

foundations

Our vision is for all men to become bold and daring followers of Jesus Christ.

The Power of One Year to Live Changes Pastors, Too

How One Man Found New Footing as a Leader ... and Follower

By Vic Williams

One Year To Live altered Ron Waters' approach to working with not only men, but every parishioner. It has rekindled his relationship with Christ in new and unexpected ways.

When Ron Waters was 12 years old, he nearly lost his life at a house party in his native Bronx, New York. When the bullets started flying, all he could do was curl up and await his fate.

"A young man and his friend came in there, and I was playing tough guy," Waters recalled. "We got into an altercation, and he shot a gun out of a paper

"From then on I knew there was a God. I didn't know about a relationship with God, but I knew it was a God."

bag. I was lying in a fetal position and he shot it at point blank range. Every bullet missed me.

"From then on I knew there was a God. I didn't know about a relationship with God, but I knew it was a God."

That was more than 30 years ago, long before Waters eventually found his way to the pulpit as pastor at Strong Tower Ministries in Columbia, South Carolina. Now 45, with a wife, two sons from a previous relationship, a loyal and growing congregation and a passion for ministering to men of all ages, he has attended two One Year To Live retreats, once as a recruit, once as a leader. He also leads a bi-weekly men's gathering at a warehouse in Columbia, built specifically for guys who don't want to explore their faith in a structured church setting, and indeed may have not seen the inside of a sanctuary for 20 years, if ever.

Waters recently sat down with me to talk about how One Year To Live altered

Waters, *continued on page 3*



My Journey Through Men's Ministry

Thank You for All the Small Steps in our Big Walk with Jesus

I started the drive from our home in Auburn, California, to my new office in Chicago on January 2, 1993. I had purchased a 1964 Dodge Dart (with 34,000 miles on it) from the estate of a woman who attended our church. Car salesmen might have said she “just drove her car back and forth to church.”

In that Dodge I followed a snowstorm across the country from where it had closed I-80 in the Sierra Nevada mountains. Before I got to Salt Lake City drivers had left their cars on the snow-packed freeways. I got to Nebraska just as I-80 had been re-opened after the storm. I finally arrived at the LMM office just off the Kennedy Expressway in Chicago, where there had just been a multi-car pile-up because of the storm. That first journey would become a picture of the excitement and challenge and faithfulness of God that we would face these past 26 years.

I brushed the snow off and found my new cubicle on the ninth floor of the Lutheran Center. My predecessor, Bill Pollock, had left the cabinets bare, except for one sticky note. The message was a quote from Nido Quebin: “Most worthwhile things are the result of doing many little things in a single direction.” That note has been on my desk to this day.

In the past 26 years, many worthwhile things have been accomplished by many people doing many small things in a single direction. That direction has always been to point men to Jesus Christ. As I look back, those worthwhile things fall into two major categories — our structure and our ministry. Structurally, Lutheran Men in Mission has moved from a being a program within the church, with half-time director and secretary, to a separately incorporated ministry with a full-time executive director, full-time discipleship consultant and several contract staff.

With our ministry, there was an exciting, if not daunting, task before us. We had few resources and income was scarce. But we took a great step of faith and God provided gifts through generous donors and so that we were able to produce the *Master Builders Bible for Men*. We have distributed or sold over 60,000 copies to men across our country and throughout the world. From homes and coffee shops to prisons and battlefields, this resource continues to change lives.

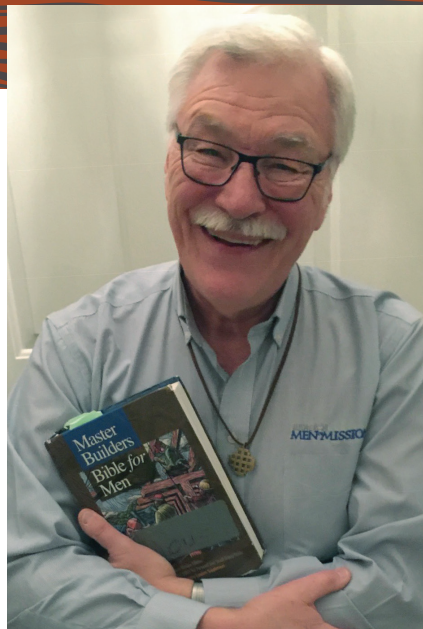
One Year to Live began with a dream shared over a lunch with Lyman Coleman. It is the most unique, powerful men's ministry experience. Nearly 1,500 men have experienced this and families, congregations and communities are benefitting. The “A-Team”, and its first initiative, Project XII, began with a handful of creative, talented leaders from Lutheran and other expressions who were doing extraordinary men's ministry. At last count we have leaders from at least five denominations and ministries providing valuable resources for men's ministry today and building the men's ministry of the future. Our future is in ministering with others.

My resignation as Executive Director will be effective January 31, 2019. I have had the privilege of serving with so many talented volunteers and exceptional staff. I'd like to highlight eight men: My predecessor, Bill Pollock, who mentored me into this position, and the seven men who have served as our LMM Board Presidents — Harry Arne, Charles “Chuck” Bruning, Charlie Schwartz, Heber Rast, Norm Smith, Rich White and Hal Derrick. These men, and the board members who have served with them, are among those who have done the many small things in a single direction that have produced worthwhile achievements.

So, what am I going to do? Well, I do men's ministry, and I will keep doing it. I will stay on in a part-time position to support my successor. Doris and I are also planning on doing some writing and ministry together. I also plan to do some work with John Armstrong, who many of you will remember from the 2017 Gathering in Minneapolis.

I'm grateful to God and all who do all they do in a single direction to make this ministry happen.

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LUTHERAN MEN IN MISSION

The *foundations* newsletter is sent to all who contribute to the ministry of Lutheran Men in Mission. Your contribution ensures that *foundations* will continue to be sent to you.

Our vision for *foundations* is that it be a source of personal spiritual growth, as well as a source of information for those involved in congregational men's ministries. Please contact us to share your stories of men's ministry that we can use in future issues, or to let us know what topics and issues you're interested in seeing featured in *foundations*.

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his own approach to working with not only men, but every parishioner — and how it has rekindled his relationship with Christ in new and unexpected ways.

How have you viewed your faith differently before and after One Year To Live? What has it meant to you?

It's a life-changer. If you allow it to be and go without expectations, it changes your life.

Being a pastor, you often feel like there's no one else for you to speak to, because after God and your church, you're the hierarchy. You hold a lot of things in because you don't want the congregation to see things. You want to be their rock. It's the same thing in the household, as far as being a father and husband. And at your workplace — I'm a manager for a tire wholesale warehouse. It's hard to get things off your chest and feel comfortable in an atmosphere doing that.

So what One Year To Live did for me was give me an atmosphere where I wasn't intimidated, where I was able to let my hair down, so to speak. Sometimes as pastor — you know when you want to return something to a store, or you're paying a bill, and you're talking to a recording? You call that place and you're like, "Man, I just want to speak to a live person, a live body." That's how I felt for a long time. Going through One Year To Live allowed me to get in touch with things that were still holding me back to days of my youth. I learned that I was still that kid sitting on the couch waiting for my father to show up, and he never showed up. It helped get a lot of that off of my chest and freed me up to minister to other people.

I went into the One Year to Live saying, "I'm not gonna tell anybody that I'm a pastor. But when something is your calling, you can't hide it. So when I got there and going through it, I'm telling my story while still ministering to others.

You have said that you realized you were lonely in a way you didn't realize before. What did you mean by that?

Sometimes going through life, you put on a façade. I'm from the Bronx, New York, not far from Yankee Stadium. Pretty rough neighborhood. I come from a rough background — drug dealers, drug abusers, womanizers. My father was a murderer. He did 25 years to live for the murder of his cousin. I had to grow up in the shadow of that. Coming from that neck of the woods, that was looked upon not as badly as you'd think. They kind of put him on a pedestal. A lot of times when I may have gotten into an altercation or something outside, the answer would be, "Well your dad wouldn't cry, wouldn't be a punk like that." So I was put into this box, and couldn't tell people how I felt. I didn't want to be my



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father. But I heard plenty of stories that glorified him. The street wanted me to be him and my family wanted me to be him, but I didn't want to be him. So it took between ages 30 and 35 for me to even realize that I was lonely, and some that stuff you get as a man, you don't want to tell anybody, you don't want to show them that you're not as tough as they think you are.

Waters, *continued on page 4*

UPCOMING LMM
EVENTS
& *programs*

Upcoming One Year To Live Retreats in 2019

April 26-28	YMCA Camp Santa Maria, Grant, CO	Sept. 27-29	John Knox Camp, Knoxville, TN
March 15-17	Tracy's Camp, Pinewood, SC	Sept. 13-15	Mackenzie, WI
April 19-21	Camp Carol Joy Holling, Ashland, NE	Sept. 27-29	Nebraska (not Camp Carol Joy Holling)
April 26-28	Santa Maria, Grant, CO	Oct. 11-13	Camp Shaw, Mateno, IL
May 3-5	Lutheridge, Arden, NC		

Visit www.lutheranmeninmission.org/events/one-year-to-live/ for information



You don't want to show that weakness or reveal your brokenness inside.

Exactly. Especially if you're a deacon, an usher, a pastor. You go through those things and you're supposed to be the example. As a man you think, I'm supposed to be an example of strength. But sometimes you just want to let your guard down. You just want to cry. No one ever knew that I was hurting about my father. I was good with the stories. My father wasn't around since I was 2 years old. He was in and out of jail, and it got to the point when I was a teenager that I would visit him myself. I wanted the relationship. I didn't want my mother's second husband. I wanted my father. But neither his family nor my family really understood my thing.

So at that age of realization, what led you to become a pastor, to take that path in life? Was it from way back, deep inside of you, or did it emerge later?

Iwent through Catholic school, gaining knowledge of Christ, but not a relationship. I graduated from a Catholic high school, again gaining knowledge. I have been

in and out of church, on Easter, Resurrection Sunday, on Christmas Eve, New Year's Eve, but never built a relationship.

I was about 27 years old, and had met who in the future would be my wife, and moved to Virginia from New York, and it gave me a sense of slowing down. That's what the South did for me. I started to take in a

little more. I met a military man at a place I worked. He wasn't a great role model, but what he showed me was, you didn't have to be perfect to have a relationship with Christ. All my life I didn't understand that. I didn't think I was worthy to have a relationship with Christ because of the kind of life I'd led. And he introduced me, invited me to church. My wife was already into the church, and she'd tried to get me to go a couple of times, but you know, when you're 21, 22, 23, you're pretty much a knucklehead. I didn't want to do it. But he just made me aware that I didn't have to be perfect. I got into a sermon and the pastor started talking about people being home, drinking Thunderbird and smokin' weed, and I looked at my wife and said, "Did you have a conversation with the pastor?" And she said, "No, honey, I did not." So I knew then that God was speaking to me; that's when the relationship started.

We get my sons for the summer. My wife was taking them to church. I saw the interest that they were taking in it. And every time we took them home, they'd call me and tell me the things that were going on in their home, with their mother, and basically they were living in a house where drugs are being sold. I had to take an introspective look at myself,

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realize there's no way I could fight for my sons if I was the same person that they wanted to get away from at their mother's house. That's when God really started to tug on me.

I changed my life. I've been sober for about 12 years. I quit everything — drugs, alcohol, cigarettes — cold turkey, and just started to dive deep into the Bible. I didn't understand it at first, but I felt that no drug could come before God. If I put the Bible down and went a smoked some weed, I was going against God. That's my mode of thinking — of putting God first in my life.

Do you ever see your sons going through the One Year To Live retreat?

Ido see them going through it but I also see them having to live their life first. I've noticed something as I've gotten older — I remember thinking that the people in my life were out of touch. And I know my sons may think, "Dad, you're not as hip as you think you are. You might wear your hat to the back once in a while, but you're not as hip as you think you are." Sometimes they have to go through some life, and I'm allowing them to go through life, because you don't know what to stay away from until you know what it is. In due time, I will always push it — I think everybody gets something different out of One Year To Live, and they'll get something different than I did. They have a father that's in their life.

I learned in that retreat how to let God fill in the gaps. How to let

my hair down around other men. How I don't have to be on this plateau even though I'm a pastor. The retreat is well-rounded, and I believe it'll touch anybody who goes through it in a different way.

So, in the aftermath of that, I know you've mentioned that your wife sees the difference in you. What about in the way you deal with the guys in your parish, or in your church?

It's definitely helped me be more transparent. To reach people in a different way. When I got back, along with one of the other One Year To Live leaders, Jimmy Smith, we created a group called Men WEEP Too. WEEP is an acronym for Wisdom, Elevation, Empowerment, and Purpose. It brings in diversity — anybody who wants to just let things off, different topics every week. We just allow you to vent as a man. So the retreat has brought me closer to men.

I always say this to men: The world has gotten to a place where the men don't even carve the turkey anymore. It's all left up to the woman. We watch football. But I remember my grandfather, it was tradition — he always carved the turkey, carved the ham, all that stuff before we sat down to eat. We as men have to get back to the forefront of our families. It helps with the structure. When you're coming from the Vietnam War, or from the crack epidemic — men sporadically ... it wasn't a slow thing ... they started to leave the home. When they left the home, they left a void. My goal, my calling, is to bridge that gap. To work with young men on getting back to their homes and staying in their homes.

Single parenthood has become an epidemic. It's become normal, because of the way of life not of just this nation, but in the world. It's just leaving a void in our hearts, in our growth. I feel that's where God is leading me — to diversify and unite men, and bring them back into the home.

I really feel that there's one good word that sums it up, and that's compassion. When you get around these guys at this retreat, and hear the different stories ... the diversity, for me, was awesome. A lot of times, you feel like you're from the other side of the tracks, that no one can relate. But when you hear the stories, we're all struggling from the same pain. Your house might look different from mine, but the pain is

the same. That's what it's done for me: To be compassionate to other men and their stories.

If we knew the pain our fathers felt, we would be different as men emotionally. We feel we can't talk about things, because our fathers never talked about them. We didn't know that our dad was going through things. Dad never talked about that stuff, so it becomes generational. We're going through the same thing, and we're trying to find a way to cope. And the way to cope is through Jesus Christ.

Would you be willing to end our conversation in prayer?

Of course!

"Father God, we come before as humbly as we know how, and first and foremost, asking forgiveness for anything we might have done outside of your will. Anything that we have done in the closet, where we thought no one else knew what was going on, but you knew, Father God. We come to you and just ask for grace, and your mercy.

We pray for all men across America, from across the world, who suffer from disappointment, from loneliness, from mental illness, from depression, from addiction. Father God, we ask that you bind those things up and let loose the love, let go the agape love, that we know we get from you, that only comes to us through your Son, Jesus Christ, and the love that he has given to us.

We thank you, Father God, for sending us your son to die on the cross for our sins, the sins that we have already done, that you have already forgiven us for. We thank you for today, for the One Year To Live retreat, and for Brother Lyman [Coleman] for giving him the ideas, the wittiness, the creative spirit, Father God, to come up with a retreat such as this, that is releasing young men, and old men, from bondage, from being locked away mentally and in their heart, Father God.

We thank you for opening our hearts, for giving us compassion, and reuniting us with each other.

And it's in Jesus' name that we pray, Amen."



LMM has grown ... to becoming a dynamic, self-sustaining, non-profit ministry with a vision to help all men become bold and daring followers of Christ.

2017-2020

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Celebrating Our Past – Anticipating Our Future

We've recently announced the pending departure of our long-term executive director, Doug Haugen. This occasion is a true cause to celebrate and reflect on the growth and effectiveness that Lutheran Men in Mission has experienced under the past 26 years of Doug's faith-filled leadership. It has been my humble pleasure to work alongside with Doug for these past several years as LMM has grown from being just another ministry program of the church at large to becoming a dynamic, self-sustaining, non-profit ministry with a vision to help all men become bold and daring followers of Christ. We all owe Doug our heartfelt appreciation for his time, talent, financial support and a lifelong passion to grow this ministry for men into what we are today. Doug has been the driving force for our vision to become reality and to position LMM to become a recognized leader across the entire country for men's ministry.

As we celebrate our past, your board is preparing for an even greater future. The search for a new executive director is underway. We gratefully acknowledge the service and commitment from our former board member, Larry Moeller, and his firm, the Liberty Group, for their critical assistance in this national search for a new executive director. We are committed with God's guidance to seek out and hire the right individual that can lead our ministry forward to fully achieve our vision in new and exciting ways. We are seeking that individual who daily lives in their Christian faith, has excellent communication skills and has demonstrated effective leadership in men's ministry and fundraising activities. We ask specifically for your prayers during this search and hiring process that God's will can be achieved and that our ministry will grow to serve even more men in the future.

Additionally, a number of new action steps are underway to help us obtain these goals. We are planning to expand our involvement with all the men who have experienced our One Year to Live retreats, seeking new and effective means to expand the financial support for our ministry, and ensuring a seamless transition to the leadership of new executive director. All of us on the board and our existing staff are fully committed to see that these actions are implemented and will lead LMM to a stronger future.

We continue to ask for your prayers, your participation and your financial support as we move forward together.

Your Brother in Christ,

Hal Derrick, President, Lutheran Men in Mission

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Doug has been the driving force for our vision to become reality and to position LMM to become a recognized leader across the entire country for men's ministry.

Lutheran Men in Mission Online

You can find us online at our website lutheranmeninmission.org, or on:



and the **Reaching Men blog** at reachingmen.blogspot.com

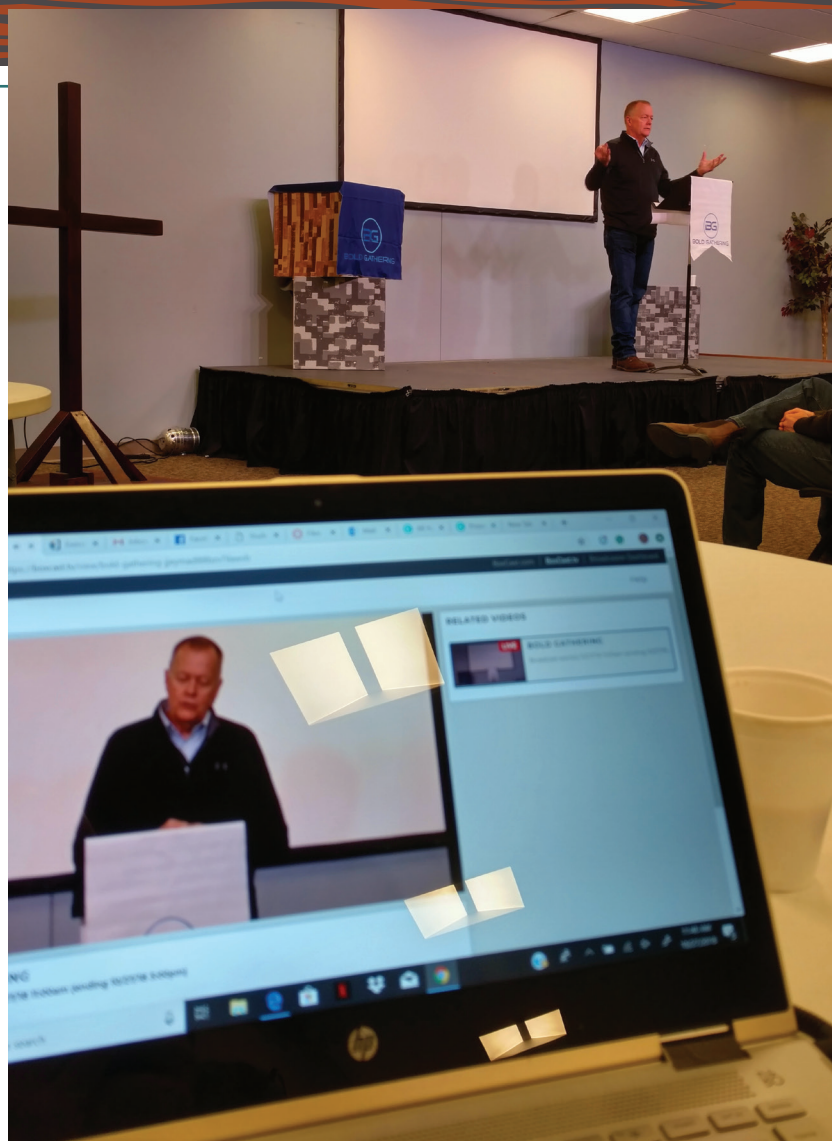


BOLD GATHERING

Did you miss the **Bold Gathering Fargo** on October 27? If you missed it, check out the videos at www.BoldGathering.com under the videos tab.

Bold Gathering Fargo brought men together from nine states to learn from six speakers who are leading the way in their communities!

The next Bold Gathering dates for spring 2019 are still being finalized.



Kevin Burke monitored social media and the streaming feed as Pastor Dan Carlson spoke at the Bold Gathering.

Bernie Bresson and Doug Haugen prayed over Police Chief David Todd (right) just before he took the stage at the Bold Gathering.

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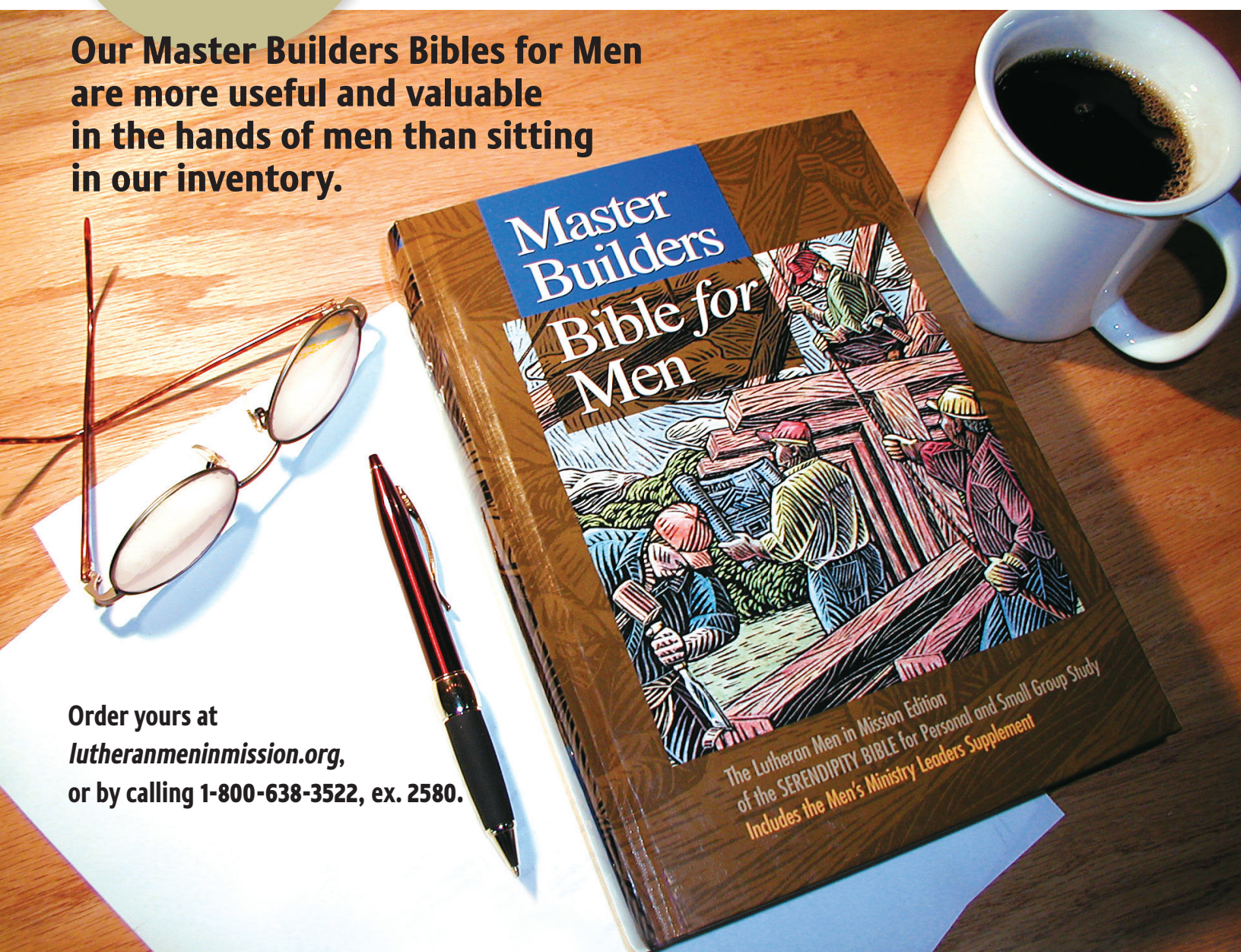
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