

Music: [00:15](#) [inaudible].

Katie Langston: [00:17](#) You're listening to an Extra Shot episode on the Project Zion podcast, a shorter episode that lets you get your Project Zion fix in between our full length episodes. It might be shorter time wise, but hopefully not in content. So regardless of the temperature at which you prefer your caffeine, sit back and enjoy this extra shot.

Linda Booth: [00:59](#) Welcome my friend to coffee connect. My name is Linda Booth and I love to tell true stories. So grab a cup of your favorite brew and sit close because do I have a story to tell you. Actually, I have a couple of stories to share with you. There are about coming home and about people who yearned for a spiritual home. I come from a long line of faithful servants who lived out their discipleship in Community of Christ. Church was the center of their lives. It was for me too until I attended university and became fascinated with philosophers who did not believe in God. I remember in April, 1966 there was a Time Magazine cover that proclaimed God is dead. I began to doubt all that I had been taught and determined there was no God and I thought if there was a man named Jesus, he was simply a man and not divine, and my new found belief system broke my parents and my grandparents heart.

Linda Booth: [02:17](#) I met my husband who was raised an atheist. He remembers when he was about eight years old asking his aunt Francis if there was a God and she replied, "Oh no, Doug, there is no God. That's just a figment of people's imaginations." So Doug and I fell in love and we got married and we had three sons and our lives were good. Neither of us talked about God thought about God or considered believing that God was real. Doug worked with a man named Harold. He and his wife Pat had attended a weekend called marriage encounter that was sponsored by the Catholic church. Harold became what I would describe as a cheerleader for the retreat weekend. Every morning when Doug would get to work, Harold would ask, have you signed up for marriage encounter? And every time I called the office to talk to Doug, Harold would ask me, when are you going to sign up for marriage encounter?

Linda Booth: [03:23](#) When I ask him what the weekend was about, he described it as focusing on communication. Well, Doug and I've never had a problem with communicating, so the weekend didn't appeal to us. We didn't want to waste a weekend away from sons, family and friends, but finally we signed up just to get Harold off of our backs. The marriage encounter weekend was in a monastery in Kansas city, Kansas. A very interesting place. Our bed pulled out

of the wall. Our room was stark with minimal furniture. The crucified Christ hung on the wall. We were not pleased at all when the priest told us that this was going to be a silent retreat, something that Harold had failed to tell us and what that meant, that there was no one was to talk, but the priest, there were no conversations over meals. There was not to be any talking in our rooms.

Linda Booth:

[04:27](#)

There was to be complete silence. All of our communication to each other was through written letters. We each received a notebook and a pen, but it turned out to be pretty good. We both found out we enjoyed writing and reading our letters to each other, but the last day of the retreat was writing love letters to God. Although at first foreign we followed the priest's instructions and wrote letters to God, and through that simple act of writing, Doug and I both felt something profound. I knew it was the Holy Spirit from experiences growing up for Doug, this feeling was brand new and exhilarating. When we got home, we tried to figure out what we were going to do with the experience and Doug suggested we find a church having been raised in the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. I suggested trying the Catholic church because that's where we had had the experience, but Doug wisely suggested we find my church.

Linda Booth:

[05:39](#)

So we looked up the nearest congregation in the phone book and on Saturday night we drove past the little congregation on park street in a Oletha. We got a babysitter for our three sons and we attended church the next morning, just Doug and me. I still remember nearly everything about the service. Marlin Constance was the presider. David Ite, the speaker. His scripture was about Jesus knowing us so well that he can count the number of hairs on our heads and the congregation laughed because Marlin was nearly bald and David's hair was thinning after the service, the people surrounded us with love. One couple friend and Barb invited us to a sweetheart banquet on the next Friday evening, and when we said yes, they told us they'd pick us up and we went and had a great time. We took our sons to church the next Sunday and every Sunday thereafter, Doug and our oldest son, Bernie, were baptized. Sons Bart and Ben were blessed. Doug was called to the priesthood. We became youth leaders, et cetera. The rest is history. The marriage encounter weekend and that little congregations, hospitality changed the trajectory of our lives and our family because of what happened to us I get very passionate when I think and I preach and I teach about congregations. Call to be inviting and welcoming. God had a purpose for my life. I've served as a minister for 21 years, was

ordained and apostle and March of 1998 and because of that Oletha congregations love and welcome to us and our children, my life has changed. Doug's life has changed and so it has our children. I know many others yearned for community that will love them, empower them and be the spiritual home they need. I know because I often meet them and listen to their stories of being welcomed into a community and how their lives and their trajectory of their life changes.

Linda Booth: [08:08](#)

My husband, Doug and I traveled one summer to several reunions, our family camps in the Southern USA mission field. We enjoyed the fellowship and sweet spirit we felt among the people. One Sunday I was scheduled to preach in a very small congregation in Cantonment Florida. There I heard the following story from a woman named Sherry. She told me about a year ago there were three baptisms in the congregation and at the end of the service, pastor Diane told us we'd be having another baptismal service in a few months and five people would be baptized. I asked her who was going to be baptized. I was surprised when she said she didn't know. She told me to pray about it, so Sherry did pray, she said, and as she prayed, her nephew's name kept coming to mind and Sherry described him to me as quote, "the black sheep of the family." She said he was one of those guys who was always in trouble, always obstinate, kind of mean spirited because God kept placing her nephew on her heart.

Linda Booth: [09:27](#)

Sherry began to reach out to him with phone calls and invitations to dinner to her home. He always answered the phone. He always came to dinner, but when she invited him to church, he flatly refused and said, if I entered your church, lightning would strike the roof of your building. But Sherry was persistent. She kept praying. She kept reaching out to her nephew. She kept deepening her relationship with and connection to him. So there was going to be a baptismal service on the banks of a river. The next Sunday and four people were scheduled to be baptized and Sherry invited her nephew to meet her there. You can sit on my blanket. He refused. Sherry's said the baptismal service was lovely during the service. She thought she heard her nephew muttering and when she looked over her shoulder, he was sitting on the grass far behind everyone.

Linda Booth: [10:31](#)

When the fourth person came up from the water, people clapped as they had for the others. Her nephew stood and asked to be baptized. He entered the water as Sherry said, she cried tears of joy and amazement. When he left the water, Sherri was the first to hug him. Now how do you feel? She asked

him for the first time in my life, I feel clean. He replied. Isn't that wonderful? Doesn't that make you feel as if you want to share the love of Jesus with another person so that they can find their way home? Because of persistent Harold and because of that interesting experience that Doug and I had in a monastery in Kansas City, Kansas, I came home and because of a congregation that was full of love and welcomed us and included us, we found a spiritual home for our family and our lives were changed. And because of a little congregation Cantonment Florida that continues to grow because of people who pray and ask for God's direction on who it is there to reach out to Sherry's obstinate Henri nephew found a spiritual home for himself.

Linda Booth:            [12:13](#)            Checkout Coffee Connect and I'll tell you more stories, stories about God's amazing grace and how God uses ordinary people to change the world.

Music:                    [12:33](#)            [inaudible] [inaudible]

Josh Mangelson :        [12:34](#)            Thanks for listening to Project Zion podcast. Subscribe to our podcast on Apple podcast, Stitcher or whatever podcast streaming service you use. And while you are there, give us a five star rating. Project Zion Podcast is sponsored by Latter-day Seeker Ministries of Community of Christ. The views and opinions expressed in this episode are of those speaking and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of Latter-day Seeker Ministries or Community of Christ. The music has been graciously provided by Dave Heinze.

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