

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 transformations 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.



"If the LORD Had Not Been On Our Side..."



Indicates our recognition of a divine stitch.

As you read the anecdotes in this Saga, please continue to realize we're sharing what the Holy Spirit was doing in and around us—the same Holy Spirit Who works in and around all the genuinely born again! Cooperating with the Spirit working in and around us stems from the day we were born again: we were **Lordship-committed**. Mike spent 9 years in the navy before we became followers of our Lord Jesus. With three deployments to a war zone flying helicopter combat support, he clearly understood the **obedience-based** demands in the Bible – ***if the Lord commands it, we do it!*** (Deference to His Lordship is the lifeblood that's required for Him to rule our lives – **Jesus is LORD of all or NOT at all.**)

In the Lord's Prayer we petition, ***"Your Kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."*** These two requests were and still are very personal to us. They're at the heart of our Kingdom living each day. In particular, ***"Your will be done"*** directs our prayers specifically for us → to bring glory to our heavenly Father by His grace → under the Lordship of Jesus in His family of beloved slave/servants → guided by the *rhema* and empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

Most of the 5,000+ people who came to the retreat center during our time there were **outcome-based**. Their lives were a pursuit of favorable and pleasant outcomes; religion included. The **outcome-based** are more easily annoyed and frustrated if things didn't go as positively as they'd expected! We directed retreats so that retreaters would find themselves becoming **obedience-based** because of the love of the One Who had guided them there. Only the **obedience-based** will walk in the Lordship of Jesus as the Bible commands. For these it doesn't matter what the outcome is, because *"we are unworthy slave/servants; we have only done our duty"* (Luke 17:10). Being *genuinely* born again means complete submission to the Lordship of Jesus Whom you love, not just the oft-peddled "fire insurance" against hell. We're thankful that many "Christians" who came to the retreat center left having genuinely launched their **obedience-based** journey to their salvation.



In our self-evaluation as *unworthy slave/servants*, we found we went too far in perceiving ourselves as insignificant and incidental to the retreat center premises itself. A few months after we took over the center, a leader of major denomination whom we'd met soon after our arrival took Mike aside and rebuked him. In effect he said, "You're in error in viewing the retreat center as more special than you and Sue are. God uses people, not places! There were people who served here before you, and there will be people after you. You need to understand that it's our Lord's use of you two and not this place that's important to His purposes." We repented, realizing we'd taken our Lord's words in Luke 17:10 too far. Indeed, His followers who love and serve Him as Lord have the specialness of His divine anointing as His beloved slave/servants.



One difficulty we encountered during mealtimes was trying to keep the food warm until it was served. We needed a large microwave oven! Shortly after we began to pray about this need,

a man came to us with a very large microwave. He told us he had repeated problems with it because the fuse kept burning out and was expensive to replace.

When we'd lived in Massachusetts we met "Andy" who lived in Lexington and taught at MIT. His specialty was microwave communications, not ovens. But we called him anyway about our problem. He told us to get the microwave to him and he could fix it. As soon as we got off the phone we prayed. An hour later a man who'd previously been on retreat stopped by to visit. When we told him about our problem, he said he was in fact on his way to Lexington and would drop it off! Several hours later Andy called—he'd fixed the microwave. The fuse itself was the weak link and he replaced it with a circuit breaker that never popped. The next day Sue and her Mom had an enjoyable time together driving to Lexington to retrieve the microwave—and we used it successfully for years.



A stream flowed near the lodge and was a perfect place to put in a pond. (Our Lord had already prepared Mike for the job way back in college when he'd worked part-time at a small construction company using backhoes and bulldozers to landscape.) We prayed for a way to build the pond. Soon afterward we were loaned a backhoe to use for two years for free. Digging a pond with a backhoe in wet mud was no easy task! Twice during the project Mike was ready to give up. And each time a certain woman we knew called just as he was about to quit to tell us she'd had a dream: that her unbelieving husband would be baptized in the pond Mike was digging. That was just the encouragement Mike needed to complete the job. Many were baptized in the pond afterwards, though we don't know if the woman's husband was among them.



Here's a touching event that occurred with our fish:

After the pond was filled, Mike put in a dozen bass he had caught while fishing. He'd feed the bass with bugs and worms as well as minnows and crayfish he'd catch while snorkeling in nearby lakes. The bass learned to trust him. They'd feel his foot vibrations and would be at the edge of the pond waiting. If other people walked to the pond, the fish seemed to know by the footsteps that it wasn't Mike—and they'd stay in the middle of the pond. Surprisingly, the bass's relationship with Mike touched many lives, especially people who'd been emotionally wounded in their lives. He'd take them to the pond so they could feed his bass. Sometimes tears flowed as they fed the fish. That's because trusting and being trusted is a powerful force in emotional healing.



As we've recounted in these different Sagas, we had to face a variety of diverse and unexpected situations at the center. Having to adjust especially without fretting was crucial in enacting our trust in the Lordship of Jesus. For example, one Thursday afternoon a retreat that was scheduled for that weekend called to cancel. (Sue had already purchased the food for the weekend, and the fresh vegetables wouldn't last until the next scheduled retreat.) We prayed, committing everything to our Lord. We'd barely finished praying when the phone rang. It was a different congregation who'd just been informed that the retreat center where they had scheduled their weekend retreat had doubled-booked and was unavailable. Could we help? Of course we could!

If you haven't embraced this truth, we strongly encourage you to if you seek to be Lordship-committed:

One sin that insults our Lord Jesus probably more than any other is when His followers **fret**. Fretting to any degree is a clear indicator that you don't trust Him. And your fretting nullifies anything else you can say to others about your faith. In Psalm 37, the "don't fret" psalm, this cardinal truth is asserted: *"Commit your way to the LORD, Trust also in Him, And He shall bring it to pass"* (Psalms 37:5). Alongside this verse, we rely at all times on this comforting command and promise: *"Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand"* (Isaiah 41:10).



In late April of our second year a youth retreat was scheduled for the weekend. They asked to canoe down the Willimantic River which flowed right past the retreat property. Even though the water was cold, the river was no more than a Class .005 in difficulty—very easy, smooth water with light ripples and gentle curves. We drove 7 miles up river and Sue and a staff member took the vehicles to our pickup point down river near the retreat center.



Mike: After making sure everyone had a life jacket, I insisted that all the canoes leave together and stay within sight of each other. The youth pastor was the first to launch, and before the second canoe even left shore he was down the river and around the bend going as fast as he and the teenager with him could paddle.

I helped the remaining canoers get into the river. The last were a male chaperone and an unrelated younger boy who didn't look very happy even being on the retreat. The other canoes had raced off to catch up with the youth pastor. Soon we were all spread out so that no two canoes could even see each other. I left the chaperone to launch on his own, and started down the river to try to gather everyone together. All the canoes finally arrived safely at the pickup point except the chaperone and the boy. I waited about 20 minutes and then started running up a trail that ran alongside the river. About two miles upriver I found them both shivering in the water as they clung to the upside down canoe. Racing into the river, I righted the canoe and we headed downstream to the pickup point.

When we were finally all back at the lodge sitting by a fire and sipping hot chocolate, the chaperone and the boy wanted to tell us their story: "Mike, when you found us, that was the seventh time we'd flipped over." They'd barely left the shore at the departure point without capsizing! Their account initially seemed like a tale of horrors. But they said that with each flip they became more honest with each other. Neither one had wanted to come on the retreat. The man had problems with his own son back home, and the boy had difficulties with his father. But before long, the cold water wasn't as important to them as how they found understanding and emotional healing in their discussions as they floated down the river. That had to be our Lord Jesus!



Conducting retreats requires two-way trust: For example, trusting our Lord is something you feel deep inside. It has nothing in common with just believing in His existence. There are times our heavenly Father wants His kids to especially experience the feelings of trust when everything is out of their control. On our confidence course we set up a trust fall from a log about 4' off the ground. As Mike was facilitating a group in using the trust fall, they asked if they could catch him. Their request was a jolt since he hadn't done a trust fall himself for over two decades. At 6'2" weighing 200 lbs. he fell right through their arms and smashed hard into the ground. He hurt for several days. The next weekend another group asked if they could catch him on the trust fall. This is where trust really gets tested – when you've "hit the ground" before. But this group caught Mike, much to his delight!





Our heavenly Father is glorified by His children's **confident trust** before He answers, and when they testify about Him afterwards. Here's an instance in which this was an especially true experience for us. Mike was going to attend seminary in Massachusetts, and Sue had prayed for a home there before we left California in 1978. The Holy Spirit had already revealed to her several specific things by which we'd recognize the house He intended for us when we arrived there. We told the specific parameters of the house to our faith family prior to leaving California. And within hours of arriving in our new state, we found the very home the Holy Spirit had disclosed to Sue.

We can tell you with divine assurance that when you seek divine indicators ahead of time that will guide your decision, you'll encourage others by your trust. And this only adds to the jubilation when our heavenly Father answers your prayers in giving you what the Holy Spirit had already revealed was His will for you!



At the retreat center we used an old "farm truck". But after several years we needed an "around town" vehicle. During Sue's prayer time the Holy Spirit revealed several identifiers to look for: a four-door, five-speed, high-miles-per gallon car with a hatchback for easy grocery shopping for retreats. On a rare weekend in which we didn't have a retreat, we decided to drive up to Ipswich, Massachusetts to visit older friends, Nathan and Florence. Upon arriving we learned they'd bought a new car with an automatic transmission but hadn't sold their older vehicle. Florence had developed problems with her left knee which kept her from using the clutch on their four-door, five-speed, high-miles-per gallon red Chevette with a hatchback for easy grocery shopping. They were asking \$2,000 for it.



On Monday back at the retreat center Mike confirmed that the price was excellent for that car. Later that day we discussed the car with one of the Board Members. He asked us how much money we had and we told him about \$8. He replied, "You've never done anything before by having the funds ahead of time. On behalf of the Board you have permission to buy the car." We called Nathan and Florence and asked them if they could send us the title and bill of sale. Then we called our insurance company to get a no-fault card we needed to purchase the car. And we prayed for \$2,000. On Thursday Mike drove to our mailbox at the post office. In it was the title and bill of sale, a no-fault card, and a check for \$2,000 with a note from a friend we hadn't seen in years: "The Holy Spirit told me in prayer to send this amount of money to you." The check had been mailed on Monday.

Now we needed to get the car. With retreats, international students, home schooling our son, and the farm, it wasn't going to be easy for both of us to get away again. We prayed and asked our friends to pray. That weekend we had a singles retreat from the Boston area. One of the retreaters was a flutist for the Boston Symphony Orchestra. She'd brought her flute with her and we asked if she would play on the deck overlooking the valley. Some of us sat around her listening, others laid out in the pasture. And we received phone calls from the town in the valley below telling us that people were outside on lawn chairs listening to her. Her playing was so **Spirit-anointed** that we're crying even now at the memory as we did back then.



As the retreat was coming to a close, a retreatier asked us if there was anything the group could pray for us. We asked them to pray about us being able to pick up the Chevette. Before anyone had a chance to pray, a man asked Mike, "Where do you need to get to?" "Ipswich." "Where in Ipswich?" Mike told him such-and-such road. He asked who Mike was going to see. When he heard, "Nathan and Florence Miller" he shouted, "That's where I'm going from here to spend the night!" Mike returned the next morning with what became known as "**Sue's sports car**." She jokes, "It could go from 0 to 60 in 5 minutes!"