

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.



In The Kingdom The Holy Spirit Makes The Bible Alive In You



Indicates our recognition of a divine stitch.

We want to begin this Saga with a few insights about our *goals* and the *methods* we used at the retreat center and how we got these. Our Lord Jesus said that "a disciple of the kingdom of heaven is like a head of a household, who brings out of his treasure things new and old" (Matthew 13:52). So here are some of our "old and new" experiences as His disciples that may encourage you in your own journey in Him. As we wrote earlier, Mike became a follower of our Lord Jesus after reading the entire Bible for the second time. EVERYTHING our Lord Jesus requires of His own is contained between the Bible's covers: from becoming *genuinely* born again, to what living in Covenant union with your heavenly Father entails, to how He intends to fulfill His purposes in and through you by His indwelling Spirit on your journey to your salvation.

God's commands to the Israelites in the Older Testament were directed *collectively* to them. And the predominant use of *plural* verbs in the Newer Testament specify how followers of our Lord Jesus must *collectively cooperate* in extending our Lord's Kingdom. (**Scribal theology** over the centuries has eliminated this crucial collective understanding, and focuses instead on the individual.) As two people our Lord called out, we didn't develop our Kingdom understanding in an academic setting such as from the pulpit or in a Bible study. Three young sailors discipled Mike through the process of *discussing and applying* God's commands. Their mutual goal was to represent Jesus and His character qualities to the crew on his ship. And the goal of our marriage is similar: to reflect Jesus *together*.

✓ From the beginning of our faith journey this has been our view of God's Word: that through the guidance (*rhema*) of the Holy Spirit and the grace of our Father we are to apply God's commands so that we may love and serve our Lord Jesus collectively with unconditional trust. For us, the Bible was never intended to educate people with more facts, but rather to train them to live it! Training retreaters to serve our Lord *collectively* was our goal — an essential quality for them to bring back to their homes and faith communities.



In contrast to the pervasive reliance on *Bible education* in Christianity, our Lord's method of training His disciples was **I DO, WE DO, YOU DO**. In other words, you watch Me do something, you and I do it together, then you together do this (see Mark 6:7-11; Luke 10:1-12). His Kingdom training model progressively instills personal responsibility within a larger cooperative endeavor (John 13:35; Philippians 2:1-8; 1Peter 3:8). We relied on our Lord's method: first to instruct/demonstrate to retreaters how to perform a task; then they did it with our support as well as our admonition to those who were full of themselves or uncooperative. Finally, they could do the activity together when they got home. Using the Bible and the character of Jesus as the standard, our *group discussion and debriefing* of what had taken place were facilitated through placing the furniture in the lodge or on the deck into **talking circles**.



Wherever we lived we always had two or three talking circles: our dining area, our living room, and our deck if we had one. Talking circles convey that discussions will lead to deciding what's right and not who is right. Talking circles also enhance the dignity of those who take part and improve the likelihood that they'll participate. (See our video: *Effective Discussion Requires A Talking Circle*)



As our Lord Jesus did with His disciples, **direct experience** was our primary means of developing Christ-like character and mutual commitment during retreats. In bad weather we used **simulations** when direct experience was impractical. Our Lord often used simulations through His parables so that people could put themselves into the context of what He shared. Because we were fully aware that our Lord's followers are at war against demonic foes (Ephesians 6:12), we often used war movies such as *Twelve O'clock High* or the *Sands of Iwo Jima* as simulations. We'd introduce the movies by emphasizing the mutual personal sacrifice they'd be seeing, and let them know that the various character types in the movie were most likely among the retreaters. We encouraged them to stop the movie at any time to discuss it. We noticed over the years that the women understood the idea of spiritual cooperation from the war movies faster than the men did.

We have firmly believed that to live Lordship-committed, the *genuinely* born again must be trained using the methods our Lord Jesus employed – **direct experience** or **simulations**. This personal method of training certainly isn't as "efficient" as the lecture/classroom style which was adapted from the Greeks. But the major difference is that the disciple is trained by those who have experienced what they instruct. The major hurdle we faced with most first-time retreaters was the **scribal theology method** by which they'd been taught. Since most retreaters were accustomed to acquiring more Bible knowledge, being trained by someone with personal experience was foreign to them.

We generally kept sit-down Bible instruction and discussion to 2 hours during a weekend retreat. Even then, the instruction centered on the Christ-like character issues that the activities would be used to develop. We remember one younger man who came on his first men's retreat along with others who'd been to the center several times before. In the middle of the retreat he complained about the lack of Bible teaching. The other men corrected him. "Mike has been demonstrating the Scriptures and teaching us about Jesus ever since we arrived!" The young man objected, "No, he hasn't even cited one chapter or verse!" The other men laughed and told him, "Mike has been living the Bible and showing us how to live it as well."

Try to picture the immense value of experiencing what the Bible requires versus just knowing Bible facts. And consider this: What if Mike on his very first training flight in the navy meets his instructor who informs him that he has never flown before. But the instructor then adds that he'd read a book on aerodynamics. Will he be able to train Mike how to fly, *or* just articulate the aerodynamics of the aircraft? This is the reality in Christianity that scribal theology has spawned. But because of our own love and commitment to our Lord Jesus, our goal was to train retreaters to serve Him cooperatively.

"The pleasantness of a friend springs from their heartfelt advice" (Proverbs 27:9).



In our first months at the center the Holy Spirit sent us two very helpful Christian men. One ran a Christian outward bound program. The other had been handicapped due to an accident as a teenager. They shared with us wonderful insight into using activities to generate Christ-like character development and collective unity. Together we developed our **cooperative version** of broomball, volleyball, capture the flag, basketball, farm work, and a confidence course. These various activities were all aimed at developing Christ-like character and a collective view of themselves.

Our central criterion for participating in an activity was Christ, whether how He would play or do

the farm work. During the activity Mike would speak privately to individuals if their attitudes were falling short of our Lord Jesus. After activities, group debriefings in a talking circle opened the door for Mike to give general feedback as well as for people to offer their own insights and how they felt. Again, our Lord Jesus and God's commands were our standard.

Something we thought you'd like to know. During activities we strongly encouraged retreaters to call **'time out'** when things weren't going the way they'd hoped. This one action, having the courage to call time out and stop the activity, inspired the kind of loving determination they'd need back home to admonish or confront someone close to them on their faith journey if necessary.

Please take this to heart: If you've been taught the Bible without ever experiencing admonishment, then you most likely have some inner conceit. You're deceived into believing you're "better" than how Christ or others see you. And you may be no more Christ-like in your character than when your spiritual life first began. Scribal theology and the education model that's used in teaching the Bible block admonishment. Yet the combination of instruction and admonishing and confronting are biblical (Colossians 3:16; 1Thessalonians 5:12; 2Timothy 4:2; Titus 2:15). To live Lordship-committed, you must have at least one relationship that's based on each other's Christ-like character development and having the freedom to correct each other without nitpicking or a critical attitude. (See *Discerning Levels of Friendship*.) You may also find these two videos helpful:

39. Jesus Used Hebraic-based Training Methods 40. Your Doctrine Governs Your Mutual Way Of Life

Retreaters Were Being Welcomed Into Our Home



You may have gleaned from our previous Addenda that as we lived in the retreat center lodge, we were intimately and intricately involved with the retreaters. The lodge was our home, and that is how we viewed the people who came through our door – **guests in our home**. Retreaters ate their meals at our table and sat in our living room!

Early in our faith journey, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit we developed biblical applications concerning the **freedom** of what we would permit in our home, and **boundaries** of what we wouldn't allow because it violated God's Word (Matthew 18:18-20). In God's Word the goal for upholding righteous standards in a home is **peace**. The biblical concept of peace, **shalom**, encompasses completeness, wholeness, harmony, and well-being.



So vital is the presence of peace that it is used as a name of God: *Yahweh Shalom* (see Judges 6:24). And our Lord Jesus, the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6), knows that love can't prosper wherever peace is lacking. **The Hebrew letters of shalom mean "authority that keeps chaos in check."** It's within this understanding that our Lord Jesus emphasizes, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God" (Matthew 5:9). Our Lord is citing two types of peacemakers: ❤️ those in authority who instruct and enforce the freedom and boundary of His commands in order to maintain peace, ❤️ those who bring about peace in relationships which need help in reconciliation.

A man renders personal account to God for his humble exercise of authority in his home. God-given authority encompasses the responsibility to include and commend those things that contribute to the

peace of your home, and to exclude or correct those things that rob your home of peace. Peace in the home is wholeness, harmony, and the well-being of each person living there, and is the foundation for the loving warmth that's needed to nurture individuals and families in the way of our Lord.

Jesus: "Immanuel—which means, "God with us" (Matthew 1:23)

As our forefathers in the faith recognized, I AM loves to be among His people. That is, He loves to actively live in union with them as the Father Who never fails. For the *genuinely* born again this intimate union is made possible by the indwelling Spirit of our Lord Jesus. But God has standards for His involvement in the lives of Jesus' own just as He specified to the Israelites:

"What agreement can there be between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God — as God said, 'I will house Myself in them, and I will walk among you. I will be their God, and they will be My people.' Therefore the Lord says, 'Go out from their midst; separate yourselves; don't even touch what is unclean. Then I Myself will receive you. In fact, I will be your Father, and you will be My sons and daughters,' says the Lord Almighty. Therefore, my dear friends, since we have these promises, let us purify ourselves from everything that can defile either body or spirit, and strive to be completely holy, out of reverence for God" (2Corinthians 6:16b-7:1; see also Deuteronomy 23:12-14).

We firmly believe that this principle of God "walking in our midst" includes our Lord Jesus as a welcomed guest in our home through His Spirit. And to make sure we had a home in which God's righteous standards were upheld out of grateful love for Him, Mike exercised his God-given authority as servant/leader. Often retreaters would tell us they could sense a spirit of peace as they turned off the road into our parking lot. Others would comment on our home being so spiritually bright compared to their own home. The sense of peace at the center certainly wasn't because we were perfect, but because we and the staff purposed to live repentantly.

In Saga 1 we cited the challenge that Norm Swensen gave Mike the day they met: "I want you to make Coventry House a safe place for Jesus." And that often meant confronting the divisive effects of **scribal theology** and its knowledge-driven view of the Bible in a number of men who came on retreats. These guys enjoyed starting arguments, often disguising themselves as playing **"the devil's advocate"**. In reality they acted as the devil's advocate! Their most common point of argument was eschatology – a branch of theology concerned with the end times.

While at seminary Mike asked for the Holy Spirit's guidance as he studied the four main eschatological views. Even though each view had adequate biblical support, their conclusions differed tremendously. He realized then that our Lord didn't want him spending time conjecturing about the future: "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Each day has enough trouble of its own" (Matthew 6:34).

Mike's concern about himself, our family and staff was and has been this: "When the Son of Man comes, will He find trust?" (Luke 18:8). To us that meant **trust-based obedience as we daily served the Lord Jesus we love.** And our boundary for "end times speculation" arguments comes from our Lord's own mouth, "But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father" (Matthew 24:36). So Mike firmly silenced the devil's advocates because they were sinning in our home (see 1Timothy 1:4; 2Timothy 2:16; Titus 3:9-11). No one was going to rob us of peace by either word or deed.

We have much more to share in our next Saga. We hope that if you're determined by grace to live Lordship-committed out of grateful love for Jesus and for others, this Saga has given you some insight for your own life.