from the DVD as well as some text input. Within *The Teaching* you will receive direction about where to go on the DVD for the input and conversation relevant to that option. (Note that these are indicated by minutes and seconds [for example, 2:30-9:50]. Note as well that there may be minor variations in the timing between different CD players and computers.) In some cases you will be directed to parts of the *Opening Essay*.
- *Group Response to the Teaching* provides experiential process for the group to follow after *The Teaching*. This is a time when the members of the group work with *The Teaching* and have the opportunity to integrate it into their own experience and frames of reference.

9. BEFORE THE SESSION

Each session opens with five questions for participants to consider as preparation for the session.

- We intend these questions to open in you some aspect of the topic being considered in the upcoming session. This may lead you to feel more confident when addressing this question in the group.
- Sometimes these questions are the same as ones raised in the context of the session. They provide opportunity for people to do some personal reflection prior to engaging in the group conversation on that topic.

10. CLOSING AS IF IT MATTERS

For each session there is a final option presenting a way of closing the session that emerges naturally from its content.

- It's important to close well. It's like a period at the end of a sentence. People leave the session ready for whatever comes next.
- Whether you use the closing option suggested or one of your own choosing, closing well matters.
- Another aspect of closing is evaluation. This is not included in an intentional way in the design of the sessions; however, evaluation is such a natural and satisfying thing to do that it could be included as part of the discipline of closing each session. It's as simple as taking time to respond to these questions:
 - What insights am I taking from this session?
 - What contributed to my learning?
 - What will I do differently as a result of my being here today?

POINTERS ON FACILITATION

1. Meeting Space

- Take time to prepare the space for the group. When people come into a space that has been prepared for them, they trust the hospitality, resulting in a willingness to bring the fullness of themselves into the conversation. Something as simple as playing recorded music as people arrive will contribute to this sense of “a space prepared for you.”
- Think about how the space will encourage a spirit of reverence, intimacy and care. Will there be a table in the center of the circle where a candle can be lit each time the group meets? Is there room for other symbols that emerge from the group’s life?

2. Opening

- In the opening session, take time to go around the circle and introduce yourselves in some way.
- Every time a group comes together again, it takes each member time to feel fully included. Some take longer than others. An important function of facilitation is to help this happen with ease, so people find themselves participating fully in the conversation as soon as possible. We designed these sessions with this in mind. Encouraging people to share in the activity proposed under *Beginning Conversation* is one way of supporting that feeling of inclusion.
- The ritual of opening might include the lighting of a candle, an opening prayer, the singing of a hymn where appropriate, and the naming of each person present.

3. Group Standards

- There are basic standards in group life that are helpful to name when a new group begins. Once they are named, you can always come back to them as a point of reference if necessary. Here are two basics:
 - Everything that is said in this group remains in the group. (confidentiality)
 - We will begin and end at the time agreed. (punctuality)
- Are there any others that you need to name as you begin? Sometimes standards emerge from the life of the group and need to be named when they become evident, otherwise they are just assumed.



EMERGENCE IOI

ESSAY ONE BY PHYLLIS TICKLE

1. Most discussions, to be of any use to us at all, have to begin with some kind of common vocabulary or mutually-understood definitions. This discussion is certainly no different; and we must start with at least a few terms that are central to our over-all subject of Emergence Christianity.
2. Emergence Christianity is a global phenomenon, present in parts of both hemispheres and on every continent. In point of fact, as an operative and highly visible part of Christian expression, Emergence came last to the North American continent. Session One is going to refer to Emergence Christianity, then, as present in the *latinized world*, a term that is much more accurate and far less offensive than others like *Western World* or *First World*. *Latinized* refers to the cultures and countries who received Christianity through the Latin, as opposed to the Syriac or Greek language, or were colonized by those who had so received the faith, or were colonized by those who had so received it.
3. The word *emergence* that keeps appearing everywhere these days originally had a far more focused and specific meaning than it presently enjoys in popular conversation. That is, Emergence (or Emergence Theory, to give it its full name) is a principle of the natural sciences. It studies and describes the non-hierarchical ways in which living creatures and their societies organize themselves, describing phenomena like the difference between a beehive and an anthill; the former is ruled by its queen and the latter by a communal operation in which no one is in charge and within which a queen is of use only as a breeder of more ants.
4. Wherever Emergence appears in nature, it always also involves a shift toward increased complexity. In fact, Emergence Theory as such was first discovered and formulated in the latter part of the 19th century in an attempt to understand why Darwin's principles of survival of the fittest and natural selection did not explain phenomena like human consciousness, let alone anthills. It is, then, the leap to an increased complexity, greater than that which could have been predicted from an organism's constituent parts, named both in the science lab and in sociology. The use of the term to name the huge lurch forward in complexity that characterizes both our times and the Church living and operating within them is, in other words, both a logical and a very informing choice, once we understand its history.

5. Emergence Christianity, while it names a new, more complex, and non-hierarchical form of Christianity, is not a monolith, any more than was the Protestantism that preceded it or the Roman Catholicism that preceded them both, or the monastic and episcopal Christianity that preceded all three of them. No one ever thought that all presentations of Protestantism are the same, one with another. We recognize Lutherans as being distinct from Presbyterians and both of them as distinct from Methodists, even though we are equally comfortable calling each of them “Protestants.” That is, we recognize their separateness while at the same time recognizing their shared sensibilities and defining principles.
6. In the exact same way, Emergence Christianity is frequently referred to as a conversation. That generalized, non-specific definition is a way of saying that, though there are several distinct expressions of Emergence, they nonetheless hold in common certain principles and characteristics. For the purposes of our discussion, then, we must recognize that there are emerging expressions of Emergence and there are emergent ones, missional expressions and neo-monastic ones. There is deep church and Fresh Expressions of Church. There are house churches and even cyber churches. There are also the hyphenateds—those who have Emergence DNA deeply rooted in them, but who yet wish to retain the corpus of their natal tradition. They originally referred to themselves as Presby-mergents or Luther-mergents or Metho-mergents or Angli-mergents, thus gaining for themselves their unusual name. Now the hyphens have more or less disappeared, and the words appear un-hyphenated as Presbymergents or Luthermergents, Methomergents, or Anglimergents, the hyphen living on now more in memory than in print. There are also responses to Emergence Christianity like today’s neo-Calvinism and accommodations to it like Alt Worship.
7. Session One presents the great upheavals that have occurred in Latinized Christian culture and Christianity. It will outline as well the periods—or progression of periods—that are internal to each of those turnings. In general and with a variance of no more than a decade or two, each of the ‘Greats’ follows this internal pattern.
8. First, there is that moment in which the new way of thinking and being seems, almost abruptly, to have arrived at last as the operative and dominant part of the general and public conversation about the way things are. Thus we refer to the Great Reformation as having begun on October 31, 1517, even though we know quite well that there were years and decades of events that led up to Luther and his 95 Theses. In the same way, observers seem content now to think that the Great Emergence will be dated in history from the events of 9/11. Whether that be true or not, we can safely say that there is that defining moment when we recognize we have shifted into a “new” world.

9. Shortly after we recognize that the ground has seriously shifted beneath us and a new day has dawned, we realize as well that those changes and shifts have been creeping up on us for a very long time. Actually, they have been more or less roaring up on us for about a hundred and fifty years. That period of 150 years is called by its colloquial name of *tick-up*, or in a much more dignified way, as the *peri-* as in the peri-Reformation or the peri-Emergence.
10. What that hundred and fifty years of *peri-* that precedes each upheaval does is simply to chip away, slowly but inevitably, at the bases of authority that had accrued since the last upheaval and had given stability to both the Church and the culture in which it functions. As a result, the first century or so after our recognition of a dramatic and pervasive new way of being is spent trying to answer a very fundamental question: Given this shift, where now is our authority?
11. Once that question is answered, there follows a period of approximately 250 years in which we all more or less agree where authority is lodged. We may not like the answer—in fact, more and more of us usually don't—but we all agree that that authority is *the* authority, for better or for worse. And then, having gone through the whole process, we come back to the fifteen decades of *peri-* and commence again to disestablish that which our recent ancestors had so painfully set in place.

BEFORE THE SESSION

Many participants like to come to the group conversation after considering individually some of the issues that will be raised. The following five reflective questions are intended to open your minds, memories and emotions regarding some aspects of this session's topic. Use the space provided here to note your reflections.

What kind of time are we living in as Christians?

What place does the Bible have today in your relationship with God? How is that different than when you were half your present age?

How do you feel about being in a time of such dramatic change both in the culture and in the church?

Looking at change through the long lens of history can be a consolation in a time of dramatic change. To what extent is that true for you?

What are the essential concerns of your life today that you want to be able to address in the context of membership in a faith community?

OPTION 1: BIG PICTURE

Beginning Conversation

Take time to introduce yourselves to one another both by name and by completing this stem: *The three words I would personally use to describe the spirit or zeitgeist of the time through which we are living are*

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

The Teaching



Session 1 introduces the theme of Emergence that we explore in greater detail in Sessions 2-6. For this reason, in this session we paint the topic with broad strokes, establishing the overall topic and terminology used throughout the series. Phyllis Tickle's opening essay is helpful in this regard. Be sure to read it before going on. Listen to roughly *the first 12 and a half minutes* of Phyllis's presentation on the DVD up to the point when the moderator invites questions from group members.

Group Response to the Teaching

As a group, complete the following statements as a way of affirming your grasp of the broad strokes of Phyllis Tickle's teaching:

- The metaphor of Bishop Mark Dyer that represents the kind of time in which we find ourselves living as Christians is...

- A word that is used both within Christianity and within the culture to identify the historical era which began in about 1842 and for which the events of September 11, 2001 were a significant marker is...

- The length of time that seems to be a given between these great historical upheavals in the latinized part of the world: The name given to the last great upheaval in which Martin Luther played an essential role is...

- In confronting the power of Roman Catholicism, Luther challenged the authority of the curia, the papacy and the Magisterium and proposed a new authority which is represented in these two Latin words:

- Within the greater cycle of change there is another timeline that includes a one hundred and fifty year period during which the established authority is eroded. This period that Phyllis refers to colloquially as 'the great tick-up' is also identified by the four-letter prefix...

- Many individuals and communities of Christians in all denominations identify themselves as *emergents*, but at the same time desire to remain within the body of their own tradition. Because they adopt a hybrid name that includes both their denominational identity as well as their emergence identity they are known as...
- Phyllis reckons that it takes about 100 years in each larger historical cycle to answer the key question of...
- The rise of the nation state, the formation of a middle class, the birth of capitalism, and the arrival of Protestantism, all emerged from that period of European history which is known as the...
- These cycles of history can also be seen extending back before the birth of Christ through 500 years of Jewish history to the time of exile known as...

OPTION 2: HERE WE ARE AGAIN!

Beginning Conversation

From your perspective, what are the clearest trends in latinized Christianity today?

The Teaching

Phyllis Tickle is very clear about the patterns that repeat *every time* humanity goes through one of these “great” 500-year historical reconfigurations:

- *Every time* the dominant and challenged form of Christianity does not cease to be.
- *Every time* the expressions of the old way have to drop back and reconfigure to make space for new.
- *Every time* the faith itself spreads and grows both geographically and demographically.
- *Every time* there are many expressions of the thing that is emerging.
- *Every time* there is one resounding question to be answered, and it is always the same question: Where now is our authority?

Group Response to the Teaching

What evidence do you see, both locally and globally, that we are living through such a time as Phyllis is describing?

OPTION 3: THE CHURCH AS INSTITUTION

Beginning Conversation

If you were able to ask Phyllis a question about what she has presented so far, what would it be?

The Teaching



Play the DVD from where you left off at around 13 minutes to 24:45-25:00, just before the moderator initiates a change in the conversation. Here group participants respond to Phyllis and ask clarifying questions. Notice that the issues raised by the group are all concerned with authority, order, hierarchy, rules, structure and church as institution.

Group Response to the Teaching

As you listened to the members of the small group and to Phyllis's responses to their questions, where did you feel particularly engaged; in other words, where did *their* concerns connect with *yours*?

OPTION 4: THE BIBLE AND EMERGENCE THEOLOGY

Beginning Conversation

In what way is the Bible a reflection of God's presence in human history?

The Teaching

Phyllis Tickle says on the DVD:

Luther, when he said Sola Scriptura, shouldn't be blamed for what happened, namely Protestant inerrancy. There was no way that Luther could have foreseen Protestant inerrancy. What we mean by inerrancy is the belief that the Bible is absolutely, word for word, the word of God: historically accurate, consistent (if you don't read it!), and to be taken as a piece of history.

I love emergence theology. I'm persuaded by so much of it. It's brilliant theology! One of the places I find it most appealing is that emergents will say, "Absolutely, the Bible is the word of God. It is God among us, but it is articulated in human speech and you cannot reduce God almighty to human speech articulation. It's worth to us is its actualness. To argue its historicity is to confine down to the limitations of our own intellect. How dare we! What is the arrogance that allows for that position!"

Group Response to the Teaching

What is the distinction that Phyllis is making between the *inerrancy* of Scripture and the *actualness* of Scripture?

When has the Bible been "the word of God" for you?

OPTION 5: SPEAKING OF IMPACT

Beginning Conversation

What is the impact on you personally of what Phyllis Tickle is presenting in her teaching?

The Teaching



Play the remaining DVD segment from about 24:45-25:00 where the moderator asks, “How is this conversation impacting you personally?” Below we offer the five reactions of the members of the group, including Phyllis:

China, on finding context and building legacy:

I'm in awe of how this conversation is adjusting me to my place, internally as well as in relation to my surroundings and to where I am in my life. It helps me see where I am in the course of history and why I'm feeling all the things I'm feeling and have felt for years. I've been figuring out what I'm going to impart to my children and what my legacy to them will be. What are they going to need to continue on, to understand these concepts about church and God, and to know how they are going to fit in?

Kim, on learning to listen to know who we should be:

My gut is churning! What really did it was when you talked about those 'Emergence' churches saying, "Well, we may not be here in 10 years." I fall to my knees when I hear that because that's the question I keep

coming back to in terms of the church I work for and love. It's very hard for me to think about 'not here' and yet there's a part of me that knows I need to be in this listening mode.

China and I were in a group together not long ago and they began to talk about how they wanted to come together as a community. I said that I wanted to bring my teaching, but they replied, "No, we just want to be together!" So, I find myself having to listen a lot. It's hard because, as an American, I want everything now and I want to have the most numbers! That's what we've always been brought up to expect. We're looking at the whole and asking, "What are we and who should we be?"

James, on joining the search for new structure and authority:

It makes me a little uncomfortable to hear all the talk about no authority and non-hierarchy. It's odd because I'm of the age that grew up on this non-hierarchical, no authority situation. My gut reaction is 'that's not healthy.' You need accountability. You need structure. We grow within these sort of confines; we are at our most free within confines, within structure of a certain type. But, I agree that maybe the old confines, the old structures weren't quite cutting it. Talking about what we're searching for makes sense.

Carolyn, on growing the conversation:

It's amazing to me to be sitting here having these conversations because it was in 1995 that my husband and I and others started asking many of these kind of questions. So, to think that 15 years later this is not only being talked about but it is really happening! I've come from a place of extreme confusion to a place where at least there's a whole bunch of us that are confused and talking about it.

Phyllis, on acknowledging that it's out in the open:

Emergence theology excites me! What interests me most now is the interface with the institutional church. I'm 77. I'm not going to live to see the new authority established—the rules—the parameters. But it's now out in the general conversation in this country. We can now talk about it. We can defuse the fear. Fifteen years ago when I first began to talk this way, always my heart was broken when two or three folks would meet me after my presentation, either in the washroom or in the stair well and say, "O, thank God, I thought it was something we did!"

Group Response to the Teaching

Which of these responses have resonance with your own reaction to what Phyllis Tickle is presenting?

What else would you say in response to the question, "How is all this talk of Emergence sitting with you?"

OPTION 6: THE WAY FORWARD

Beginning Conversation

Given the kind of time we are in, we need to be very clear about how we will be together while we live through this tumultuous time of social and religious upheaval and search for authority.

The Teaching

Here are ten key words drawn from the responses of the five group members in Option 5: *context, legacy, listening, humility, accountability, freedom, search, conversation, parameters* and *openness*. These words are more about the journey going forward than about the reality of emergence.

Group Response to the Teaching

What are key words to describe the kind of journey you think we are going on as we live through the Great Rummage Sale of the early 21st Century?

What are some of the “ways of being” that are required for such a journey?

OPTION 7: CLOSING AS IF IT MATTERS

Notice that, woven through the DVD presentation and perhaps through your own group discussion, there were strong exclamations by participants that showed that this conversation matters:

- *In a rummage sale you get rid of a lot of junk and you also find the treasures.*
- *My gut is churning!*
- *What am I going to impart to my children?*
- *My gut reaction is, "That's not healthy; you need authority!"*
- *There's a 300 pound gorilla in the living room.*
- *How do we know what to hold on to?*
- *I'm in awe...*
- *How dare we!*
- *It's amazing for me to be sitting here!*

In closing add your own expressions to this list.

Offer this prayer:

Holy One,
Known to us
within the cycles of our living,
through the rhythms of our history,
from the sacred texts of our traditions,
out of the concerns of our hearts, and
in the insights of our minds,
May the reflections of our time
together,
stretch us into deepening awareness of
your presence
in the *then*, the *now* and the *to be* of
your unfolding creation.
In the name of Jesus, the always of
our lives.
Amen.