

Katie Langston 00:16

You're listening to an Extra Shot episode on the Project Zion Podcast, a shorter episode that lets you get your Project Zion fixed in between our following 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 to Coffee Connect. My name is Linda Booth, and I'm a collector of God's stories. Despite all the struggles we're facing with the Coronavirus, and with the uncertainties of schools opening, jobs vanishing, a vaccine availability, etc. I believe God is in the midst of all of this mess. In fact, I believe a modern day miracle is happening in my neighborhood. When the pandemic shut everything down, and we were told to stay home, my husband, Doug and I miss being with our family. After about a month of isolation, we convinced our son and daughter in law to bring my nine year old grandson Cooper to our driveway. I said bring your lawn chairs and we'll sit six feet apart. Well, my daughter in law, who is very concerned about any social contract agreed to come, but we would have to sit at least 15 to 20 feet apart. What a joy when they arrived, especially to see Cooper who immediately pulled his chair as close to me as his mother would allow, and began to talk about what we were going to do when COVID-19 was over. We'll go to movies, we'll paint together, we'll decorate cookies, we'll read books. While we talk with Ben, Shawn and Cooper, a couple who lives across the street walk by. They stopped to chat and commented that meeting up on the driveway was a great idea. So we invited them to bring their lawn chairs over and sit with us. "We can't do it today", they replied. "but how about tomorrow?" So we set a time 3pm and we called it Happy Hour. And I said, "Bring your own lawn chairs and your favorite drink." I need to tell you about our neighbors, Dave and Lavonne. They have been our neighbors for 22 years, but we really didn't know them. We'd wave when we saw each other or roll down our car windows to briefly chat. You see everyone had jobs and busy lives and I was traveling on ministry assignments. So we were friendly, but we were not friends. Dave, Lavonne, Doug and I got into a routine. Several days a week we'd either sit on their patio, or on our deck. We've now graduated to sharing meals together and have developed a deep friendship, praying for each other, supporting each other, sharing God's stories of hope. We have a walking trail behind our house. For a while it was like a human highway. Families with strollers and little children, couples walking their dogs and folks just taking a walk for exercise. We meet all kinds of people like Robin, a young Black mother and her twin boys, Brenda, a retired woman and her dog Harry. We set up lawn chairs and tables in our driveway and we invite folks to Happy Hour. We got to know them learning about their struggles and indeed embracing them. not physically holding them close, but encircling them with love, praying for them, sharing Christ peace and hope. God is up to something in our neighborhood. The miracle of a sacred community is forming, and I'm thankful for the opportunity

to do my small part. I was reminded of God's presence and people's compassion even during the Coronavirus struggle, when on July 5, I received an email from Jimmy Munson in Chattanooga, Tennessee. The email subject line read: "Real many testimonies shared from our zoom communion service tonight." The email included nine testimonies of people whose lives were radically transformed because of ordinary people who simply were good friends to those who needed a good friend. Through their compassionate actions miracles happened. I don't want you to be offended because I haven't edited these few testimonies that I'm going to read. And some of them contain a few cuss words. From Julia. "I'm 187 days drug and alcohol free tonight. God and my church is my reason for freedom. Jesus still is setting centers free, and I am living proof." From Vani, "I'm showing you my arms. These scars are from self cutting. After 14 years of scarring myself from the painful shed of life, you can see that there are no new wounds. My pastor said we need to trust God when it don't make no sense to trust. 23 months, no new self cuts because Jesus heals invisible wounds." From Jessica. "596 days ago, I lost a lung from self inflicted gunshot from the pain of hiding my sexuality. Yesterday July 4 was my first anniversary being a member of Community of Christ. I love my church, for showing me Jesus who lifts up those who have fallen, crying in the darkness of shame, longing for a family who will love without boundaries." From Mike. "Nine years ago, September 14th, got sentenced to federal prison for a hate crime. Four years ago, my brother Kevin took me to Chattanooga Community of Christ in the Black neighborhood on Glass Street. Today you see me wearing a Black Lives Matter shirt. God is unchangeable because Jesus is still changing people like me to love those whom I once hated. I love my church for showing us to enjoy being colored blessed. For three years been enjoying loving my Black brothers and sisters." And the last one I'm going to share is from Charles, whose nickname is Maxi King. "Because of the pandemic isolation, all these damn zoom meetings the church has, I am 44 days sober. Reflected on past especially high school years. I'm a sinner been set free by the support of this church. I love God. Just got one more thing to say. A question actually. Pastor, when the hell is the church going to open up again so I can get baptized?" We come together in this time of isolation and struggle through the power of the Holy Spirit. Being together in sacred community reminds us that God needs us to stop waiting for a miracle and participate in one instead. And we trust that if we fully participate in God's miracle making, if we embrace people struggles, and unconditionally love each person, that through the power of the Holy Spirit miracles will occur in the lives of people who yearn for people like you, who will be their friends, who will treat them like family, and invite them into loving sacred community, even in the midst of a pandemic.

Josh Mangelson 08:55

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