

# Kingdom Living Today Addenda



Kingdom Living Today Addenda is the saga of two ordinary people who by grace have loved, obeyed and served our Lord Jesus as children of our heavenly Father. Foremost, each Addendum reveals our Lord's divine involvement in our lives – bringing to light His life lessons for us in our character transformation as well as His Spirit's use of us to be His blessing to others. May our saga encourage you to be confident to live Lordship-committed.



## Under The Lordship Of Jesus Your Life Is Stitches In A Divine Fabric

- ☞ "My Father is working to this very day, and I too am working" (John 5:17).
- ☞ "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work" (John 4:34).
- ☞ "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who trusts in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father" (John 14:12).

The *genuinely* born again are part of a spiritual lineage of serving our Lord Jesus in love-grounded, obedient trust. Our particular thread of family kinship originates in the will of our heavenly Father. By His grace we are part of His *never ending story* that began in eternity and will continue throughout eternity! If you are *genuinely* born again, you have accepted our heavenly Father's invitation to serve His purposes as you live in union with Him and our Lord Jesus in the New Covenant.

You can picture living resolutely committed to the Lordship of Jesus to be you fully yielding to Him as He stitches you into the perfect place in Father's divine fabric. You might not recognize or understand the entire divine tapestry that is being stitched together over many generations. But we know that our trust in Jesus as Lord of our lives and our ongoing devotion to Him compel us to be part of that tapestry.

There are occasions when the Holy Spirit stirs followers of Jesus to reflect back in time and recollect the various people and events that were part of His stitching then. It's important for you to realize that as He uses you, you are inherently a stitch in a larger fabric that the Spirit of our Lord is weaving in accordance with Father's will. And if you're going to be used as part of His unfolding purpose, then know that our Lord gives you just one step of faith at a time for you to obey. When you take that one step, then He gives you the next step.

But *if* you are beset by the need to know every step in advance, or *if* you view yourself as more important or indispensable than others are in serving our Lord, then you are not living under the Lordship of Jesus. Instead, you'll carry out your will and not that of our heavenly Father. The same thing happens if you see yourself as inadequate or less worthy than others. You'll shrink back from doing Father's will and follow your own path of what you feel comfortable doing.

✝ Being our Lord's stitch in His time always has His divine guidance and power.

***"As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8).***

We know that the Spirit will use each of those who love and serve Jesus as Lord in very different ways to serve very different aspects of Father's will. And we hope that as you read different chapters of our own life saga, you'll be strengthened and encouraged in the faithfulness of the Holy Spirit to specifically guide and direct your life too. In Saga 1 you'll find our reflections of events leading up to February 4, 1983 — the day we became administrators



*Indicates our recognition of a divine stitch.*

and later teacher/administrators at a Christian retreat center in Coventry, Connecticut. Back then Coventry was a rural town in eastern Connecticut populated by more dairy cows than people. We were in our mid-30s and had been following our Lord Jesus for six years. The previous June Mike had graduated from an inter-denominational seminary and had been employed there as a consultant in accounting and personnel while we prayed about where our Lord would be sending us.

We initially wanted to serve as foreign missionaries, but that door was soon shut. The first mission agency we applied to informed us that since we were already in our mid-30s, we were too old to be sent out. Another agency read our resumés and told us that they would accept us as long as we didn't share anything about the power of the Holy Spirit or spiritual gifts on the mission field. The Spirit prompted us to turn down their offer.



From graduation in June, 1982 until February, 1983 Mike had three job offers for which he hadn't even applied. The first was to direct a medical mission in Sudan for a year. This would be unaccompanied, and the Holy Spirit put a check in our spirit about not being able to minister together.



The second job opportunity was with a noted missions organization in Pasadena. Mike met with all the department heads and staff, and following three days of interviews was offered the Assistant Director position. During his prayer time the third morning, the Holy Spirit told him he couldn't accept the job — but He then revealed the name of someone who was already in the ministry to fill that position. After Mike told the Director what he'd been told by the Spirit, the Director promoted that person. The Holy Spirit then showed Mike how to reorganize the ministry so it could operate more effectively. He drew the new organization plan on a blackboard in the room where the staff were meeting, and the Director fielded questions from them. Six months later the entire ministry had been revamped according to the Holy Spirit's instructions. Mike had served as a messenger, and he wasn't needed there.



The third job opportunity was in Boston. The Director of a ministry had offered Mike a position as Assistant Director. But the Holy Spirit led Mike to tell him how to reorganize the entire ministry and eliminate the need for the position he was being offered — which they did.

(Sue's Mom worried about Mike providing for his family and told her, "The man has three degrees. Can't he get a paying job?" Obeying our Lord can be very hard for unbelieving relatives to understand!)



In late November, 1982 while Mike was still consulting for the President of the seminary, the Holy Spirit gave him a message: Our heavenly Father was going to take Mike's father Home soon, and Mike should resign and go to Connecticut to help his Mom care for his bedridden Dad. The President accepted his resignation, and for the next 5 weeks Mike and his Mom cared for his Dad in his own home until his passing on January 5, 1983.

(A few years before this, Mike's Dad had told him, "I'd like to have the same Jesus I see in you." They'd both knelt together in prayer and Mike's father became his brother in our Lord Jesus.)



The morning of Dad's passing, Mike's Mom had gone grocery shopping. Mike was typing on an electric typewriter in the room next to where his Dad was sleeping. All of a sudden Mike couldn't touch the letter "I". It was like a force field was preventing him. As he bowed his head and asked the Holy Spirit for understanding, he was prompted that he hadn't

prayed with his Dad that morning as he had for the past five weeks. So he went into his room. Mike was holding his Dad's hand praying as his father passed from this life to be met by Jesus. That was such a special gift to Mike! As he ran around the house praising our Lord, it was snowing in every window, even though the sun was shining and there wasn't a cloud in the sky.



While still a student at seminary Mike had met Gene, a fellow seminarian who was also caretaking Coventry House, a defunct half-way house and farm in Coventry, Connecticut. Gene was tending the premises and the farm animals until the Board of Directors could meet to consider selling the 60-acre property. Two months earlier while caring for his Dad, Mike had been led by the Spirit to visit Gene. He saw for himself the dilapidated condition the property was in. And in the Spirit's divine timing, it was just a few weeks previously during the interview for the ministry position in Boston that Mike had learned of the need for retreat centers in that part of New England.

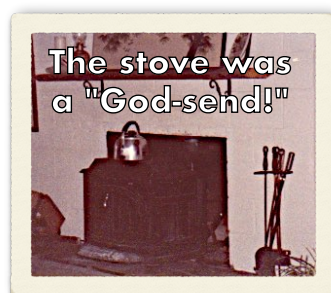


The Holy Spirit continued to lead us step by step, prompting us to write a letter to the Board of Directors of Coventry House, informing them of how greatly retreat centers were needed. The Board contacted us and asked if we would care to submit a résumé. After much prayer (and at that point Sue hadn't even seen the property!), we sent them our résumés. They invited us to meet with them at their next Board meeting on February 4, 1983.

(We were later to discover that the words and phrases the Spirit had led us to use in our letter were almost verbatim to the initial purpose of the center before it digressed into a halfway house.)



After receiving the Board's invitation, we didn't want to take another step without involving the elders in our faith community in Rockport, Massachusetts. We gave each of them a copy of the letter we'd given to the Board of Coventry House. We asked the elders to pray, but to not discuss the letter together until they met with us a week later. We met with them in late January, 1983 and each man witnessed from the Holy Spirit that our Lord Jesus was sending us to the retreat center. Several days later we were leaving Sunday services just prior to departing for Connecticut to meet with the Coventry House Board. A man in our faith community walked up to Mike and prophetically told him, "When you get to Connecticut you'll meet a man named Norm Swensen who will help you in your ministry."



We arrived at the mostly unheated retreat center on February 3 and slept in sleeping bags on the floor. The 4,600 sq.ft. two-story lodge had several metal chairs surrounding a long table made from 2x6s, and that was about it. There was also the blessing of a wood burning stove as we got dressed on the chilly morning of February 4 and for the next 2 months afterwards.

(Because the lodge was so big and empty, some of our relatives called it "a bowling alley"!)





On the first Friday of each month a group of pastors had been meeting at Coventry House for prayer and mutual support. February 4, 1983 was a first Friday, and leading the group was Pastor Norm Swensen. (An older man, Norm had moved several years earlier to eastern Connecticut from the midwest. He had a deep, Spirit-inspired burden for the various congregations to cooperate together in evangelizing the region.) The pastors invited us to join them, asking us many questions about ourselves. Later, as everyone was leaving, Norm took Mike aside privately. "Mike, can I be Elijah to you and you be Elisha?" Mike told Norm, "Yes!" and Norm went on, "I want you to promise me that you will stay here ten years. It will take you that long to find out why our Lord Jesus has you here. I want you to make Coventry House a safe place for Jesus. You can attend any local congregation, but don't join any and be perceived as proselytizing on behalf of it." Mike gave him his word.

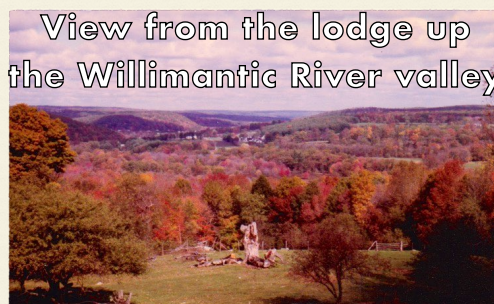
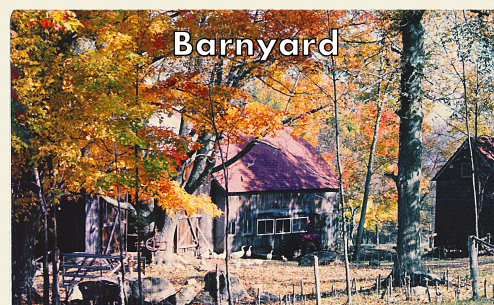
(Several years later Norm told Mike how easy it was for him to give Mike godly counsel. That's when Mike told Norm that he'd prophetically been given his name 5 days before he first met him!)



That evening we accepted the offer of the Board of Directors to administrate the center. Handing us \$40 in cash and \$700 of unpaid bills, they told us they'd pray for us. They had said we would have to raise 40% of the center's income through donations. But Mike had worked at both a Christian college and a seminary, and he was familiar with how "Christian" organizations often kowtowed to the rich. We were concerned that we might violate James 2:1, "My brothers, practice the faith of our glorious Lord Jesus Christ without showing favoritism" (see vv. 2:1-4). Not wanting to cross this line and sin if we benefitted from the donations, we asked the Board to pay us nothing. We had divine assurance that we were exactly where our Lord wanted us and that He would provide in His way and timing.

Keep in mind that we had no farming background! Coventry House was on 60 acres of woods and pasture land, complete with cows, ducks, rabbits, goats, geese and chickens — and 70+ apple trees. The retreat center had begun in a renovated barn and chicken coop. The barn served as both the girls' dorm and dining hall, while the boys slept in the coop. After several years the lodge was built. The upstairs included a lounge, kitchen and dining facilities, and staff sleeping quarters. Downstairs were two dorms, a lounge and a small kitchen for coffee and snacks. A large deck overlooked the Willimantic River valley and the 2,000 feet of forested frontage on the river. Sounds pretty great, right?

Now for the good part. We'd arrived in a cold, snowy February. The lodge roof leaked, the plumbing leaked, we had livestock to care for and feed. (There were some other challenges too which we'll discuss in a later Addenda.) Our furniture had stayed with our house in Massachusetts. That's because in late summer of 1982



we let a missionary family with three teens move into our home while we rented a furnished beach cottage for the off-season. They stayed there until 1984 while getting medical help for their son.

When we moved to the retreat center we had only our clothes and Mike's father's old car. But we had such divine guidance by the Holy Spirit in knowing that our Lord was sending us there! The confirmation by our congregation elders sealed the deal. Everything else that took place afterwards was our Lord teaching us, testing us, and using us to be His blessing.

But remember, you too have a history of the Holy Spirit at work in and around and through you to prepare you for how He wants to use you today and tomorrow. Our account here is our story of the faithfulness of our Lord to speak and work through His Spirit in us. What are your stitches in His divine fabric?