

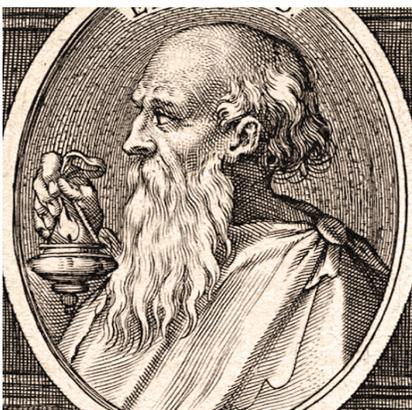
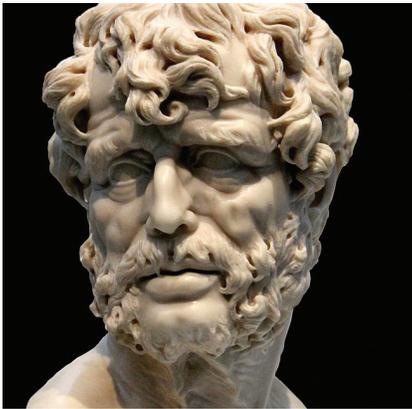
foundations

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

Stoic Doesn't Mean Static

How These Ancients Can Help Us Modern Guys Get Through

By Vic Williams



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The Stoic philosophies of (from top) statesman Seneca, Emperor Marcus Aurelius, and slave-turned-teacher Epictetus can help us be more thoughtful and caring followers of Jesus.

When I was a little kid, six or seven years old, I'd sometimes park on a chair or sofa and sit there, silent, for hours. My siblings got used to it and would just leave me alone until I snapped out of it. I suppose it was an early tip-off to my introverted nature, which I inherited from my mom most of all (who had inherited it from my pipe-smoking, nearly non-verbal grandpa), though my dad had his introspective moments.

As I matured and continued to seek out "alone time" to think, observe, or just "be," Mom surmised that I was "stoic," at least according to the popular, and woefully incomplete, definition that persists to this day. To most of us, "stoic" means quiet, removed, emotionless, even aloof. I was not and am not any of those things—if anything I'm more vocal and emotional the closer I get to being silenced forever, while still seeking out those moments of silence to recalibrate my life and discern where to spend my increasingly precious stores of energy.

Perhaps I'm becoming an actual, real-live Stoic, or something like one. Anyway, as I write this on Ash Wednesday, I'm wondering if more of us modern guys could benefit from ancient words of wisdom that I've recently found myself getting into, 40 years after graduating college.

Stoicism is a school of philosophy founded around 300 B.C. by a guy named Zeno of Citium, but the three best-known and most-quoted Stoics, all Romans—statesman Seneca, Emperor Marcus Aurelius, and slave-turned-teacher Epictetus—came much later, continuing to influence Western thought well after the New Testament was written in the decades after Jesus' life, death and resurrection. Though agnostic in spiritual terms, Stoicism's chief tenet—which Britannica.com describes as "the goal of all inquiry is to provide a mode of conduct characterized by tranquility of mind and certainty of moral worth"—runs parallel with much of Jesus' teaching, with the codes for living in faith put forth in Paul's letters, and with the Christian ethic in general. To Stoics, "reason became the true model for human existence ... virtue is an inherent feature of the world, no less inexorable in relation to humans than are the laws of nature."

Men are inherently good, worthy of love and endowed by nature to both receive and give it.

That's highfalutin language for this: Men are inherently good, worthy of love and endowed by nature to both receive and give it, and by living in harmony with nature through reason—and by living in harmony with each other,

Stoic, continued on page 3



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*.

Lutheran Men in Mission

8765 W. Higgins Road
Chicago, IL 60631-4101
lutheranmeninmission.org
projecttwelve.net

John Sundquist

Executive Director
john@lutheranmeninmission.org
773-380-2566

Doug Haugen

Consultant
doug@lutheranmeninmission.org

Kevin Burke

Discipling Consultant
kevin@lutheranmeninmission.org
920-562-1411

Kyle Pedersen

Emerging Ministries Consultant
kyle@lutheranmeninmission.org

Vic Williams

foundations editor/writer

Kathryn Hillert Brewer

foundations designer

An Exciting New Era For LMM

As I look back on the past year I am struck by how great and generous God has been to Lutheran Men in Mission. He has blessed us to be able to continue the work he has called us to. Specifically, intentionally disciplining men to be bold daring followers of Jesus Christ!

Additionally, LMM has been the beneficiary of an outpouring of prayer and generosity that moves me still. Along the journey we also have become more generous as an organization, seeking to provide resources and studies that will help transform men into the men Jesus Christ is calling them to be, such as the weekly book and Bibles studies and the Men's Group Lifelines Lessons—Faith-Based Roadmaps for Every Generation. Lifelines is the natural follow-up to the studies in the Master Builders Bible for Men that so many know and love.

I believe that this change has, in part, come about thanks to the national board creating and implementing a strategic plan with measurable key deliverables. Over the coming year I will highlight different parts of this exciting effort. There are four parts in total to our "Reach Beyond" campaign: Reach Boldly, Reach More, Reach Wide, and Reach Generously. Recently, as I was reading Proverbs, I came across Proverbs 11:25: "A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed." It truly summed up the past year and I believe is prophetic of what is to come.

Reach Generously: I think about what this means for LMM today and tomorrow. In the strategic plan, Reach Generously focuses:

- On connection and being fully transparent with our giving partners as well as with men LMM reaches.
- In growing support for the great work LMM is engaged in today and looks to do tomorrow.
- In becoming a truly self-sufficient ministry with the ability to grow and reach men in new and unique ways.

Reach Generously also means that LMM will continue to model generosity in our work—continuing to bring new free and affordable resources to men, families, and congregations across the country. Later this year we will, through ProjectTwelve.net, release a second series of Lifelines Lessons that, as with the first set, will be written by many of the men who were part of writing the Master Builders Bible studies as well as new friends. LMM will continue to seek ways to make it possible for more men to attend a One Year to Live retreat, to participate in a Bold Gathering and to join with men across the country in weekly book and Bible studies.

Together, with your prayers and support, we can fulfill the mission of Lutheran Men in Mission: by God's grace, to intentionally disciple men by personally modeling the character of Jesus by living and leading a lifestyle intended to help transform them from having an inward focus to a culture of naturally loving and serving their neighbors—and helping those men to transform their families, churches, and communities, all in the name of Jesus Christ.

In the power of the Spirit,

God bless!

John Sundquist, Executive Director, Lutheran Men in Mission

john@lutheranmeninmission.org John.Sundquist@elca.org

"A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed."

— Proverbs 11:25

If a bunch of us guys got together over a firepit or a beer and the Stoics somehow came up, I'm confident we'd pretty much agree that their four virtues match our bedrock Christian virtues, the very ideals we seek with added intensity and care during Lent.

Stoic, continued
from page 1

and interacting virtuously with the world at large—we will find happiness.

Fearless, reasoned, loving community: What's more Christian than that?

Not to say that in its focus on the material, observable universe, Stoicism doesn't conflict in some ways with our Christian belief in salvation by grace freely given by a merciful and loving God, through faith. Faith is beyond and above the Stoic bedrock of reason and logic; to them, all "salvation" comes via self-control, all enlightenment via an approach to daily life that finds its most familiar refrain in American theologian (and student of Stoicism) Reinhold Niebuhr's Serenity Prayer:

*God, grant me the Serenity
to accept the things I cannot change,
Courage to change the things I can,
And Wisdom to know the difference.*

Indeed, Stoics don't fully deny the existence of God. Rather they acknowledge a being, as in "nature," that bestows order on the universe—a precedent to the American Founders' "deist" philosophy—while stopping short of imbuing that being with any supernatural powers or the need or ability to manifest itself in human form or interact with humans at all. Christianity, of course, adds the divine dimension, bringing God to earth through Jesus, who suffers physical death and is resurrected to forgive

our sins and give us eternal life.

Christian writer Louis Markos zeroes in on this fundamental difference in his article "Why I Would Become A Stoic":

"Both the Stoic and the Christian look inward; however, while the former finds only an impersonal inner light to guide him, the latter finds the Holy Spirit of God indwelling him."

So that's a big difference. But Stoicism and Christianity intersect in many other ways that only strengthen and deepen in the subdued and quiet light of Lent, when we believers embark on our annual journey toward the Cross, stripping away, as best we can, the earthly trappings and worries that separate us from God.

In fact, if a bunch of us guys got together over a firepit or a beer and the Stoics somehow came up, I'm confident we'd pretty much agree that their four virtues—Wisdom, Courage, Temperance, and Justice—match our bedrock Christian virtues, the very ideals we seek with added intensity and care during Lent, and aspire to every day as we deal with modern life's pressures, challenges, disappointments and triumphs.

Let's go through them one at a time, through the words of the Stoics themselves via www.dailystoic.com.

WISDOM

"The chief task in life is simply this: to identify and separate matters so that I can say clearly to myself which are externals not under my control, and which have to do with the choices I actually control. Where then do I look for good and evil? Not to uncontrollable externals, but within myself to the choices that are my own."

— **Epictetus, Encheiridion**

Translation: Figure out what is good, what is evil, what is neither, and how we react. That's where wisdom lives, and what leads us to virtuous action, to give our best selves to the world – and receive the good of the world in return.

TEMPERANCE

"'If you seek tranquility, do less.' Or (more accurately) do what's essential—what the logos [community] of a social being requires, and in the requisite way. Which brings a double satisfaction: to do less, better. Because most of what we say and do is not essential. If you can eliminate it, you'll have more time, and more tranquility. Ask yourself at every moment, 'Is this necessary?'"

— **Marcus Aurelius, Meditations, 4.24**

Translation: Simplify. Figure out what's important, what matters, don't worry so much about material goods, or accumulating wealth, or going to extremes to get what you think you need or deserve. Take a breath. Don't get angry or anxious.

Stoic, continued on page 4

[The Stoics] ask us to free ourselves from the earthly bonds of distraction and empty yearning. They invite us to seek serenity, and therefore happiness, even as we struggle with relentless bad news...

Stoic, continued from page 3

It brings to mind Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, doesn't it? Especially Matthew 6:25-33:

"Do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ... And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? Therefore do not be anxious, saying 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ... Your heavenly Father knows you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."

COURAGE

"Don't you know life is like a military campaign? One must serve on watch, another in reconnaissance, another on the front line. ... So it is for us—each person's life is a kind of battle, and a long and varied one too. You must keep watch like a soldier and do everything commanded. ... You have been stationed in a key post, not some lowly place, and not for a short time but for life."

— *Epictetus, Discourses*

Translation: Stay strong, keep the faith, hold to your best selves even in the face of external corruption, fear and temptation. Be there for your friends, your family, your community, always. Be your own man, with God-given wisdom as your guide.

JUSTICE

"And a commitment to justice in your own acts. Which means: thought and action resulting in the common good. What you were born to do."

— *Marcus Aurelius, Meditations*

Translation: The three other virtues feed into this one. Take your wisdom, temperance and courage and do good in the world with fairness, generosity and respect for all. Leave selfishness by the side of the road. Share your innate goodness with friend and stranger alike.

Golden Rule, anyone?

...

To me the Stoics strike a chord of ageless truth. They're not about being aloof, or emotionless, or above the fray. Quite the contrary. They ask us to free ourselves from the earthly bonds of distraction and empty yearning. They invite us to seek serenity, and therefore happiness, even as we struggle with relentless bad news, fraught social media, incendiary politics, personal woes, petty worries—and once again wander through the wilderness of Lent with little more than our faith in God, and love for our fellow man, to carry us forward.

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What Defines Who We Are? Our Core Values

Every individual and organization have a set of core values that define just who they are. This is especially true for us followers and believers in our Lord Jesus Christ. The same is true for our ministry at Lutheran Men in Mission. Being led by the Spirit and bathed in prayer, we have taken a deep look at ourselves to define and publicly express the values that make us Lutheran Men in Mission. We continue to live into these values so the vision and mission for our ministry is alive today and will continue into the future.

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What are the core values that make us Lutheran Men in Mission?

Our values are embodied in all of our actions, relationships, and ministries. Simply stated, this defines how we will behave. Our stated values have been around since LMM was started over 30 years ago, but we (our current Board) have just recently documented these values in our strategic plan and vision so that everyone will know just who we are. LMM has four core values that define our ministry and guide our actions. First, ***we are a ministry that is led by the Spirit and carries out all of our actions in a Christ-like manner.*** Prayer coupled with personally modelling our individual lives in the character of Jesus is the way we live in this core value.

Secondly, our next value is ***to intentionally disciple men.*** We have developed and promote ministries that focus on discipleship. Led by our unique and life-changing One Year to Live retreats, we encourage men to work in small groups that foster a true Christian brotherhood with each other. We hold and promote Bold Gatherings as a way to disciple men through both a personal contact and/or a virtual environment. Our Project Twelve ministry is a fully virtual presence that fosters discipleship across generational, racial and geographic lines.

Our third core value is ***to love and serve our neighbors.*** We understand who our neighbor is as defined by Jesus. LMM strives to be the hands and feet of Jesus in providing events and resources for men, their families and congregations across the entire country. We ask men and their congregations at the local level to use and share the resources we provide. Key resources provided by LMM are the Master Builders Bible, Man Talk Cards, the I-Go Model, Lifeline studies, our One Year to Live retreats and Bold Gatherings. Please prayerfully consider being part of our upcoming National Bold Gathering that will be held on October 7-9, 2022 at the Carol Joy Holling Retreat and Conference Center in Ashland, NE to help us show how we love and serve our neighbor.

Finally, our fourth core value is ***to encourage relationships among men and small groups that are both collaborative and collegial.*** Just as Jesus formed a small group of the 12 disciples, we follow his model to be open, honest and supportive of each other in our small groups. We employ innovative communications and technology to support and encourage each other as we are spread across the entire nation and in recognition of the current health and safety needs caused by this Covid crisis. We foster strong and productive bonds with our fellow board members, our One Year to Live leaders, our LMM Ambassadors and men's leaders in other Christian denominations.

I look forward to being a full partner with you as our ministry continues to live in these core values and as we Reach Beyond in 2022 to go wherever God leads. We will always ask for your prayers, your participation and your financial support in reaching more men, their families and congregations.

Your Brother in Christ,

Hal Derrick

President, Lutheran Men in Mission

hal.derrick@lutheranmeninmission.org

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

LMM Says Goodbye to Norm Smith

Former Lutheran Men in Mission President Norm Smith passed away on February 6, 2022 after a long battle with multiple health issues. Norm was President of LMM from 2008-2011 and was instrumental in the adoption and development of the One Year to Live (OYTL) retreat as a mainstay of LMM's ministry outreach. This retreat has been life-changing to many if not most of the almost 2000 attendees.

Norm attended LMM's constituting convention in 1988 in Seguin TX and ultimately attended all the LMM National Gatherings from 1990 to 2017. He became active in national LMM leadership serving as Vice-President from 2002-2008 and then as President during 2008-2011.

In a 2020 interview for Foundations, Norm recounted his life as a Lutheran and his history with men's ministry.

"I became a Lutheran about 1951. As for men's ministry, I looked for it in the Navy and didn't find any. I got out and got into it in Des Moines, Iowa, with a Catholic-based organization, but I wanted to do more Lutheran things. I transferred to Omaha and met some old friends who were Lutherans, and they had already talked about getting something set up in Texas, at their next meeting. I missed it; I went back to Brazil, then came to Denver, and then to Kansas City.

"[LMM board member] Rich White and I went to Wisconsin, and from then he and I have worked together on LMM. He had been in New Jersey for five years,

"I went out, kicking the bushes looking for people to join, in different churches in the area."

and we decided we'd start a men's ministry organization at Good Shepherd Church in Somerville. Rich took that over and I went out, kicking the bushes looking for people to join, in different churches in the area, and down south

also. I stayed there five years, and I came back to Denver for three years, then came to the Kansas City area.

"There was an organization that claimed they were Lutheran Men in Mission, but they never made it work, so Rich and I made it so it was really men's ministry, and that was at Good Shepherd. There were other churches in the synod in Jersey that we worked with, but most of that happened after I came back to Denver.

"One of the first things I wanted to see was a men's retreat. Of course, [former LMM Executive Director Doug Haugen] was excited about that. So Doug and I went to Colorado and worked with Lyman Coleman and some of his people. It was not a snap, but we got it done. Those were exciting times.

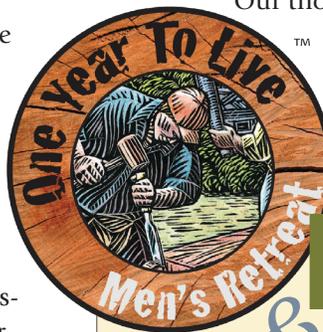
"We had opposition at times, and difficulties—especially when we became separate from the church. We did a lot of pushing, and we were lucky—we found people who really wanted to see us succeed, and that made all the difference."

He will be remembered for his dedication to men's ministry, devotion to Bible study and his inspiring President's Column of the Foundations newsletter.

Our thoughts and prayers are with his wife Kathie and their two sons.



"We found people who really wanted to see us succeed, and that made all the difference."



UPCOMING LMM EVENTS & programs

2022 One Year To Live Retreats

April 22-24, 2022
Camp Santa Maria
Grant, CO

September 23-25, 2022
Poynette, WI

April 29-May 1, 2022
Camp Cherokee
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October 21-23, 2022
Camp Chrysalis
Kerrville, TX

September 2-4, 2022
Del Ray Beach, FL

November 11-13, 2022
Camp Ewalu
Strawberry Point, IA

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

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