Why Read Jonathan Edwards and

What He Has to Say About Secularization

Jonathan Edwards was one of the greatest American thinkers and theologians. He was also at the heart of the transatlantic global revival known as The Great Awakening. In recent decades, there has been an academic rediscovery of Edwards that has bled over into a popular resurgence of interest in his preaching and writing. At the heart of Edwards’ contribution to evangelicalism is his grasp of and response to the secularizing tendencies dormant in, as well as decisive to, the Enlightenment. In many ways, Western Culture as a whole still reflects a discourse that interrelates with its Enlightenment heritage. Edwards can help us as model and method in our interaction with the Enlightenment-influenced secularization within which we work on a daily basis.

**Josh Moody** (Ph.D., University of Cambridge) is the senior pastor of the historic [College Church](https://www.college-church.org/). He is the president and founder of [God Centered Life Ministries](https://godcenteredlife.org/), which proclaims God’s Word worldwide through daily broadcasts on [Moody Radio](https://www.moodyradio.org/stations/chicago/), [One Place](https://www.oneplace.com/ministries/god-centered-life/), podcasts, and live-streaming on [godcenteredlife.org](http://godcenteredlife.org/). His theological research into the challenge that Enlightenment secularization posed to the Christian faith, as well as Jonathan Edwards’ response to it, culminated in a doctorate in historical theology from Cambridge University, a research fellowship at Yale Divinity School, and a fellowship at the Jonathan Edwards College of Yale University. Dr. Moody is the author of over 14 books, including an exposition of the Psalms of Ascent and their message of increasing joy ([*Journey to Joy*](https://www.amazon.com/Journey-Joy-Psalms-Josh-Moody/dp/1433534975), 2013); a two-volume commentary on John’s Gospel ([*John 1-12 For You*](https://www.amazon.com/John-1-12-You-Josh-Moody/dp/1784982164) and [*John 13-21 for You*](https://www.amazon.com/John-13-21-You-Revealing-glory/dp/1784982466/), 2017 and 2019); an accessible guide to the teaching of Jonathan Edwards ([*The God-Centered Life*](https://www.amazon.com/God-Centered-Life-Insights-Jonathan-Edwards/dp/157383386X), 2006); and a technical work with global Jonathan Edwards scholars on Edwards’ doctrine of justification ([*Jonathan Edwards and Justification*](https://www.amazon.com/Jonathan-Edwards-Justification-Josh-Moody/dp/143353293X), 2012). He grew up in the London area and became a follower of Jesus in the Church of England. He is married to Rochelle, and they have four children. You can find him on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/drjoshmoody), [Twitter](https://twitter.com/drjoshmoody), and [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/drjoshmoody/).

1. Who Was Jonathan Edwards?
   1. Dates
   2. Pastor
   3. Theologian
   4. Theological Background
   5. Creative
   6. Family
   7. Reputation
2. What Is Often Not Understood About Edwards?
   1. Relationship to the “Enlightenment”
   2. Epistemology
   3. Private notebooks and their relationship to his public ministry
3. Edwards’ Basic Argument
   1. Gospel “light”
   2. Non-materialistic approach to the universe
   3. The presence of God
4. Practical, not Just Cerebral
   1. The “secularizing” moral decline of Edwards’ context pre-Awakening
5. Edwards’ Conversion
   1. Personal narrative
   2. The sovereignty of God
6. Edwards’ Intellectual Engagement with European Enlightenment
   1. Journals
   2. His private notebooks
7. Key Elements of His Message as Preached and Published
   1. God glorified in man’s dependence
   2. A divine and supernatural light
   3. Justification by faith
8. His Theology of Revival
   1. Narrative of surprising conversions
   2. Distinguishing marks
   3. Religious Affections
      1. “Moderate New Light”
   4. Relationship with George Whitefield
   5. History of the work of redemption
9. Most Famous Sermon Understood in Context
   1. The context of “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God”
   2. The message of “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God”
   3. Reflections on preaching hell
10. Other Sermons Less Well Remembered Now, But Equally Important
    1. Charity and Its Fruits
    2. A Burning and Shining Light
11. Pattern of Life—Exemplary?
    1. 14 hours a day in his study?
    2. Relationship with his wife
    3. Relationship with his children
    4. No pastoral visitation
    5. Training of younger pastors
12. Controversies—Then and Now
    1. The Bad Book Case
    2. The Communion Controversy
       1. Enemies following him to Stockbridge
    3. Slavery
13. Major published treatises
    1. Freedom of the Will
    2. End for Which God Created the World
    3. Religious Affections
14. Core Ideas
    1. Sense of the heart
    2. Affections
    3. Signs and Distinguishing Marks
    4. Immaterialism/Perceptivism
15. Leaning from Edward as We Engage Secularism Today
    1. Establish clearly the pivotal issues
    2. Clear articulation of Biblical message in language of our day
    3. Unembarrassed commitment to the Bible
    4. Core issue is epistemological
       1. Answer “the God-centered life”
16. Mistakes to Avoid from Edwards
    1. Articulate a clear antipathy to moral issues even if we ourselves cannot change them
    2. Understand the importance of personal relationships in church and ministry leadership

***Suggested Readings:***

*Jonathan Edwards: A Life* by George Marsden

*The God-Centered Life: Insights from Jonathan Edwards for Today* by Josh Moody

*Jonathan Edwards and Justification*, edited by Josh Moody

*Jonathan Edwards and the Enlightenment: Knowing the Presence of God* by Josh Moody

*Jonathan Edwards: A New Biography* by Iain Murray

*The Complete Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Yale

Two volume *Complete Works on Jonathan Edwards*, Banner of Truth

Jonathan Edwards Center at Yale University: [http://edwards.yale.edu](https://nam10.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fedwards.yale.edu%2F&data=04%7C01%7Cclitfin%40college-church.org%7C96fc7671a475497f662808d8ef1b137d%7C16cf7a5fa63a4cb8bf887b5c16584d4d%7C0%7C0%7C637522246859842656%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=j4J%2BcqZIT620nBcvnk%2FsBMcghBuNXFuZiNazqkAovGk%3D&reserved=0)