

Kingdom Living Today Addenda



Kingdom Living Today Addenda are the saga of two ordinary people who 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 – revealing

His life lessons for us and our character transformation,
as well as His Spirit's use of us to be His blessing to others.

May our saga encourage your confidence to live Lordship-committed.



"Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you."



Indicates our recognition of a divine stitch.

We confronted a certain recurring spiritual darkness at the retreat center over the years, one we especially needed to help people overcome. Our motive to intervene is described as this: "He will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers" (Malachi 4:6). Specifically, unresolved bitterness of children toward their parents, especially against their fathers, was a widespread spiritual virus we encountered often during our retreat center days. Sadly, bitterness especially among Christians has intensified in the almost 30 years we've been sharing the Hebraic foundations. Bitterness persists and has spread in Christianity for at least 2 reasons: 🙌 Many men with unresolved bitterness toward their fathers became clergy to show their dads they were a better man than he. Therefore the clergy don't tell their people to forgive since they themselves haven't forgiven. 🙌 Since the 1970s onward, most Christian counseling never deals with bitterness as a sin, but rather as victimization, especially of children by their parents. When any steps toward reconciliation are given, most counselors tell the "victim" to go to their parents and tell them they forgive them. But consider the Christlike view: forgive your parents in your heart and then ask forgiveness yourself for any wrongs you did, whether attitudes or actions. (See Matthew 18:21,22,35.)

Luke 15:11-21 recounts the "Prodigal Son" parable of a younger brother who squandered his inheritance and then humbly returned to his father. It's a powerful image of humility and a living example for us. After we became followers of our Lord Jesus, the Holy Spirit told us to ask our respective parents for forgiveness for the hurt we'd caused them in our youth and for any bad attitudes we'd ever had against them.

Our Lord blesses intergenerational healing! This can take place when the offspring realizes that **every parent does the best they can with what they have going for themselves** – how they were raised, existing strongholds, stresses in their own lives. These can't be used as excuses by parents, but a son or daughter needs to seriously consider the circumstances before choosing to hold onto bitterness. Teens in particular are prone to compare with each other about how tough their life is. But replaying gripes impedes reconciliation — and social media has made one-sided views convenient. Today just about everyone seems to think they're a victim of abuse, with a child reserving the right to dishonor his or her parents through bitterness!

The Bible mandates that you forgive from your heart *without exception*; to belong to Jesus *is* to forgive. Forgiveness gets you out of *negative* territory on the chart to '0'. The emotional healing accomplished by Jesus occurs as you enter *positive* territory through prayer for, and good deeds toward, the one who has hurt you. The further a forgiving person goes into positive territory, the less likely that bitterness will return.

<u>Unforgiveness</u>										<u>Forgiveness</u>		<u>Blessing</u>									
-100	-90	-80	-70	-60	-50	-40	-30	-20	-10	0	+10	+20	+30	+40	+50	+60	+70	+80	+90	+100	
seething bitterness, hatred, begrudging, resentment										prayer for, compassion, acts of love and kindness											

We practiced and taught that every child needs to appropriate the grace to forgive from their heart, and then go and ask forgiveness for attitudes against their parent(s) which our Lord Jesus never gave them a right to. Counter to the trend of much of Christian counseling, we set our hearts to fulfill Malachi 4:6 – reconciling children of any age with their parents. On our website we uploaded our series for fathers of any age, ***Turning The Hearts Of Fathers To The Children*** We created this series to help family members pursue reconciliation among themselves. When we returned from Israel in 1994 with the Hebraic foundations, we used the story of the prodigal son to represent the reconciliation we understood to be at the core of what our Father was restoring. And from a Hebraic perspective, the parable commends the gracious Father.



Ongoing bitterness is a deep festering wound within many Christians. Yet we know from our experiences ministering at the retreat center that our Lord Jesus is fully able to heal and to reconcile!



- When “Annie” was conceived, her father left her mom. Now in her 20s Annie told us how bitter she was toward him. But shortly after we helped her forgive her dad in her heart and begin to pray a blessing for him, the Holy Spirit inspired her to find him. She discovered that an aunt had kept track of her father and that he was living halfway across the country. Overcoming any fear she contacted him. He told her that two weeks earlier he’d put his trust in Jesus, and the Holy Spirit told him to find the daughter he had never known. They soon got together, to our Father's glory!

This next account is similar to that of many other single women we helped who wanted to be married but bitterness toward their father kept them from committing themselves to a man as his wife.



- “Emma” had been carrying so much bitterness toward her dad that she avoided any relationships with men. She came to visit us at the center for several days to help us with chores on the farm. We discovered that her resentment toward her father stemmed from him running off with another woman from their congregation while she was just a young girl. Shortly after the divorce her mom was diagnosed with MS and had been suffering with it ever since.

Emma had forgotten her contact lens solution and asked Sue if she could use hers. Disaster! She used Sue's hard contacts solution on her soft contacts, and when she put her contacts in the next morning her eyes were burned and she was blinded. We took her to the emergency room. They told her she'd be unable to see clearly for a few days, but there would be no lasting damage. Later that day back at the retreat center she was very open to our counsel to not only forgive her dad but to start praying for our Lord's blessing on him. As her eyes began to heal over the next several days, she was able to write her father a letter asking his forgiveness for her anger and bitterness.

After her dad read the letter he called her, forgiving her and asking for her forgiveness. A few weeks later she went to see him. Emma learned from him that her mother had willfully refused intercourse with him for years for no specific reason (1 Corinthians 7:4,5). He regretted his own sin of adultery and the hurt it had caused Emma. She later went to see her mom and learned that what her dad had said was true. It wasn't long before God brought a wonderful man into her life, and they've been joyfully married for over 40 years.



- “Caleb” was a high school senior living with a pastor and his family because he couldn't get along with his parents. The pastor was doing nothing to help him reconcile with his dad and mom. Mike asked if Caleb could live with us for the summer and help out on the farm. Caleb was a hard worker but had a bitter chip on his shoulder. That summer a five-night seminar was being held in

a nearby city focusing on unresolved bitterness especially toward parents. Mike planned to take Caleb along with a youth group from a local congregation. But the day the seminar started, Mike got sick and was bedridden for several days.

About an hour before everyone was to leave for the seminar the first night, Caleb came into our bedroom. Mike asked if there was anyone besides his parents he was bitter toward. Caleb mentioned a classmate who'd bullied him all through high school. Mike told him to not be surprised if our Lord did something great for him at the seminar. Late that evening Caleb burst into our bedroom while we were asleep and yelled, "How did you know? How did you know?" It seems that during a break he was walking down a hallway. No one else was in that particular hallway until the very guy who had bullied him came walking toward him. As they neared each other the "bully" asked for forgiveness for his cruelty toward Caleb. Forgiveness was freely given, and not only toward that guy. When the conference ended we returned Caleb to his parents and he asked their forgiveness for his attitudes.



- "Owen" was a youth pastor we knew well. We considered him and his wife to be the best we'd ever met in working with young people. As Owen sat next to Mike on the deck eating breakfast during a retreat, the Holy Spirit spoke to Mike: *"Ask Owen how his mother died."* Surprised by the question, Owen answered, "My mother committed suicide." Owen was just a boy when his mom died. Then the Holy Spirit told Mike that Owen had never had closure over his mom's death. He and his siblings hadn't been allowed to view the casket or attend the funeral.



Owen's father lived in the next town so Mike encouraged him to call. In our Lord's timing Owen's sister had just called their dad because the anniversary of their mom's death was the next day. All the siblings got together with their Dad and figuratively "opened their mom's casket" by talking about their mother and sharing memories so they could "close her casket" properly. A lot of healing took place that day!



- "Kaylee" led a campus ministry. She grew close to us and told us about her unresolved issues with her father, who lived in another state. Her heart was tender to what we discussed about forgiveness and she looked to the attitude of the prodigal son before she went to see her dad. Several months later she got engaged and we were invited to the wedding at her home congregation.

Before walking his daughter down the aisle, her father asked to speak with Mike alone in the foyer. He'd wanted for so long to reconcile with his daughter but didn't know how. Now they'd been reunited and he was so grateful for Mike's help. Mike encouraged him not to walk his daughter down the aisle until he had expressed his whole heart to her—a wonderful reason for the service to be held up a bit!



When we first arrived at the retreat center a pastor's wife told Mike about "Chris", a young man whose dad had died when Chris was a boy. She asked Mike to keep an eye out for "Chris" to see if he could help him at some point. Several years later Chris showed up in our singles group. He also joined Mike's Wednesday evening men's basketball group. Mike didn't tell Chris that he'd known of him for a while. But as Mike observed him, he noticed how Chris had too high an opinion of himself. During basketball games Chris would often play dirty, and the older men were fearful they might get hurt. They asked Mike to do something about Chris.

Mike talked with him several times but to no avail. Keeping Chris in his prayers, he sought guidance from the Holy Spirit. Finally, at one game in which Chris played exceptionally rough, Mike walked up to the 6'5" young man and said, "You're too big to spank!" — and slugged him. All the single men saw that as an act of violence, while the fathers understood how necessary it was. Even Chris told everyone, "Mike had every right to do that!" We didn't see him for some time until late one

night there was a knock on our door. It was Chris with tears in his eyes. Grabbing Mike in a grateful hug, he told us that God had showed him a lot about himself for which he repented. It wasn't long before he met and married a widow with a 9-year-old daughter. His wife truly loved our Lord Jesus, and in fact we'd known her when her husband was still alive, before he died of brain cancer. It meant a lot to us to see her now marrying another fine man.



We also encountered those with unresolved bitterness toward people who had already died. We encouraged them to write a letter to their parent(s) and go to the graveside and read it aloud. Our Lord Jesus can do a lot of inner healing within someone who's tearfully reading from their heart what they wished they'd said when their parents were alive.

Be very, very careful

We observed that bitterness was prolonged by **seemingly merciful people** who listened to bitter slander but did nothing to help the speaker change. We warned such people because there's demonic power in listening to bad-mouthing of someone else. They made it even harder for any reconciliation because they were more poisonous in passing along the gossip to others. One woman who refused to repent of this had established a very close relationship with her niece, her sister's daughter, who was estranged from her mother. When we asked why she didn't help her sister reconcile with her daughter, she told us, "I like hurting my sister this way."

Consequences of gossip (from Proverbs)

- "A gossip separates close friends" (16:28).
- "The words of a gossip are like choice morsels; they go down to the inmost parts" (26:22).
- "Without wood a fire goes out; without a gossip a quarrel dies down" (26:20).

For more insight into gossip and its hateful sidekick slander, read July 2000 Newsletter:

Lashon Hara — Bad Mouthing

"A gossip goes around revealing secrets. Therefore do not associate with a gossip" (Proverbs 20:19). A man or a woman who gossips compounds the difficulty of people to pursue love, forgiveness and compassion. For instance, there was a noticeable difference between men's retreats and women's retreats. The women seemed prone to gossip and slander especially about their husbands and even their family members. And when they got together to pray, the women often disguised gossip and slander as prayer needs: "Please pray for my husband; he got angry last night and yelled at the kids." Or, "I think my neighbor Deanna is cheating on her husband. Please pray for her."

Among our own relatives were certain women who kept the poison of gossip spreading so much that they minimized any hope of reconciliation in strained relationships. On one hand these women looked like they cared the most for the family at large, but on the other their gossip was preventing reconciliation. We found this situation to be true in many other families we met at the retreat center. This is why the accounts we've written about people who did reconcile have meant so much to us.

We're saddened about so many bitter people within Christianity who are bringing down the reputation of Jesus. And we're also grieved that there are so few peacemakers who seek to help reconcile the bitter with our Father and with other people. In fact, we see far more who foster bitterness within Christianity than biblical peacemakers who bring lasting relational peace. It's time for you to be an instrument of reconciliation in the Spirit's hands. Ask Him how He would use you!

We encourage you to pursue love, forgiveness and compassion in all your relationships. If you don't perceive that you are bitter yourself, are you standing in the way of someone else being reconciled? Do they need your help? Consider this: You may be either the cause of the problem, the solution to it, or both...