

Cuppa Joe | Theo-History Take and Go Lesson Templates

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

history, church, story, education, class, learn, series, narrative

SPEAKERS

Karin Peter, Robin Linkhart

Robin Linkhart 00:28

Welcome to Cuppa Joe, a Project Zion Podcast series where we explore the people, places and events of Restoration history. I'm your host Robin Linkhart. And today I'm here with Karin Peter, who is usually the host for Cuppa Joe. Our topic is learning more using Project Zion Podcast episodes. So over the years listeners, we have urged you to consider how podcast episodes can be used in church settings, as well as every day life. Now we want to help make that easier with Take and Go Lesson Templates. These first templates will be focused on the Theo-History episodes in the Cuppa Joe series. Karin, it is great to have you as a guest again on PZP. I know you absolutely love sitting on the other side of the mic for a change. <No, I do not. (Karin)> So, tell us about the Theo-History episodes.

Karin Peter 01:32

Well, thank you for asking, because these are some of my very favorite episodes that we've done on Project Zion. So the Theo-History episodes are a series of eleven episodes that explore our sacred story—our faith narrative, if you will. But a lot of times, Robin, when we think about church history, a couple of things come to mind. The first, we think about the early history, we kind of end at Nauvoo, and then we that's kind of the exciting, you know, controversial kind of time. And so then we stop and, and we've done our church history learning, but that's not the end of the story. And so, one of our goals was to tell the story of the whole journey of, of kind of where we are. But to do it in a way that broadens our understanding of the narrative of our story, but also touches on or actually it gets pretty extensive into: what then did that part of the journey have to say to us as a people, how did it shape and form us theologically? What, what was leadership doing to help us become a more faithful people responding to God's call? And to do this, to have this conversation and never forget that everything we're talking about historically, and the theological developments, they have to be looked at in context, about what was happening in the time and place. It's really hard for us as modern listeners and readers to kind of take off our own lens of our own time and our own understanding and try to look at things in a different way. So it does this and it does it in a way, I think, that is lively. And the discussion is lively. So Lach Mackay presents the historical perspective of the different era. And we cover different eras in the life of the church. And then Tony Chavala-Smith talks about the theological developments in there. And then I just toss in, I interrupt at inconvenient times to ask questions, and maybe clarify something. But I'm oh, I'm always kind of reminding people where we are in the bigger contextual story of where these things are happening. And it's an important aspect of our own, of our own study and growth. And so I think this

series helps us move from looking at church history in an isolated kind of way to looking at it in a different way. To give you an example, when I interview the folks who do the lectures for the Historic Sites Foundation, I try to always ask them at the end of it after they've shared what they lectured on and who and the event. I ask them, "When you were researching this, what affected you and your discipleship?" And then I ask, "From your perspective, what part of this story does Community of Christ still carry within in our DNA today?" And that's what this series does. It helps us put together, "Oh, that's why we do what we do or we think as we do, or we've explored this in the way that it's been explored." So you in a nutshell, it's eleven episodes to go through our journey from the 1830s until the 2000s.

Robin Linkhart 05:10

And they are great episodes. And it's really an adventure. I feel like I'm getting on a wagon or you know, whatever is happening at the time. It's like I'm right there with them. The other thing that's been wonderful about these episodes is the Community of Christ website, CofChrist.org has a page that talks about who we are and where we came from—so our history, our sacred story. And in that narrative, which is a brief, high level overview narrative, they've strategically placed links to episodes that connect with that time period. So I think it's really exciting that people who are reading about our history can now click on a live link and go to an episode that puts it in the time and place and context of the greater world and the nation where it's happening, and have Lach speak to the history of that time. And Tony speak to the theological developments, it just, it all just comes alive.

Karin Peter 06:09

It's one of the gifts that Project Zion Podcast has really given to the church. And that is a first to recognize that not everybody learns by reading that we all have different ways that we absorb information best. But that we can use digital content in ways that can really help shape and form us in our journey of discipleship and in our mission as a people. And that's, that's a that's a wonderful thing, because so many times we forget, and we resort only to one way of delivering information. So this has been great. And we did get a copy of the script for that narrative that's on the church website. And so we did make our episodes follow that narrative. And so you'll find three of them that deal with the first 14 years and then two that deal with Joseph Smith III's legacy, and then we go, one per prophet-President of the church. We didn't do Steve Veazey's legacy only because he, he could actually say to us, "That's not how it went." But that might be uncomfortable. But it's not really far enough into our history yet that we can go, "Oh, here are the theological developments that came, then we still carry forward. So we'll leave that to somebody else. Long after I retire.

Robin Linkhart 07:34

Yeah, good historians always say you need distance of time before you can actually look back. Okay, Karin, well, not long ago, I happen to know that you went on your annual spiritual pilgrimage in an undisclosed location, and came back with a fabulous idea of how we could make it easy for people to take a journey through Community of Christ history with Tony and Lach. Tell us about your vision.

Karin Peter 08:04

So, we learned something really valuable during the pandemic, we were trying to, we all learned valuable things during the pandemic. But one thing we learned about learning, and about how we as a community share together, is that we can develop ways to share information that can be used in

multiple settings. And one of the things we did because we couldn't go anywhere, and we were all locked down, was we developed a series of Facebook mini episodes called Temple Tuesday, and people just love them. And later on, people began to discover where we archived them, we kind of hid them for a little while, but they live on YouTube. And they also live at www.allthingsarespiritual.org. So we thought about how can we use these small Temple Tuesday episodes in a way that they can continue to have value for the church and for others who are, just want to learn about Community of Christ and what the temple means to us. And so we developed some templates so that these could be used as lessons, they could be used in worship services that can be used in lots of different ways: personal study, small groups, and we put them up on www.allthingsarespiritual.org. Which is a marvelous website. All our listeners should check that out. And people began to respond and using them in all these different ways, including, which surprised me, instead of a Sunday sermon, and actually showing the short video and answering the questions that are posed in the video, and having a discussion around the topic. And that led us to thinking about ways that we could use some of the Project Zion material in a similar way. And the theology slash history (Theo-History) episodes that we've done. They're the history, our story's so important to us, it's so much a part of our of our heart story and who we are as community. So how could we use these episodes that live online, in ways that really bring the conversation to us in how we meet together, in our community conversations, in our classes, in our congregational buildings, in our small groups, in our personal study, even. For a lot of us, that's our preferred spiritual formation aspect is the personal study. So what can we do to take this material that is so rich, and use it in different ways. So we're going to work on delivering templates for the Theo-History series. So they can be just kind of a Take and Go product, that you listen to the podcast, with the template. It has questions, it has supplementary information, it has some resource suggestions, maybe for further study. So that we can all kind of go on this journey, as a people. Thank you, Mark, Scherer. And we can broaden the way in which we understand and live our story in new ways. So...

Robin Linkhart 11:23

I think it's a real dynamic idea and integrates different ways that people learn. Some people learn by hearing, some learn by seeing, some learn by doing. There are just all these different ways we learn. And integrating different ways that people can engage with the content, I think is going to be really exciting, and very easy for teachers, class instructors, to bring some quality content to a class and go on that journey with the students together in dialogue. The other thing that we realized is that our Doctrine and Covenants is our sacred story, through the Scripture text. It doesn't have all the details that we get in the Theo-History. But it's a way to have the scripture that comes out of those eras be side by side with this other part of the journey. So likely that will be present in our templates. But it could also be used if somebody just wants to read the Doctrine and Covenants and listen to the Theo-History series as they do that.

Karin Peter 12:32

Absolutely. The other piece that I think is interesting, and hopefully helpful, is that church history is one of those things where you either don't care about it, or you have strong feelings about it. And and I think depending on when you encountered the story of the church, you have different markers about church history that are important to you. And so the way that the Theo-History podcasts have been done, we actually share not so much conflicting information, but information from very different perspectives. So

Tony and Lach have different reasons for looking at the episodes as they did. One wanted to talk about theological development, and the other one to talk about historical factors, you know, the historical narrative. We didn't ever all agree on some of the things. And I think that's what a real honest conversation about church history, that's where it has to live right now. Because we used to think here's the story, this is exactly how it happened. There's no perspective that's different from it. And if there is a different perspective, it's wrong. And we don't look at our story that way anymore. There are too many unknowns. And we've learned the limitations of the old way of looking at our story. And so this gives us an opportunity, listening to the podcast, to listen to a healthy model of dialogue around the ideas of the history and development of the church, that I think will really be a blessing for folks that maybe are a little hesitant to dive into the church history conversation. This will be helpful, I think, for us to do that in a way that's not as intimidating I think. Because I'm not an historian and I'm not a theologian, but I hung in there with both of them.

Robin Linkhart 14:44

And you asked a lot of poignant questions, because in the time that you live, some things that we find in our history are—fly in the face of our sensitivities in today's world, and it can be hard to reconcile that that's part of our story and until you ask them some zingers wouldn't you say?

Karin Peter 15:02

I do sometimes. And part of it is from the era I grew up and what I learned because I grew up in the area, that era of RLDS, and we didn't have the ordination of women, and that was my young life. And so watching some of these unfold and change has been important. But I think also I try really hard to ask the questions that I think our listeners are asking. If I'm wondering what that's all about somebody else is, if I think that's stupid, somebody else was thinking that too, so I'm probably going to ask good question.

Robin Linkhart 15:38

Something that you already touched on a little bit at the very beginning is our tendency to look through a lens of presentism, as we hear our history, where we're taking how we see the world now, and imposing that into a different time and place and the way that Theo-History walks us through the story, it really helps invite us in to that context, and to let go, or at least be able to identify that we have some presentism that we're looking through, and to take those lenses off and get into the story. And I think it makes it come alive. For me anyway, it's like flesh and blood. These are real people.

Karin Peter 16:22

You know that I think that's one of the biggest hindrances to really having a productive discussion about church history is we're all looking through our own lens, and we have to recognize that. So I'm looking through a 1970s, early feminist lens, which makes me not appreciative of some of the characters in our church history. And I have to be willing to name that. And you know, I don't like it. I might not like what has happened, but I wasn't there. Right. I wasn't doing the best I could do with what I knew at that moment. And so I can't put my own feelings and lens on that and say, it should have been this way, or I don't like how it was. So we should take that out now. You can't do that when you're going to look at history, and nor should we. That gets us into trouble in our own family stories. Right?

Robin Linkhart 17:07

It does, it does. Well, as we said earlier, we do think we have a lot of Project Zion Podcast episodes that lend themselves to the journey of learning and disciple formation. And other people have seen that too. In fact, we want to share some possibilities. And some things that are happening right now. For example, Blake Smith, and I know you know, Blake, because he incurred bring Coffee to Go with you to you every Sunday morning. Blake Smith, Mission Center President and Financial officer for the Chicago Mission Center. They have developed every Sunday, a hybrid worship and adult Sunday school class for the whole mission center, which was targeted at not over replicating the work and effort of planning and providing worship and Christian education. But to do that together for many of the congregations and to liberate their time and talent and energies towards mission—living out mission and their various cities and also sharing the load because they all participated and take turns in helping with that. Blake had the idea of using the God Shots under the Percolating on Faith series as the the keystones of an adult Sunday school class. So those of you that listen to Percolating on Faith may be familiar with that series God Shots. It's walking through a theology—a kind of a systematic theology—with Daniel Migliori's. Faith Seeking Understanding as a text and that's with Tony and Charmaine Chvala-Smith. So Blake sends out the audio episode and the transcript every week to the membership. He has key questions that he's worked up listening to the podcast, and then for the class, because folks have a chance to read and listen if they have time. But even if they don't, it's a lively interactive class where Blake has some key clips, audio clips, that he plays, gives an opportunity to expose people to the content, and then dialogue around questions, which I think is a fantastic way to use that content. And of course Blake is keeping copious notes on all of that and our plan is to turn that in to a Take and Go template to be shared with all of our listeners. What other possibilities would you explore Karin are things that might be good?

Karin Peter 19:51

One of the things that I hope the Take and Go template provides is an alternative to a congregational grouping. So sometimes when we provide a resource, we think the only place it can be used is in the congregation as as a class. But I would love to see, especially with the Theo-History, like a book club setting for it. Where you listen to the podcast on your own time, and you think about, then you come back, and there's some questions and you can discuss it. And it's more of a—not what's right or wrong, or what happened or didn't happen—but how do you feel about this? Why do you think this character from our history did this? What would you do in that situation? That's what we do with book clubs. You know, we talk about why we love the book, why we hated it. Well, I'm okay sayin' what I love about the Nauvoo period, and what I hated, in fact, I could, I could say a lot about that. But, but we don't approach our history that way. And so I'm hoping that this template will give people kind of permission to look at it that way, in a in a more relaxed way.

Robin Linkhart 20:59

I love that. And you mentioned earlier, too, that a lot of this lends itself even to personal study, which is a spiritual discipline for many people.

Karin Peter 21:07

So that's the other one I think, is really important and that we forget, that many of us appreciate having resources that really help us delve into something. And that is our main avenue of spiritual formation.

It's mine, I will, I will read all kinds of things and ponder it at length. But these could actually be used as reflection questions as one listens to the podcast and then goes through the template. What, how? How am I growing and learning with this as part of my story? What part of this do I need to put away? And what part of it do I want to carry forward? Those are all wonderful ways of looking at the faith narrative and finding some common ground with it, but also finding where it's okay to put some things away.

Robin Linkhart 21:56

Yeah, that's so important. Speaking of spiritual formation, and spiritual practices, the Awaken to God's presence episode, which is early each month, I believe it drops on the first Tuesday of each month, those are all-in-one guided spiritual practices. They're usually about 12 minutes long, some are a little bit longer. And people just organically began to utilize those in all kinds of ways. We've heard of people using them in worship for the spiritual practice during a congregational gathering for worship, and retreats and classes, a meeting, you know, we have meetings a lot with our teams, and we often have a devotion at the beginning. And we can just pop in and play a 12 minute guided spiritual practice, which is a wonderful devotion. Reunion lends itself really well to that too. And you know, a family worship at home gathering together with children of all ages to sit and listen, and be guided in spiritual meditation, and of course, personally. And what I love is, you know, we can listen to these on our cell phones, so we can be out in nature, and do it. In fact, some of the them are actually guided meditations as the person guiding you is walking actively through nature. So just another example of things that right now you can take and use, both in group gatherings, more formal settings, as well as relaxed, spontaneous and at home settings. Anything else you want to add Karin?

Karin Peter 23:39

I don't think I have anything content wise related to add, because we're at the beginning of looking at Project Zion episodes and seeing how we can best use them in a multiplicity of ways. But one of the things that I'm hoping is that it instills a curiosity in us that deepens and broadens for us in Community of Christ. Curiosity about our own story, but also a curiosity about how we can best participate in where we go from here. And what does that look like? And how do we imagine how people will look at this time period and our participation later? I think that's one of my big hopes for this particular opportunity to take this series and turn it into some lessons.

Robin Linkhart 24:28

Yeah, that's amazing. I think one of my hopes is that pastors, teachers, leaders of classes, parents, disciples who are finding their way, seekers and members can use this as a resource that meets a need that they have and for those who labor many hours every week to prepare classes, that some of that labor can be lifted off of them, and they can be supplied with some really great resources that will make it easier for them. But there won't be sacrifice of content, and depth and what's presented and what's explored together in fellowship with one another as we journey the way together.

Karin Peter 25:14

And these are low technology. So if you're a person who really hesitates because you don't know how to do visuals or projections so that you don't have to worry about that. You just, you just need to have your cell phone and a speaker and everyone can hear and participate. They're very low tech.

Robin Linkhart 25:31

And high tech people can have fun just turning it all into colorful PowerPoint with a movie. <Karin, "Absolutely".> So we're sure you want to know where you can find these. We plan to create a new page on the Project Zion Podcast website for Take and Go lesson templates and other ideas about how you can use Project Zion Podcast episodes. I think it'll be a little later this year when this particular Theo-History episode, turns into a full blown taking template. But it won't be that long. I'd say by summer for sure.

Karin Peter 26:12

I'm hoping by reunion. Yeah. Well, Karen,

Robin Linkhart 26:15

anything else that you would like to share that you haven't had a chance to say today?

Karin Peter 26:19

I get so many chances to say things on Project Zion. So most of the time, I'm pretty talked out. But I would I would want to say this. Church history is one of those things, that as we continue on our journey as Community of Christ, we learn more and more and more, and don't be afraid of it. Enjoy it, and it's okay to not like something and it's okay to be uncomfortable with something. It's okay to laugh at something, or cry about something. But this is a gift that Lach and Tony have given us so I hope we use it well.

Robin Linkhart 26:55

Yes. Well thank you Karin, for being with us as a guest and thank you our listeners for tuning in and sharing part of your day with us. We will be sure to put links in the show notes so you can find everything that we're talking about. This is Robin Linkhart and you are listening to Project Zion Podcast go out and make the world a better place. Take care, bye bye.