

# foundations

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

## ‘These Guys Were Just Different’ *How OYTL Changed One Man’s Relationship With God*

By Vic Williams

**M**ike Rawl sells wine for a living, but it’s the sacramental wine, the blood of Christ, that gives him life, as it does for all believers.

But as he was turning 40 and had become a dad for the first time, that crucial, communal moment of connection with our Savior and Lord had somehow isolated itself from the rest of his life, especially outside his Columbia, S.C., church’s walls.

That happens to a lot of believers, too.

The rush and whirl of modern life will push a person away from the comfort and grace of God, whether or now there are extenuating circumstances to add force — death, divorce, addiction, job loss, health issues ... and, yes, a pandemic. But Covid-19 didn’t exist when Mike Rawl felt that certain emptiness, that disconnection of Sunday morning healing and joy from the other six days of the week, and the path he walked through those days.

He was devout, he loved Jesus, but still ... a void.

Then he came across some fellow Christian men who told him about a retreat that, like so many, played out in the woods — but, unlike so many, went deeper, demanded more of the

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*“One Year To Live gave me a little bit of purpose, a little bit of identity, along with the passion and the fire.”*

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spirit and the heart, and ultimately built a powerful foundation for stronger relationships among men, and between men and their maker.

So he went, and something in him changed, opened up.

Mike recently took some time to talk about that change, how One Year To Live put him on the path he needed and wanted.

**You’ve been in One Year To Live, and you’re now a platform leader. You have an interesting story.**

I don’t know how interesting it is (*chuckles*).

**How did you get involved with LMM, and specifically with the One Year To Live Retreat?**

Around the time that my son was born, which is about a little over five years ago now, I had an epiphany, so to speak, that I was not living my life in the way that I felt was right, or as an example of Him.

**Rawl: One Year to Live, continued on page 3**



**Mike Rawl and his wife, Leah.**



## 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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## From the Executive Director

# Even In A Pandemic, Faith Thrives

*"For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." —Romans 8:39-39*

A little more than five months ago, life changed. Suddenly we had a new enemy, coronavirus (COVID-19), that we can't see or yet understand fully, though we can do such things as wear masks to fight it. This new virus quickly caused a global pandemic as it spread from person to person, country to country. To date over 20 million people have been affected and more than 750,000 souls have been lost and there is no sign that it is going to end anytime soon. Just like that, we had a new way of living. Working from home became the norm, students had to adapt to virtual learning, and face masks have become part of our daily attire. We are staying at home and trying to stay healthy.

Personally, I have felt the anxiety and depression that comes from social isolation. I miss interacting with friends and family. Little things that I have always taken for granted—handshakes and hugs, gathering with friends and family, going to the movies and, most of all, attending church and partaking in communion. All these precious moments are on indefinite hold for most of us.

And yet, faith remains. Relationships have grown stronger and new ones have germinated from the most unlikely of places. I find myself looking forward to weekly zoom calls. My core group of friends are closer today than ever as we are intentionally taking time each week to laugh, cry and be with each other. Thanks to our weekly Thursday night Bible study, I have new brothers from across the country who fill my spirit each week as we come together for study, prayer and fellowship.

All this serves to remind me that relationships are stronger than distance or disease. Even in this time of social distancing, we are drawn together in Christ. We may not be worshipping the way we may want to be, but churches are finding new and innovative ways to connect, to disciple and to worship as one body united in Christ. ***These uncertain times serve to remind us that we are one in Christ and that nothing can "separate us from the love of God."***

Only God knows when these challenging times will be over. When we will be able to come together once again for worship and fellowship. Until that day, let us find comfort in each other and the relationships that sustain us. Let us stay faithful and lift each other up in prayer. Embracing new technologies that allow us to interact in meaningful and personal ways regardless of distance. Keeping our eyes centered on Christ, seeking to grow in faith with each passing moment. So that when this is all a distant memory, we can go out to our communities intentionally disciplining men to become bold, daring followers of Jesus Christ.

Until we can gather together once again, stay safe, stay healthy!

In the power of the Spirit,

God bless,

**John Sundquist**, Executive Director, Lutheran Men in Mission  
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**Rawl: One Year to Live,**  
*continued from page 1*

I was watching a TV show about the Bible — where Peter denied Jesus the third time and he's going berserk. I saw that and I'm like, "man, how could you possibly turn your back on Jesus when you saw all the things that he did?" I just couldn't understand why someone would do that after being a part of it. And then I realized I had been doing the same thing most of my adult life. From that point on, I've wanted my life to have a purpose, a purpose that is right by the Lord.

And so, I went back, I got back into church full time. I go to Mount Herman Lutheran [in Columbia] now. I had this big ball of energy and I wanted to make a difference. But lot of the people at my church are elderly, and I didn't really have anyone my age to roll with me.

I met these guys from One Year To Live at Lutheran Men in Mission quarterly meeting. Those guys are just different — there's just something different about them. They walk different, they talk different, and just the way they carry themselves was different than what I was accustomed to.

Now, what was so different about them, I really can't explain.

So I gravitated towards them. And they they've kind of taken me under their wing, and showed me what they see, and they don't force their opinions on me. They just kind of let me figure it out for myself. It's just good guidance.

The more I got involved with One Year To Live and Lutheran Men in Mission, there was just a way about

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them — and I wanted to continue on the path I had originally started on. I wanted to do more. I would like to think that One Year To Live gave me a little bit of purpose, a little bit of identity, along with the passion and the fire.

So, anytime I could get a chance, I would absorb it like a sponge. Eventually I told myself, "I want to lead this thing. I want to make a difference in men's lives. Every day it should be your ministry now." These guys have helped me understand that.

**You did the first retreat in South Carolina. How long ago was that?**

Four years ago this fall.

**And you've done a bunch since then as a platform leader?**

Three or four, I'm trying to recall. I don't have as many as some of these guys have, but I think I've started to feel like I'm getting the hang of it.

**It's an intense journey, but also a freeing one as you know. Is there a certain part of it that really turned the light switch on for you as you were going through it?**

One Year To Live has taught me how to serve. [What happens] on Sunday was probably the most profound part of the retreat for me. Being able to lead is first being at the bottom and understanding that role. So serving men now is something that excites me. It's something that fuels me. It's part of my drive. And it all goes hand in hand.

**Rawl: One Year to Live,**  
*continued on page 4*





**Yes, Sunday is intense because you're just wide open at that point in the process. You've been down to the depths, literally, by then and are on the way back to the light. You're just laid bare.**

Yes.

The second part of my answer is the Sunday experience helped me see and understand what my identity is supposed to be. I was able to take down all the barriers that I put up between myself and God that blurred my vision. That weekend allowed me to take it down. I feel like that's the first time in a very long time that I was able to feel the Holy Spirit's presence.

**You mentioned that it created this mission for you, the day-to-day ministry. Where has that led you in service, both within and outside the walls of your church, including the virtual walls we are living with now?**

One Year To Live helped me prepare for the walls that are not there anymore. Church is a great place to meet somebody, talk to somebody and have a relationship with somebody. But now that you don't have that [due to Covid-19 restrictions], if you don't have the practice, it's really tough right now. But I am very intentional about what I do and what I say to people, inviting them into my life and showing them what it's like to have a meaningful relationship with the Lord — which is part of my mission statement — and to try to have a life worth imitating, which is also part of my mission statement.

Virtual [interaction] hasn't been so difficult. You can pick up on

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the signs that guys are struggling from their body language and their facial expressions. It's just more of a challenge to get them to open up and trust you.

The good part about One Year To Live is that if a guy has been struggling with certain things and it's something out of my realm, I can put them together [with someone else] who they have a little bit more in common with. So it allows that conversation to happen a little more naturally: "Hey, there's a guy that I trust, I feel like he could help you better" — or, "I will gladly walk with you and sit with you and talk with you."

I think the intentionality that I had prior to Covid made this a little easier, because you can't ask someone to come over for a beer or dinner. But even now with Covid restrictions, just be intentional and vulnerable, let the walls down. Treat every week, every day, like a retreat — some days better than others — it makes ministry a lot easier.

**Have you seen, within your local circle, some younger guys? It's a Lutheran church, so there are older folks. But are you seeing some younger folks show up, get involved?**

I don't necessarily know if that's [happening] in my church per se, but I don't care where you go

to church. It's just a matter of *if* you're going to church. I know that [younger guys] do tend to stay attached a little bit better.

**They get a little bit of a foundation.**

Yes, absolutely.

**So how has the ongoing experience of One Year To Live changed your connection with the church now?**

Oh, wow. Great question. Well, South Carolina now has a woman's one year to live. The men were so impactful on the women that, five of them went to Colorado and figured out what they did, and they brought the protocols back here. One of them was my wife. We have a pretty dynamic group of women. We're always looking for someone to try to share this gift with.

I think it's creating a community that I'm proud to be a part of and I'm proud to continue to build, and I'm proud to turn it over to somebody to let lead one day. Great relationships are forming all over the board, not just at one particular church. And it continues to build. There are some things we need to work on, but it's thriving.

We're going to try to do a fall retreat. It's going to be completely modified and something that's going to push us out of our comfort zone because it will be something we haven't done, but everyone's so passionate about it that they want to continue to move forward and continue to try to change men's lives. People's lives.

**Especially now, when the world's turned upside down, a lot of guys are searching for whatever the rest of their life looks like. Guys tend to cut themselves off. So, it's great you're out there opening yourself up to them, and Jesus is there with you. Sometimes guys forget that. When things just get crazy and wacky, and it's tough to even make sense of it, you have to take a step back and remember that He is there. And you don't have to be at a retreat — that's the whole point, the work that's done with and through**

**men with it. A lot of guys are hesitant to go, thinking it's going to be too intense, but then you get in there and it's an amazing experience.**

At the time that I went, the guy [who invited me] leaned into me and invested in me a lot, but when the time came round for the full retreat, I felt like I had a pretty good grip on my life spiritually, and then that weekend happened. And, man, I didn't realize how much I didn't realize about myself until that weekend. It opened my mind's eye of how to look at myself mainly, but also how to look at other guys too. It made me realize for the first time, in a really long time, that as much as I want to do it by myself, I don't have to. Life is not designed to do it by yourself. To get to that realization was vital for me. With parenting my kids, I know it takes a village. I understand really what that means now. And I don't think it would be more than just a saying if it wasn't for One Year To Live.

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**What about the future? What goals have you visualized, or what has the spirit laid on you?**

Well, personally, I try to live my life by three simple rules: Love God with all your heart and soul, love your neighbor as yourself, and go make disciples that make disciples.

Rawl: One Year to Live,  
continued on page 6



PHOTO © ISTOCK/YSBRANDCOSIJN



**Rawl: One Year to Live,**  
*continued from page 5*

That was another part of the mission statement.

I would like to see a lot of in-home ministry moving forward, in my house. That's a little more of a place where men or women could feel comfortable. I would like to do this with my wife as well. She's just as passionate about it as I am and that has made it a lot easier.

What's the saying? If you want your job to be easier, teach someone to do yours.

I've gotten to a point where I don't have to be the guy, nor do I want to be any more, because I realize it's not even me anyway, especially on retreats. They are very humbling. I want it to continue to thrive, but at the same time, I want to take One Year To Live and do something different. We haven't gone past the initial retreat, the 12-week follow-up and the Ironworks — I want to do something different to keep men engaged. A One Year To Live Part 2, to keep these guys ... to keep their fire lit. And also keep investing in them. I think we have a responsibility to the guys that have come through to not let them fall back by the wayside, because some of them have. Even from my timeframe, they have.

I want to continue to be a part of One Year To Live, but at some point, if I realize I'm not equipped as somebody else to do it, I'm not doing it justice.

*I want to take One Year To Live and do something different. ... I want to do something different to keep men engaged, ... to keep these guys' fire lit.*



PHOTO © ISTOCK/ANATOLY GLEB



UPCOMING LMM  
**EVENTS**  
& *programs*

## Upcoming One Year To Live Retreat

**DATES ARE TENTATIVE**

Sept. 24-27, 2020 Tracy's Camp, Pinewood, SC

Visit [www.lutheranmeninmission.org/events/one-year-to-live/](http://www.lutheranmeninmission.org/events/one-year-to-live/) for information



## How Do We Share Our Faith in a Virtual World?

In our last **Foundations** issue, I shared how my Dad helped me to tell the story of Jesus and, by now, I had hoped that we would be leaving most of this virtual communications stuff in the rearview mirror. Telling the story is a vital part of being one of Jesus' disciples, and getting together with our LMM brothers and others helps us to accomplish this mission. Like most of you, I long for the ability to safely be with our families, friends and our Christian brothers and sisters in person, not just on a "Zoom" screen.

However, we all know that our days of social distancing and virtual communications are not going away, so how can we reach out to others and tell the story? Making a personal phone call (or maybe even a Facetime) to another LMM brother, a neighbor, a member of my church, a relative in another town or state, or a golfing buddy is one of the ways I have used to reach out and share my belief in Jesus. It must be a personal call, not just leaving a message on someone's answering machine. Showing the other person that you care about them is part of sharing our faith. I make these calls intentionally and strive to make at least three calls per week.

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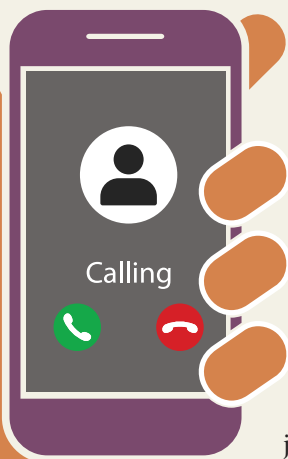
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At LMM, we continue to reach out in this virtual world through our Constant Contact messages, our quarterly Foundations newsletter, weekly book studies, our weekly Bible study and a special prayer time every Wednesday. We are looking to expand our virtual Bold Gatherings and plans have been finalized for our next Bold Gathering that will be coming to you in the near future. We are telling the story of Jesus' love and caring for our brothers and sisters across the entire U.S. and beyond. We continue to have new brothers join with us on our Thursday evening Bible study. Our ministries will not slow down just because we can't meet in person. All are welcome to join in any or all of our virtual meetings, events or studies.

I again ask that you participate with us, help us share our faith with others, and continue to keep LMM, our ministries and our virtual events in your hearts and in your prayers.

Your Brother in Christ,

**Hal Derrick**, President, Lutheran Men in Mission  
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**Lutheran Men in Mission Online** You can find us online at our website [lutheranmeninmission.org](http://lutheranmeninmission.org), or on:



and the **Reaching Men blog** at [reachingmen.blogspot.com](http://reachingmen.blogspot.com)



# Interactive Online Bible Study

Every Thursday Evening  
at 7:00 pm Central

It will be hosted on a  
Zoom video call

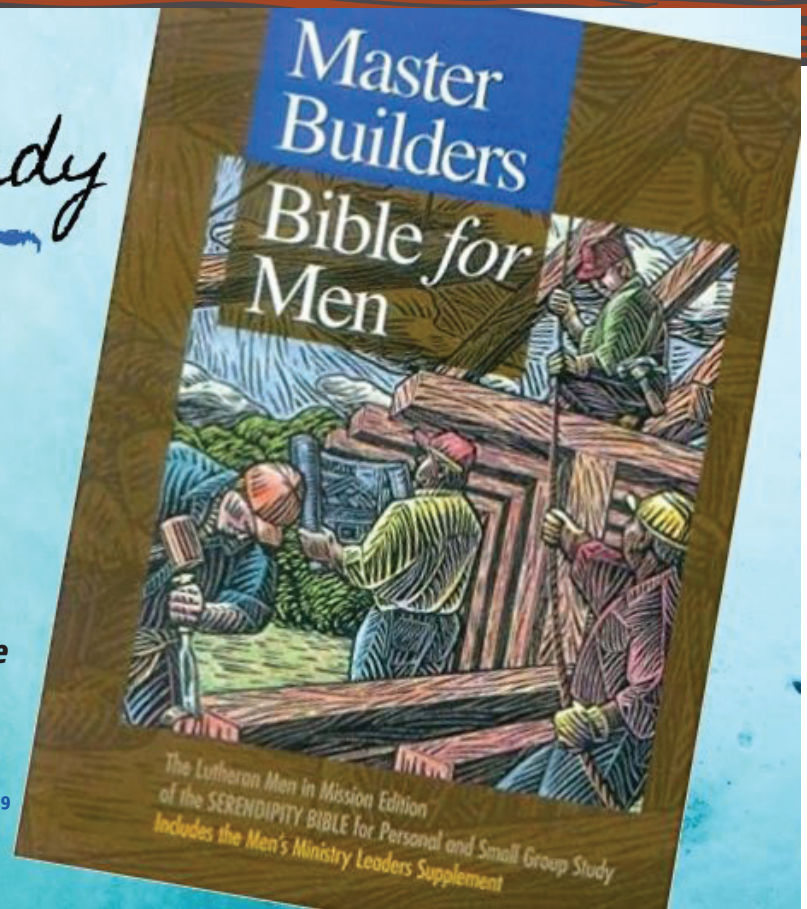
Following along in your *Master Builders Bible for Men* might be helpful for questions.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/353022558?pwd=WHBSa2FuTmZEdigSMohqVjVpVEtHQTo9>

Meeting ID: 353 022 558

Passcode: 499275



## Join the LMM Book Discussion Group!

Our LMM Book Discussion is every Tuesday at 7pm Central Time.

We've read through three books this summer.

### Upcoming books will include:

*Outlaw Christian: Finding Authentic Faith by Breaking the 'Rules'* by Jacqueline A. Bussie

*Inspired: Slaying Giants, Walking on Water, and Loving the Bible Again* by Rachel Held Evans

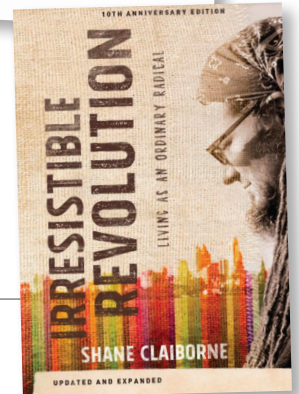
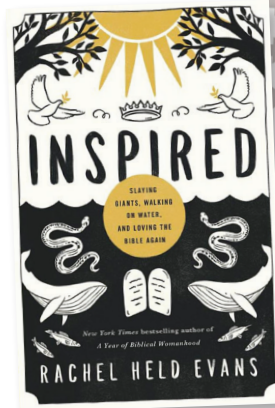
*The Irresistible Revolution: Living as an Ordinary Radical* by Shane Claiborne

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87360423196?pwd=MEFwR2g1bksremgxeVRRt3ppKokwZz09>

Meeting ID: 873 6042 3196

Passcode: 853568



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