

# A True Patriot

Meet RPM board member, John Swinford. John and his wife of 33 years, Cari, have 2 married daughters and 4 grandchildren.



Growing up watching the Vietnam War unfold on nightly television, John knew from a young age that he wanted to serve his country and be a veteran like many of the men he looked up to in the small town in Vermillion county where he grew up. "The first time I ever saw my father cry was in 1975, the day I told him I was enlisting into the Marines. My father was supportive of me going into any branch of service other than the Marines," he states.

Swinford held several positions over his military career. An injury that occurred while being in the Infantry required that he re-enlist to serve in a different occupational field. While training to become an Aviation Operations Specialist in 1983, John learned several of his closest friends had been killed in the bombing of the Marine barracks in Beirut. John served in many locations and conflicts including

Beirut, Mogadishu, Bosnia, and Operation Desert Storm. "The Battle of Mogadishu (Blackhawk Down) occurred in October of 1993 and I left for Somalia in December. It was unlike anything else I had ever experienced. Complete anarchy," John explains.

While in Somalia he received orders to escort someone to safety. In complete body armor and fully armed, John answered the call. John explains that the gentleman was visibly not Somalian but African, and can describe him to you as if he were standing in front of him all these years later. "Are you a Christian" this man asks. "Yes, I am. I have been a Christian since I was a young boy", John replies. John goes on to explain that immediately he feels the conviction that only God can bring. Later that night John attended a Bible study and fully recommits his life to Jesus. John explains that although he had accepted Jesus as his savior at a young age, he hadn't really made him Lord. That night, in Mogadishu, John made Jesus Lord over his life and soon felt the call to ministry.

John found out this African man, was actually a missionary from Kenya. "Here I was fully armored up with body armor and armed, but this man....he was clothed only in the full armor of God. God has a way of bringing everything together. All the things I went through in the military, was for this one encounter. He wins, God always wins." John emphatically states.

After serving for 26 years (1975-2001) John retired from the Marine Corps. Swinford went on to attend seminary and is now a bi-vocational pastor of Sweetwater Christian Church in Greenview, IL and is "Lifting up Jesus" throughout central and west central Illinois as station manager for the WLJ family of stations in Springfield, IL.

Thank you John, for your service to God, your family, your country, and to RPM!

## Manhood Tips

- Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is FREEDOM. Tap into it!
- Always be listening to that still, small voice. You never know where it could lead you!

### July Resource Winners

Leonard Latham  
Collinsville, IL

Freeman Wright  
Terre Haute, IN

**CONGRATULATIONS MEN!!!**



# RELEVANT PRACTICAL MINISTRY FOR MEN

## Freedom in Christ

Whether your family will be going out to watch a spectacular fireworks show or simply enjoying a backyard barbecue this 4<sup>th</sup> of July, you are in the ranks of countless other Americans celebrating our country's independence. When the Declaration of Independence was approved by Congress on July 4, 1776, America became "the land of the free". We still enjoy that freedom today because of the sacrifices of brave men and women. For Jesus followers, freedom comes from being a disciple of Christ and the word "freedom" should take on a new meaning for believers.

Most are familiar with Moses leading the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt to "let my people go". Today it's easy to explain what was happening to the people of Israel, they were being held in slavery as captives in bondage. Well, many are living in what Billy Graham called "spiritual slavery", and the only way to be free is through Christ. I want to encourage you today to not fall prey to the temptation to trust in other things for our freedom from the tyranny of sin: status, money, good works, associations, etc. True disciples of Christ should find their freedom in Christ alone.

*"Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death." - Romans 8:1-2*



*Tom Gensler - Director of Development, RPM*

## Coming up....

- 7.18 - Father/Son Day Camp
- 8.15 - Father/Daughter Day Camp
- 9.12 - Springfield Iron Sharpens Iron
- 10.3 - Champaign Iron Sharpens Iron



### Independence Day vs Dependence Day

Being a Marine and going through the process (boot camp) to earn that honor, is probably a major contributing factor to why I love the celebration we display as a country. The celebration that we broke free from the rule of Great Britain and became a free and independent nation. As a Marine, you are taught the great cost of freedom. All the wars and battles since our original Independence Day have been to protect our freedom and help others protect theirs.

As a Christian we are taught the great cost of our salvation, our eternal freedom, was paid at the cross by Jesus. However, it's not our independence we celebrate, rather our dependence. John 15:5 tells us,... apart from Christ we can do nothing. It is our DEPENDENCE on Christ we need to yield to, if we are going to glorify God.

*Tom Cheshire - Executive Director, RPM*

