

Life & Work with Mark Mason of Brentwood

[Local Stories](#) February 3, 2025



Today we'd like to introduce you to Mark Mason

Hi Mark, please kick things off for us with an introduction to yourself and your story.

My wife and I met in Mr. Minkowski's homeroom class around 1976. We didn't start dating until after we'd both been kicked out of high school. Both of us had multiple run-ins with the law and fell into heavy drinking and drug abuse. We moved in together at 18.

At 19, the prayers of my mom and Granny were answered when I turned to God as a tattered and tortured soul on November 23, 1982. We immediately began attending church faithfully, and three weeks later, on December 17, 1982, we were married.

In miraculous fashion, my life began to change. I became the first in my family to earn a GED and later a college degree. As crazy as it sounds, five years later, the same police department that had arrested me multiple times as a juvenile hired me to be one of their own. I spent ten years in that role, mostly as a detective. For the last three years, I worked in forensics as a crime scene processor/technician.

That job gave me a deep desire to try to reach young people before they ended up in prison—or worse, in a body bag. I started volunteering at a local church, initially mopping floors after youth meetings. When they discovered I played guitar, I was asked to join the worship team. Soon after, I began studying for the ministry.

In 1995, at the age of 32, we entered full-time youth ministry. After 20 years of serving in local churches as pastors, we launched the ministry we now lead, called Life on the Verge. Much of our work focuses on prisons. Since 2011, we've spent 6–8 months each year on the road, traveling to prisons nationwide to conduct ministry concert events. We play a mix of classic rock, blues, and original music under our band name, The Plunders.

Around 2014, our son Matt Mason (known professionally as Matt Maeson) joined us to distance himself from trouble. For two to three years, he played his original music almost exclusively for prison inmates. After posting two songs online, he was signed to Atlantic Records. Since then, he's had two platinum alternative rock singles, Cringe and Hallucinogenics.

Matt has let this "old man" (me) join him on stage at festivals like Bonnaroo

and Lollapalooza. He's performed numerous solo and band shows as a headliner across the U.S. and Europe. In August 2023, he sold out the Ryman Auditorium. He spent 2024 on the road, opening for Zach Bryan. It's been a wild ride for sure.

I'm sure it wasn't obstacle-free, but would you say the journey has been fairly smooth so far?

This might sound a bit sensational, but it's the truth. In fact, it's a driving force behind why we do what we do today. These events have also played a significant role in our son's songwriting. For those who are fans of Matt Maeson, you might know he has tattoos on both of his forearms. One reads, "Born a Sinner," and the other says, "Died a Martyr." He also has a shoulder tattoo with the letters "ALM." All of this ties back to the biggest struggle we've faced to date.

When we took our first full-time, out-of-state ministry position in 1995, my younger (and only) brother Andrew moved with us to be a part of it. He had a deep heart for the destitute. On February 2, 1997, while Andrew slept, a young drug addict he had been reaching out to broke into his home. As Andrew stumbled down the hallway, half-asleep, the 19-year-old man raised a rifle and shot my brother dead. No motive was ever given.

The shooter went to prison for life, but not before his drug-dealing family put a lot of pressure on us. They sent threats through others, vandalized our mailbox, called to threaten our children, sprayed mud on our bedroom window in the middle of the night with a motorcycle, followed my wife around town, and even interrupted two church services with shouting and cursing—all because they believed we were not agreeing to a plea bargain. In reality, a plea bargain was never on the table, and we had no say in how the prosecutor handled the case.

To make matters worse, while awaiting trial, the shooter escaped from the mental institution where he was being held. At the time, we were living in a home owned by one of his relatives. That family was connected to our church, but I later learned—too late—that they were also involved in a coast-to-coast drug trade. (The patriarch of the family eventually went to federal prison.) With the killer on the run, I, as a husband and father, didn't feel safe living in one of his kin's homes.

Overnight, our family of five (including Matt) found ourselves living indefinitely in a friend's spare bedroom. After several months, we secured a new home, the killer was recaptured and sentenced, and things finally calmed down.

Through all of this, the Lord helped me realize that the best way to combat the ultimate enemy—death—is by projecting life. During this time, I heard a sermon from Senator John Ashcroft, who recounted the story of Billy Borden, heir to the Borden dairy dynasty. Folks can look up the story, but the main takeaway is that Billy overcame tremendous adversity and left behind a mantra that we now live by: No reserves. No retreats. No regrets.

Thanks – so what else should our readers know about your work and what you're currently focused on?

One way we describe ourselves is with the term "musicianaries." We use music to build bridges and talk to people about faith, hope, and love. Our ministry, Life on the Verge, has several facets, but we are probably best known for our work in prisons. We put on full-scale rock concerts in state penitentiaries. Our mission is to: entertain the crowd, edify the church, evangelize the lost, and equip others for ministry.

We always make sure to deliver on the entertainment end before we do anything else in a prison. My wife and I perform under the name The

Plunders. We both share lead singing duties, and I handle most of the guitar work. We also hire professional musicians to back us up. Coming out of the pandemic, my wife and I did dozens of shows in Florida prisons with just the two of us and backing tracks. I still showed off on guitar, and we performed all the vocals live, so the men and women in prison loved it.

It always comes down to how much money we can raise. We've learned that relying on volunteer musicians sometimes results in mediocrity. That's why we strive to raise a budget each year to hire professional musicians and speakers. Our goal is to demonstrate love and show value to those whom others often deem unworthy. We don't want to just bark at the problem; we want to be part of the solution. Plus, we love rocking for some of the most appreciative crowds on the planet.

Life on the Verge isn't just about prison ministry, though. The Plunders also plays at other venues—bars, RV parks, churches, and more. I've also authored a couple of books, most recently Thrival Mode: Using the Power of Vision to Ignite Your Passion for Living. We're working on inspirational materials for folks both inside and outside of prison.

I also host a weekly podcast called Hope Signals.

What would you say have been one of the most important lessons you've learned?

We've had the privilege of building several enterprises in life. There are so many lessons we've learned along the way that I started a podcast five years ago to share them. It was audio-only until this year (2025), when we began posting a video version on YouTube.

Most of what my wife and I have built started small and grew into something considerably larger. Here's the one piece of advice I give all the time:

"Do all you can, where you are, with what you have, and God won't leave you where you're at."

Things have a way of converging if we just keep moving in the direction of a dream. Don't sit around waiting for conditions to be perfect. Get moving with what you have. Provision follows vision.

Get a detailed mental picture of what you're after, develop a plan, execute your strategy, fail forward by getting feedback, and adjust as you go. Just keep moving. Keep doing all you can, where you are, with what you have, and leave the miracles up to the Almighty.

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