

# 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 committed to His Lordship.



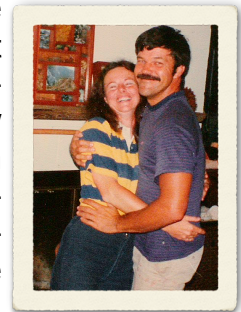
## The Spirit's Revelations and Interventions—And Our Frailties



*Indicates our recognition of a divine stitch.*

The accounts we share in these sagas aren't about two spiritually perfect human beings. Far from it! You could say that our spirits are willing, but our humanness and sin nature require repetitive sanctification by the Holy Spirit. Those early months at the retreat center were times of the Spirit's miraculous interventions amid our own human frailty. Adjusting to our new life in a cavernous empty lodge, learning how to make repairs on just about everything, and tending to a multitude of farm animals made us vulnerable to demonic voices of discouragement and inadequacy. An absolutely vital verse for us was *and* has continued to be, "Encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called 'Today,' so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin" (Hebrews 3:13).

(For the Lordship-committed, mutual encouragement is almost as vital as mutual trust in Jesus!)



**A bit of our own history:** When we became followers of Jesus in 1977 we knew that we were being called to **trust** our Lord Jesus in ways that far surpassed "believing" in Him. We mentioned before that Mike had placed his trust in Jesus after reading through the entire Bible for the second time. His life had been directed by military procedures for the past 8 years, and he read the Bible using the same framework: "What did our Lord Jesus demand of him in order to serve Him?" Several months later when Sue internalized the personal nature of trusting in Jesus, she too became His follower. Not long afterward we were both baptized at a New Tribes Mission station in the Philippines during Mike's final deployment.

By putting our trust in the shed blood of Jesus for our sins and realizing that belonging to Jesus gave us spiritual power to carry out our Father's will, we avoided the error of just being "believers" who were content to *know about* God. Nor did we succumb to the lie that the gospel is "fire insurance" to keep us out of hell. Even with our initial trust in our Lord Jesus, the retreat center tested us. Our humanness and sin nature kept coming up against such a simple demand of our Lord – **TRUST ME!** "Whoever puts his trust in Me, as the Scripture says, rivers of living water will flow from his inmost being! Now He said this about the Spirit, whom those who trusted in Him were to receive later" (John 7:38,39a; see Acts 2:38,39). The root of the Hebrew word for trust, *emunah*, means "to jump off a cliff." Your jump of trust testifies to your confidence in Him Who is telling you to jump.



**"For who has despised the day of small things?"** (Zechariah 4:10).



One of the early problems we faced before we could hold our first retreat is that we had no parking lot at the center. Guests needed to park on the side of a steep, narrow country road. Also, the dorms were on the lower level of the lodge, but there was no path to the entry door. People would enter up-

stairs and lug their luggage down a narrow winding staircase.

In early March, Mike contacted the contractor who'd poured the foundation for the lodge 10 years earlier and showed him the plans for the parking lot. The contractor was aware of the financial plight of the retreat center and told Mike the work would cost \$1,800. He also told Mike to get 32 feet of 18-inch pipe because there was a seasonal stream that ran across the lot area. Lastly he told Mike to call him after he'd acquired the pipe.



(Norm Swensen had previously invited Gene and us to speak at his congregation's Sunday evening service. This was several days after Mike's conversation with the contractor. After the service a man walked up to Mike and asked if he had any specific needs he could help with. Mike told him about the 32 feet of pipe and the man nodded. Tuesday morning the pipe was delivered, free of charge! Mike contacted the contractor and told him he had the pipe.)

The contractor finished the project that Saturday and told Mike that he needed payment as soon as possible. Prompted by the Holy Spirit, Mike told him he'd pay him on Monday. The three of us added up our available funds, which totaled about \$15. We prayed and asked others to pray too. Monday's mail arrived with financial gifts and income tax refunds that totaled \$1809. We took a check to the contractor and then spent \$4 on ice cream to celebrate!



In early-March as repairs continued, Norm advised us that we needed to reduce the number of farm animals. He said that the time it took each day to tend the livestock was going to create a lot of stress for us while having retreats at the center. And since Gene was gone every Saturday with our only truck to sell animals and distribute tracts to internationals in a parking lot in Hartford, Norm suggested that Gene locate a congregation in the area to take over his parking lot ministry.

(Some of the Spirit's interventions were very personal. At the pastors' monthly meeting on Friday morning, March 4, 1983, Mike was shown a chain-reference Bible, something which he knew would be helpful in his counseling. But when he asked what the Bible would cost, he realized it was far too expensive. So the three of us began to ask our Lord to provide that kind of Bible.)

Two weeks later, after talking about his parking lot ministry on a Sunday morning at a Hartford congregation, Gene came home with a chain-reference Bible. He told us that a man was standing at the front door as he entered the congregation. Handing Gene the Bible, he said, "You or someone you know has been praying for this Bible and the Holy Spirit told me to give it to you." Gene joyfully placed the Bible in Mike's hands.



Another obvious problem we faced was that the upstairs and downstairs lounges were devoid of furniture. As we prayed each day about the need for furniture, the Holy Spirit prompted us to pray for 21 pieces – specifically, lightweight sofas, loveseats and chairs that would be easy to rearrange. Even more specifically, the Holy Spirit prompted us to get furniture with reversible pillows and stain-resistant herculon fabric. Then He began showing us places in the lounges to mark with masking tape on the carpet so we'd know where to situate each piece. Then on one day our mothers each gave us a check for \$1,000 — and neither one realized that the Holy Spirit had prompted the other to do the same thing!

A few days later a man who lived just outside of Boston called Mike. "Joe" was the father of

a former student whom Mike had counseled about her rebellion toward her Dad while she was at the college where Mike had been Controller. Following up on Mike's counsel she went home and asked her father's forgiveness. Now, four years later, Joe had found out about our need for furniture. He told us he was in the hotel/motel furniture business and invited Gene and us up for the weekend. As he showed us his warehouse, he said, "What I've gotten for free you can have for free, and what I've paid for I'll sell to you at cost."

Looking through his warehouse we discovered that he had end tables, some used motel dressers, and carpeting—but not the furniture we needed. A little downhearted we returned to his home. That night we went to bed while Gene stayed up talking with Joe. After Gene prayed with him, he insistently told Joe, "You know where the furniture is that our Lord wants us to have!" It was then that Joe remembered that several months earlier a furniture manufacturer in western Massachusetts had contacted him about 21 pieces of furniture which a buyer had ordered and later canceled the order. Joe couldn't recall the color of the furniture but thought it was tangerine orange herculon. When Gene told us about it the next morning, the Holy Spirit gave us a witness in our spirits that this was indeed the furniture our Lord Jesus wanted us to have for the retreat center.

We called the manufacturer and found they still had the furniture and would sell it to us for their cost of making it. They also included a dozen bar stools for the counter at a reduced price. We made arrangements with both the manufacturer and Joe that five days later we'd go to both warehouses in one trip to pick it all up. Then we began praying for a large truck to retrieve all that furniture. On the morning we were to go we still didn't have a truck. In prayer the Holy Spirit gave Mike a phone number to call. It was a UHaul rental company a few miles from us. That day they had a special offer: the largest truck could be rented for the cost of the smallest truck, \$19!

(Several weeks later a man came to the retreat center and asked our forgiveness. The Holy Spirit had been prompting him to let us use his large delivery truck and he was rebellious. We forgave him and told him how the Holy Spirit had met our need. A word for all of us who are *genuinely* born again, "So, as the Holy Spirit says: 'Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts...'" (Hebrews 3:7,8a)).

After our long day at both warehouses, the UHaul was stuffed—even the cab was nearly full. The 21 pieces of lightweight furniture proved to be tan and rust, perfect for the rustic decor of the center. We had about \$25 left from the \$2000 our moms had given us. And once everything was in the lodge, we marveled at how wonderful it looked and fit.

**"Jesus reached out His hand to [Peter], took hold of him and said, 'Such little trust! Why did you doubt?'" (Matthew 14:31).**

(We wrote in Saga 2 that during those early weeks at the center Mike had gotten disheartened, and our Lord had spoken to him, "Be patient and keep repairing the premises." He had then told Mike to be at peace because on April 24, 1983 our ministry would be made public – the day the pastors commissioned us.)



In a way, Mike was like Peter, who had enough trust in our Lord Jesus to get out of the boat, but then let himself become anxious. You'd think that with everything we've been telling you so far, trust would be a constant in our lives. But as April began with all the furniture in place, there were many other things we needed to buy before the 24th and our first retreat. Mike began to use our credit card to fund these purchases instead of waiting for our Lord to provide. The Holy Spirit allowed him to do this for a few weeks. Then He firmly told Mike, "Cut up your credit card! You will not undermine your trust in Jesus by your doubt!" We immediately

cut up our card. And before the credit card bill came due, funds had come in to pay it all.

Seven years later the Holy Spirit again tested Mike in finances. At year's end we were going to be \$3,000 short in paying our bills. Having seen what other ministries usually did in that situation, he wrote an appeal for donations. As soon as he finished writing the letter, the Holy Spirit chastised him and told him to destroy the letter. He did it immediately. By the end of the year \$6,000 came in through donations—and we hadn't said anything to anyone about the need!

**Take this to heart:** If you feel that you're the one who's solely responsible for the finances for yourself, your family, or your business, please learn from Mike's lesson of sanctification when it comes to financial supply: **God is THE source of provision.** For the Lordship-committed, our responsibility is to trust Him to provide, and to seek the Spirit's *rhema* about how He will provide. One of God's names in the Bible is *Jehovah Jireh*, meaning "God will provide." Whether you work for provision or He provides in some other manner, God is the provider, not you. As with Mike's testing, it's dangerous to believe that you are the source of your own provision. Take this adage to heart: "If you're going to fret, He'll give you reason to fret." God will always meet your need for provision—unless you doubt or fail to see Him as the Provider. (Read Deuteronomy 8:3-20 for an example of God's faithfulness to provide and the consequences of doubting Him.)

(We who are Lordship-committed need to remind ourselves and each other that our heavenly Father puts us where we can serve Him and bring Him the most glory through our Lord Jesus. In positioning us to bring Him glory, He'll place us among people, whether neighbors, co-workers, or classmates to whom He wants us to represent our Lord Jesus. We would learn that He'd use us in the lives of over 5000 people in the next 10+ years.)

### **"Offer the sacrifice of praise to God."**



On April 29, 1983 our first retreat was a group of Christian Khmer men who had escaped Cambodia during the time of the Killing Fields. The Killing Fields are a number of sites in Cambodia where an estimated 1.7 million to 2.5 million Cambodians were executed and buried by the Khmer Rouge. None of the Khmer who were coming on retreat spoke English, but an army officer in the Reserves who spoke Khmer from his service during the Vietnam War was going to accompany the men and serve as our translator.

Following Norm's counsel to reduce the number of farm animals, several days before the retreat we took a beef cow to the slaughter house. On Thursday, the day before the retreat would begin, the army officer called us. He had been called up on assignment and wouldn't be able to be our translator, but the men were still coming. We committed it to prayer – boy did we pray! On Friday we went to the slaughter house to pick up our meat. As we told the butcher what we were about to face that weekend, a woman waiting on her order overheard us. She was a follower of Jesus, as was her husband. She introduced herself and told us that her husband spoke fluent Khmer from his time in the Peace Corps. They both joined us that weekend!

We're crying now as we remember the testimonies of the Khmer men who had seen their wives and children having been mercilessly slaughtered by the Khmer Rouge. Several of these guys had become followers of Jesus while in refugee camps in Thailand where Christians had gone to share Jesus with the refugees. Our worship with these men was as close to touching the face of Jesus as you could get. They worshipped in Khmer and we in English. And our Lord felt the love of each one of us.

More in our next Saga...