

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.



The LORD Directs the Steps of His Servants.



Indicates our recognition of a divine stitch.

Over the years as we told Christians about our experiences at the retreat center, many had a hard time picturing our lives. One of the major hurdles for them was that their **outcome-based** view of their own spiritual life blocked the beauty of divine intervention and kept them from understanding our **obedience-based** way of living. This was sadly personal for us. Except for Mike's Mom, our relatives expressed no interest in hearing the miraculous interactions we were experiencing with our Lord Jesus and are relating to you in these Sagas. To this day we carry an emotional sting that people we care for so deeply didn't want to know how faithful and loving our Lord is to have worked so mightily in our midst.

Our obedient trust has given us the opportunity to experience the purposes our Lord has prepared for us.

To experience His purposes in your life is to experience Him! We are far, far from getting it right every time. But by His grace we've chosen to walk in the obedience of our father Abraham out of grateful love for our Lord. Our prayerful hope is that these Sagas will inspire YOU to live the life our Lord Jesus promises the obedient. If this isn't where you're at, or if these Sagas don't convince you about the way of life that pleases our Lord, then for you these Sagas are just fiction. But WE know they are real. And if you are obedience-based, we hope they'll strengthen your own resolve in loving and serving our Lord Jesus with His purposes as your goal.



An older godly woman frequently used our retreat center to teach younger women about their biblical responsibilities in our Lord Jesus. At the end of one retreat she asked Mike to come down to the lower lounge and pray for a certain woman. Privately she told him, "I can't tell you what this woman has gone through in life, but just hear what the Holy Spirit wants you to pray for her." Mike prayed, and afterwards we didn't give the event much thought. Several months later, though, there was an article in a Christian periodical in which the woman Mike had prayed for recalled the abuse she'd gone through years earlier and how she was healed by Lord Jesus as Mike had prayed. Very thankful to our Lord for her healing, we again didn't think anything about it afterwards.

Then one night we were very late returning to the center after counseling a pastor and his wife. Just as we were about to turn into our parking lot, we saw our dog, Sonny, lying dead beside the road. It seemed that rather than waiting for us on the front stoop like he normally did, he got nervous and ventured down near the street. Sonny's pal, our son Sean, was away at the time with Teen Mission in Ecuador.



For several weeks we prayed about getting another dog. Then a friend told us about a woman who raised Weimaraners. We called her—and she was the same woman Mike had prayed for those many months earlier! She told him that she was selling her pups for \$450 each. When he said we couldn't pay that much, she insisted we come see them. On the way to her home we prayed, "Lord, we want her to be more blessed than we are by whatever happens." When we arrived at her home we found out that the Holy Spirit had prompted her to keep aside a special puppy to give us for free. Her eyes filled with tears of joy as we hugged her and took "Ollie" home.



Ollie became an integral part of our family and with people on retreats. Weimaraners have the kind of fur that everyone loves to pet! A particular retreat from the inner city of Providence revealed the depth of blessing the dog could be. The pastor had brought men who lived on the streets to our rural retreat center. Being away from the city frightened these guys since some had never been out of urban areas. Mike encouraged them to walk along one of our forest trails, and directed them to follow Ollie. During a closing prayer time at the end of the retreat, we found out how our Lord had used the dog in a special way. One of the men prayed with grateful sincerity, "Lord, we want to thank You for this "Christian dog" who waited for us at every turn and intersection on the trail. Thank You for having the dog watch over us!" We were thankful too for this "canine gift" that kept on giving!



When our son was about 11 years old he came down with a 105° degree fever. He was admitted into the hospital where they ran a battery of tests on him but could find no cause for the fever. All they could do was give him something to try to reduce his temperature. We asked our friends to pray. Very early the next morning Mike returned to the hospital to continue praying for Sean. As he was praying, a nurse came into the room. The Holy Spirit prompted Mike to help her. As they talked, her expression looked hopeless — her husband had given her divorce papers just the day before. Mike talked with her and prayed for her, and then she left the room.

Back at the retreat center Sue was hanging clothes outside when the Holy Spirit told her that Sean had a kidney infection. She immediately called Mike at the hospital and told him what the Spirit had said. Mike went to the nurse he'd prayed with earlier. Her face was now radiating peace! He told her what Sue had been told by the Holy Spirit, and she replied that the tests didn't show any kidney problem. Mike pleaded in tears that he had no doubt that the Lord had shown us the cause. A doctor "happened" to be walking by to visit his patients, and with a firm voice the nurse explained the situation to him. Violating all protocols, he immediately prescribed an antibiotic that lowered Sean's temperature. Several weeks later Sean had an operation to remove a blockage in his kidney.



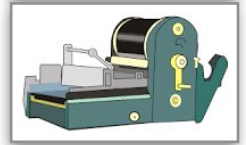
There was a Bible school about an hour away from us. The leaders of the school as well as the congregation that sponsored it had come to the retreat center several times and heard Mike teach. They asked him if he would teach at the school. His first semester he emphasized the importance of teaching with the intent to help people apply God's Word. (Mike had learned this biblical method from a godly professor when he was working on his MBA.) Each week the students returned to the class telling each other how our Lord enabled them to put into practice what they'd learned. The second semester the Holy Spirit led Mike to teach the same course using the worship song, "**Shine Jesus Shine**." Each session began by singing the song and then discussing a particular stanza as a way of life that epitomized the Lordship of Jesus for them personally. It wasn't long before the lives of the students revolved around the Lordship of Jesus.

About halfway through the semester the entire leadership of the Bible school and the congregation walked into the class unannounced. Mike thought they were coming in to fire him for some creedal difference. But they came in for two specific reasons. First they asked the class forgiveness because Lord Jesus had shown each of the leaders that they didn't know Him, but only *knew about Him*. Then they turned to Mike: "You've shown us and these students that you're a man who knows our Lord Jesus. We want you and this class to know how essential this is so they don't squander their time by getting to know more *about Him*." Everyone then stood and sang "Shine Jesus, Shine"! (After that semester Mike stopped teaching since the leaders and the students were now resolute in the Lordship of Jesus.)

"Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you."

Our life at the retreat center was very busy. Often we'd only see each other at meals or while getting ready for bed at night. After three years of ministering at the center we were being buried by our own "success." Conducting retreats, ministering to internationals and religious leaders, and taking care of the farm and the lodge left us emotionally and physically fatigued. But our Lord Jesus had led us to exactly the point where He wanted us: *"Weeping may endure for a night, but rejoicing comes in the morning"* (Psalms 30:5b).

It wasn't the hard work that was the worse problem, but the unreliable worn-out equipment and tools, and the need for equipment we didn't have. For example, we had an ancient tractor that worked when it wanted to. Using it to remove snow from the parking lot before a retreat group came was iffy at best. We also had to create many handouts for retreats by typing them on mimeograph paper and then reproducing copies on a mimeo machine at a local congregation's office.



In 1986 Mike gave a copy of Carle Zimmerman's book, *Family and Civilization*, to the pastors who came to the center each month. Zimmerman identifies three types of families, each of which predominates at various times in a civilization's life cycle: the trustee family, the domestic family, and the **atomistic family**. The atomistic family stage generally marks the final period of social disintegration as everyone becomes self-serving and individualistic, with little sense of "we".

(For further insight into the material the pastors read, see *Chapter 1, Face It! Christian Families Today Are A Mess*, in our book, *Restoring The Early Church*.)



When everything seemed bleakest, the Son arose! The following month when the pastors again met at the retreat center, they unanimously and sadly agreed that the US was in the Atomistic Stage of societal demise. We didn't realize then that our exhausted busyness was about to change! The pastors asked Mike to help them with the apathetic men in their congregations, and the Holy Spirit worked through him. Where men's retreats had been less than 10% of our total, over 50% of our retreats now became men's retreats. From this flowed couples retreats and then generational retreats of the same family group. Hallelujah!

(Mike's health permitting, the series we hope to start in 2023, *Shepherding Our Father's Children in Apocalyptic Times*, will continue the Spirit's work to develop mature men who lead their families both in this world and through the narrow gate. It's the character quality of **deference** that separates a man after our Lord's own heart from those who value their Christian faith as secondary to their worldly pursuits and satisfaction.)

At that morning breakfast the pastors also asked Mike to investigate a certain Christian women's ministry that wanted to open a chapter in Connecticut. It was then that both of us let them know how much we were struggling with dilapidated equipment and tools, to the point of even considering the possibility of leaving the center. Just as we finished explaining what we were going through, one of the pastors lovingly rebuked us: "How can I eat at your table and have my congregation and me blessed by you two if you don't let us help you?" The other men chimed in with the same loving regard, and grateful tears and hugs filled the room.

Later that day Norm Swenson called to tell us he'd secured a matching grant from the Day Christian Foundation. In less than a week the pastors raised enough funds to purchase the tools and equipment we needed—especially a new 4-wheel drive tractor with a bucket, snowplow, and bush hog to cut down the pasture weeds. The tractor was so versatile that our son and the college kids could relieve Mike of some of the farm work.





One day the Holy Spirit sent one of the pastors to us to tell us that we needed to purchase a Mac computer. We didn't know one computer from another. We told you in a previous Saga how the town we lived in let Mike use a basketball court each week so he could disciple men. One of the men was a sales rep for Mac, and his basement was his showroom. As soon as the man demonstrated the computer's capability (1986 capabilities!) Mike was in awe. He'd committed to memory many illustrations and other materials that would aid in our retreat ministry. Now the Mac would let him use what he'd been mentally storing up for so long. We put the computer in an office/prayer room next to the upstairs lounge.



We were also given 40,000 sheets of goldenrod-yellow printer paper which became known as "Coventry House yellow." We printed up retreat handouts on a dot matrix printer and kept them in a file drawer in the prayer room. Retreaters had free access to the files and could take what they needed as discussion tools with their family and friends. Over the years it was a blessing for us to encounter people who'd never come to the center but were showing us the "yellow" handout and telling us how it had helped them. (We never mentioned we were the source!)



We'd like to close this Saga with a memory that especially warms our hearts. "Vicki" was the eighth grade teacher at a Christian school in another town. Near the end of the school year she brought her students on a three-day retreat. She'd had served as a foreign missionary for many years and shared with us her sorrow over her students: "As much as I've tried, I don't seem to be able to instill the kind of motives these kids need to serve our Lord Jesus. They have a pecking order among themselves based solely on their grades." Having known Vicki and her deep devotion to Jesus, her sense of failure touched us deeply. "Would you mind if we helped? These kids need to be broken down and rebuilt if they're ever going to have the attitude that serves the interests of Jesus rather than themselves. Please let us coordinate their activities for the next 3 days."

With her permission we separated the boys and the girls. While the girls shoveled chicken manure in the coop, the boys shoveled sheep manure in the barn. Then the assignments got progressively harder. We were watching for the helpful kids—the ones who were aware of others' needs and served them. When everyone else was tired, they were the ones pouring cups of water or rubbing sore backs. As we spotted kids with these qualities, we complimented them and encouraged the rest to take notice of those who served others (see Philippians 2:1-8; 1Corinthians 16:15,16).

On the last day we had a picnic and swam in the river that flowed at the base of the retreat center property. The lodge was a long uphill walk from the river—LONG and STEEP! When we were getting ready to make the trek back, the willing helpfulness of everyone was overwhelming! As we stopped halfway back for a breather, Vicki sat down and cried for joy amid the group. In between tears and laughter she told her class how pleased she was with the caring nature each of them had come to personify. And THEY knew they were changed! That special time knit them together in a unified bond which a number of them recalled even years later. Vicki died of cancer a few years after that retreat, and we can picture the "Well done, good and faithful servant!" she heard from her Lord Jesus as her name was proclaimed to all the hosts of heaven.

We hope these testimonies of the Holy Spirit at work in and around us as we endeavored to walk obedience-based in our Lord Jesus will spur you on to yield fully to Him too!