



Lesson Fifteen: Twilight

Inquiry Questions:

- If you knew you only had a little while longer to live, what are five things would you do?
- What makes those five things the most important to you?

Historical Context: Brief Bios of Fred M. Smith and R.C. Evans:

R.C. Evans was first ordained at 21 years of age. Spanning his life, he served in the office of priest, elder, seventy, apostle, Counselor to the President, and Bishop. Evans joined the First Presidency in 1902 and believed that after Joseph III's death, he should become the next Prophet-President. He would not succeed Joseph III, being released from the Presidency in 1909 and assigned as bishop to Canada. R.C. Evans broke off from the church and used its funds to establish a new church, called the Church of the Christian Brotherhood. He was forced to repay the money through a lawsuit and excommunicated from the RLDS. He lived a short time longer, dying from pneumonia in 1921.

Frederick Madison Smith was born in 1874 to Joseph III and Bertha Madison. He was very well educated. Smith was the first graduate from Graceland College, but also studied at Iowa City Academy, University of Iowa, University of Kansas and Clark University. He earned an M.A. and Ph.D. at the latter two schools, respectively. He led the church after his father's passing serving from 1915-1946. Smith challenged the church to think of Zion in new ways, expanding previous thoughts. He was instrumental in the construction of the Auditorium, in Independence, Missouri, as well as guiding the church through the Great Depression. One of his controversial decisions, called Supreme Directional Control, led to the upper quorums of the church fighting for power and authority to function. Many members left the church over this issue. When he passed away in 1946, Israel A. Smith, his brother, was the next leader.

Pre-Class Reading:

Joseph Smith III: A Pragmatic Prophet by Roger Launius, Chapter Fifteen: Twilight

Discussion Questions:

R.C. Evans seemed to consider Frederick M. Smith as his greatest rival for potential church leadership.

- What did R.C. Evans believe he had to offer the church that Frederick M. Smith did not?
- What happened to Evans after Joseph declared Frederick to be his successor?

Joseph believed history had the “potential to create a collective identity and to build church unity.”

- Do you agree or disagree with Joseph's statement on history?



- What are the benefits of studying history?
- Can the past illuminate the future? How?

One of Joseph's final projects was to work on his memoirs.

- Why did he make these such a priority?
- Do you think this allowed him a sense of a fulfilled life, to recount it for posterity?
- What is the power of story?

What do Joseph III's final requests, regarding burial and funeral specifics, teach about his character and the legacy he sought to leave behind?

Class Activity:

Come up with three words you each feel best describes Joseph Smith III; then share you words. If it's possible write down all the words on a white board or someplace that everyone can see them. Discuss the words that were chosen. Which words came up the most? Which words were surprising to you?

Joseph Smith III: Pragmatic Prophet by Roger Launius and a variety of historical reprints are available at www.redbrickstore.com. All Red Brick Store purchases help preserve Community of Christ historic sites.

Additional information and opportunities to help preserve and share Community of Christ history may be found on the Historic Sites Foundation's website: www.HistoricSitesFoundation.org