

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 Lordship-Committed Serve A King Who Empowers His Own



Indicates our recognition of a divine stitch.

In Saga 6 we recounted the "flavor" which the Holy Spirit instilled in us, that is, *His goals and methods for conducting retreats*. Another **crucially essential element** of why we were sent to the retreat center was **our particular combination of spiritual gifts** – for Mike, apostle and prophet, and for Sue, exhorter and faith. The combination of these gifts which the Holy Spirit apportioned us by grace was and is how we view ourselves as vessels He works through, even if retreaters just saw us as Mike and Sue. As we discuss some of the ways the Holy Spirit used our spiritual gifts, keep in mind that it's His activity which flows in and through a follower of Jesus. That key element of His presence and His working is what's so important in understanding spiritual gifts.

We've noted in previous writings that while the English and Greek languages emphasize a subject, Hebrew thought and language emphasize the verb, that is, the action which the subject does. For example, "Lord" is what our Lord Jesus does — by His Spirit **He actively exercises rule in us as our Lord and Master by commanding us to do His Father's will in loving obedient trust**. (See John 14:21; 1John 2:3-6,17.) And through His indwelling Spirit, He bestows the **necessary grace** that strengthens us to follow through in love-motivated obedient trust.



So picture the spiritual gifts the Spirit has given us in light of how He uses us:

Apostle: *The Spirit-given ability to be sent forth among God's people to build up and strengthen their resolve to love, trust and obey our Lord Jesus.* (This gift is the Spirit's means to minister among many faith communities.)

Prophet: *The Spirit-given ability to receive and communicate specific revelations from God for His people at the appropriate time.* (This gift is used most often to confront unrepentance and to encourage the humble. It, too, is the Spirit's means to minister among many faith communities.)

Exhortation: *The Spirit-given ability to encourage, teach, and confront others to enable them to fulfill Father's purposes through their obedient trust.* (This gift is used to urge people to actively live Lordship-committed.)

Faith: *The Spirit-given ability to confidently confirm the will and purposes of God even if all the details are not clearly understood.* (This gift is used most often to counter the sins of worry or fretting so that trust will grow.)

As crucial as the Spirit's guidance and empowerment was and is for us, it is very rare to see it among the religiously-mired because of the impact of **scribal theology**. But this was why He brought us to the retreat center: **to free people from the prison of scribal theology and to live Spirit-led!**

(We've noted this previously: Even if the *genuinely* born again don't realize it, the Holy Spirit brings forth a marriage based on the combination of gifts He's apportioned to each spouse. Not knowing this divine reality creates a lot of unnecessary misunderstanding and frustration for a couple. Also, recognizing the combination of spiritual gifts is how the Holy Spirit establishes a faith community for the Lordship-committed.)

The Spirit Of Our Lord Reveals And Fulfills God's Prophecies

† "Surely the Lord God does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7).

† "My word that goes out from My mouth: It will not return to Me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it" (Isaiah 55:11).

† "Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass" (1 Thessalonians 5:24).



In Saga 2 we told you about our prophetic friend, Karl, whom we'd asked to come to the center and give us 'a spiritual review'. During that visit Karl spent quite a bit of time with us as we talked and prayed together. A couple years later Karl was traveling from his home in Virginia to Maine when the Holy Spirit prompted him to drive the 15 miles off the highway to the retreat center. Karl knocked on our door with this message, **"God intends to expand your ministry"**, then he quickly left. At that point we'd been feeling pretty overwhelmed with all that was going on at the center, so his message from the Spirit startled us! But as we prayed for the Holy Spirit's guidance, in our spirits we received His confirmation that Karl's words were from our Lord.



A short while later we experienced the outworking of this prophetic message. The same weekend that Sue was working with a women's retreat at the center, Mike was invited to conduct a men's retreat in another state. Then various congregations that used the retreat center began inviting him to preach. Not long afterward two single women showed up in our lives seeking spiritual direction and greater purpose as unmarried followers of Jesus. What resulted from that relationship was us hosting a singles group which served about 19 small congregations in eastern Connecticut. Most of the singles were between the ages of 26 and 36, and many of the men in particular acted more like self-serving adolescents than men who were preparing for the responsibilities of being a husband and father. By contrast, we'd married in our early 20s just before Mike's first deployment. Our life as singles had been brief, and very serious circumstances hung over our decision to marry: Vietnam, violent protests against an unpopular war, being active duty, and even getting married during a time of war.

For most in the singles group, however, life was more about them and their personal desires. Initially we held a monthly potluck at the retreat center and a weekend retreat every three months. It didn't take long for us to realize that we were overseeing a **"dating meat market."** Many of the women dressed no differently than the prostitutes outside the naval bases overseas. Many had moved away from home and were living alone, vulnerable to being used by men who were interested only in their own gratification. So Mike took a fatherly approach to these women by establishing a rule: "You can't date a man in this group unless he first asks your father, your pastor or me." At first some of the women balked, but then they realized that there was a certain sense of security and personal value in not responding to every call for a date.

It wasn't long before everyone abided by this rule and the nature of the group changed dramatically from being someone's next target to being brothers and sisters in the Lord. The women actually started dressing more modestly, and the guys who'd been using the group as a hunting ground stopped coming. Some of the women even moved back under the protection of their father. And a number of more spiritually mature men and women began attending now that they saw it was no longer a market for dates. We knew that some of the congregations treated singles as tagalongs in their family programs, or as third wheels who had little purpose in the congregation until they got married. But our own understanding and treatment of single men and women came from applying God's Word:

"He who is unmarried is concerned for the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord... The unmarried woman cares about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit" (1 Corinthians 7:32,34).

Our motive therefore was to help the single people focus on their opportunities for "*things of the Lord*" and allow Him to bring a spouse along if and when He deemed it appropriate. Our work among the singles lasted for three years until some of the congregations started their own singles groups and ours was no longer needed.



When we didn't have retreats lasting through Sunday, we attended a particular faith community. Also attending were the leaders of three campus ministries at UConn, located about four miles from the retreat center. One day the leader of one of the ministries came out to the center to speak with Mike. "I've heard you say at times, 'the Lord told me.' I've never heard the Lord speak to me until last night. He told me I wasn't to put a card in the students' mail boxes." (Putting invitation cards in students' boxes asking if they'd like to be part of a Bible study was standard practice in his ministry.) After some discussion he felt assured that the Lord really had spoken to him, and didn't put cards in the boxes. That semester he had far more students in his Bible study than ever before!

Halfway through the semester he came to see Mike again. This time he told Mike that the Lord had told him to leave the campus ministry at the end of the semester. He and his wife confirmed this was God's will. Then he blessed Mike with a word of wisdom: "You often tell people to make sure they show **deference to authorities** or they'll have trouble with God (Romans 13:1,2). You insist that deference is an absolutely essential character quality for belonging to Jesus as *their Lord*." Mike acknowledged that deference to authority is crucial. The man went on, "I'd like to tell you that you also practice what I consider a higher form of deference, **relational deference**. You put the needs of others first and keep your word no matter what the cost." Tears of joy filled Mike's eyes as he and the younger man hugged in mutual appreciation.



Towards the end of the semester the elders of the congregation where we worshipped asked to meet with us. At the meeting were not only the pastor and elders, but also the leaders of the campus ministries at UConn, including the man Mike had talked with. They told us that the ministry leaders wouldn't be returning the next semester, and the elders asked us if we would take over the ministries on behalf of the congregation. We asked them how they were led to ask us to do this. They answered that several weeks earlier a prophetess in the congregation had given them this passage:

"Sing, barren woman, you who never bore a child; burst into song, shout for joy, you who were never in labor; because more are the children of the desolate woman than of her who has a husband," says the LORD. 'Enlarge the place of your tent, stretch your tent curtains wide, do not hold back; lengthen your cords, strengthen your stakes. For you will spread out to the right and to the left; your descendants will dispossess nations and settle in their desolate cities' (Isaiah 54:1-3).



They then told us that as the elders had prayed about the passage, the Holy Spirit kept giving them our names. We teared up with joy. Ten years before this we had received that same passage prophetically, pertaining to some future use of us by the Holy Spirit. We gladly accepted the position. As a side note, we were unable to conceive and had adopted our son, Sean, when he was 2. Now we were "parenting" many young adults! Several had parents who'd divorced, and these students were grateful to be around a couple who followed Jesus and were still together.

(We'd been out of college for several years when we became followers of our Lord Jesus. Our own college experience had definitely been "worldly". Now having followed our Lord and applied His Word to our lives for a decade, we had the opportunity to help these younger people live a Christ-like life before they graduated.)



In Saga 5, we mentioned Bert, the man with whom the Holy Spirit had knit his and Mike's spirits together. Bert came to the center one day to tell us that he and his wife had confirmed what the Holy Spirit had been revealing to him: to teach conversational English to international students at UConn. So in addition to raising a family of four and pastoring a congregation, Bert began to teach English weekly at the International Center. Bert's class overlapped with many of the same students Sue connected with families in our cooperation with International Students Inc.



Bert taught for several semesters and then asked Sue if she'd come to the classes to encourage the women students. Not long afterward the Holy Spirit told him to emigrate to Israel with his family. (Bert was a Jewish follower of Jesus.) He asked us to pray about Sue taking over the class. The Holy Spirit confirmed Sue's role with the internationals and she began to teach. By now the class was all women, and wonderful relationships began to grow among them all. Even though she wasn't permitted to proselytize, she was allowed to answer questions about her trust in our Lord Jesus — and there were lots of questions! As you can see below, we formed many personal relationships with a number of internationals and their families. And we established our first house church with others in our congregation in order to collectively disciple converts from her class.



Mike's Mom



To help in her evangelism efforts Sue purchased copies of the **JESUS** film in as many languages as possible. One day we were invited to another retreat center about 20 miles from ours. In back of the center was a very old tattered barn. We were taken into the barn and down a secret staircase which led to a large modern room with printing presses. From here a ministry printed Christian materials to secretly distribute in Communist countries in Eastern Europe. The project was kept secret because the Russian KGB was trying to find where the materials were being printed so they could destroy the premises. We were invited there because three Chinese chicken farmers who were visiting UConn were willing to risk their lives to sneak the Chinese version of the **JESUS** film back into Communist China. The ministry heard that Sue had this film and we gave a copy to each of the farmers. We were in awe of the loving courage of both the farmers and the printers.



At our dinner table that Thanksgiving we hosted 20 Japanese visiting faculty and students and their wives. Half spoke English and interpreted for the others. All were Buddhists and were deeply interested in our faith in Christ. Mike always relied on our Lord's assurance, **"I am the way and the truth and the life"** (John 14:6) when he shared our Lord with unbelievers. So he asked our guests if they were seekers of truth. After his question was translated, they all assured him they were. Mike invited them, "If you can show me that Buddha is a higher truth than Jesus, I will become a Buddhist. And if I can show you that Jesus is a higher truth than Buddha, would you consider becoming Christians?" Animated discussion filled the table.

The core of the conversation that followed over the next two hours was:

- Christ is eternal, but Buddha was a created being;
- Christ answers prayer, while Buddhists pray to Buddha who does not answer prayers.

We were able to point out numerous instances of specific answered prayers in the Name of Jesus. Finally, in response to these two truths, all of our guests declared that Christ was a higher truth than Buddha. Mike told those at the table that it was up to them if they wanted to pursue Jesus since He is a higher truth than Buddha.



The next day Nurio, one of the Japanese professors, came back to the retreat center and asked to discuss and compare Jesus and Buddha further. Mike told him that he couldn't bring Jesus down to a comparison level with Buddha since he and the other Japanese had already declared Jesus as a higher truth than Buddha. But Mike did give Nurio a Japanese Bible to read and discuss with his wife Rumiko, telling Nurio to read it **"until Jesus presented Himself to them."** Several weeks later Nurio came to an evening event at the International Center and told everyone that Jesus had presented Himself to his family. They were now followers of Jesus. Several newly arrived Chinese students were standing next to Mike and asked, "Who is Jesus?"

Nurio, Rumiko and their son



We wrote in Saga 4 that our desire after seminary was to serve our Lord as missionaries. A few days *before* we turned down the mission agency that would accept us **only if** we didn't share anything about the power of the Holy Spirit or spiritual gifts on the mission field, the Head of the Missions Department at the seminary, Dr. Christy Wilson, approached Mike. "Mike, the Holy Spirit has told me that our Lord isn't sending you and Sue to the mission field. But through you and Sue He is going to send hundreds of others." With many families from different congregations befriending international students or faculty, and with the Sue's English class with Internationals, what the Holy Spirit told Dr. Wilson became even more very real to us. International students and faculty alike were carrying Christ back to their own people!

More in our next Saga...