

**Building Up One Another**  
**Mission, Vision, and Values Part 4**  
**Sunday, February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2026**  
**By Ryan Perry**

**Scripture**

**Ephesians 4:11–16**

*[11] And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, [12] to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, [13] until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, [14] so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. [15] Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, [16] from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.*

**Philippians 2:1-4**

*[1] So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, [2] complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. [3] Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. [4] Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.*

**Let's Pray**

Illustration

A man walks into church on Sunday morning. He smiles and says to the greeter, **“hello Fred, great to see you today.”** He then hangs his coat up on the rack, and walks into the sanctuary to find his seat with his Bible firmly in his hand.

While he waits for the service to start, he talks with John about things like the weather, sports, his kids activities, and even his job until the music starts to play and everyone gets ready to begin.

Once the service starts, he sings his heart out in praise to God, writes a reminder for he and his wife to make sure that they bring something to the meal next week, takes a few notes on the sermon, and with open arms receives the closing benediction as if it is bringing refreshment to his weary soul.

After service, he and his wife introduce themselves to the couple sitting next to them and learn that they just moved to the area, have 3 kids, and that the husband just took a job as an engineer for Trane.

Finally, after saying goodbye to that couple, they go and get their kids from Sunday school and leave church with this great feeling that they really encountered God, fellowshiped with his people, and were used by him to build the church.

**And they can't wait to see what he does next week.**

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Now, I can imagine that some of you are wondering, **“where is he going with this?”** because I just described a typical Sunday morning for many of us.

But before I tell you why I gave you this “illustration,” I want you to know that many of the things I said are good.

Coming to worship with God's people, taking notes on the sermon, talking with brothers and sisters in Christ, meeting new people, singing loud, receiving the benediction, and sending your kids to Sunday school are all great things that we should want to do when we come here on a typical Sunday morning.

And yet, if we look closely at this illustration, the words that might come to mind are **superficial and passive.**

Superficial and surface level conversations seemed to dominate this man's church experience, and it felt like he was more of a passive participant than someone who was deeply invested in the lives of other believers.

Now, I do realize that part of the reason we come to worship is to receive and get encouragement from one another and from the Word. And I also believe that there are many who participate here at LEFC in deep and meaningful ways, either on Sunday's or throughout the week.

**But that doesn't mean we don't struggle with a desire to be passive, superficial, and disconnected within the body.**

Because sin is always working in our flesh and through our culture to convince us to prize independence over interdependence. To be consumers in the world and in the body of Christ instead of seeing it as our duty and delight to serve. To avoid vulnerability and to keep people at arm's length. To see our brothers and sisters as competition instead of companions. And to take the easy road of passivity, because investing in people's lives is messy and costly.

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However, if we are going to be a church that's about, "**Loving God and inviting people to follow Christ,**" and if he is going to build us into a "**growing household of backyard missionaries,**" then we all need to reject the temptation of becoming passive consumers.

Instead, we need to take ahold of the bible's call to serve and invest our lives in others so that they would grow in their faith and shine Christ in the world.

This brings us to the **third value** that God is calling us to live out here at LEFC.

### **Value 3**

#### **Building Up one Another in Christ.**

Here's what that value means.

**Main Idea:** As Christ's body, it is our shared joy and calling to grow one another into his image.

When we gather together as a local family of God's people, we are to come with the mindset of a servant and a worker. To serve and do the good work that God has for us so that we all can grow in Christ, serve Christ, live like Christ, and receive the joy that he has for us as his people.

The question we're going to answer this morning is, "**How do we begin to live this out as a New Testament Church?**" With it, "**How will this help us to fulfill the mission and vision that God has given to us at LEFC?**"

And the place that we need to start, as we answer these questions is with our mindset. Because if we are going to be a church that grows one another into the image of Christ, then we need to understand that it begins with our pursuit of unity in Christ.

**This brings us to our first point for this morning.**

## 1. Live as the unified body of Christ.

### Philippians 2:1

***[1] So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love (agape love of God the Father), any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy,***

Some of you may remember this particular verse from my first sermon series on the book of Philippians. But if you weren't here or can't remember back that far, what you need to know about Philippians 2:1-4 is that Paul is pleading with this church to pursue unity even in the midst of persecution and hardships.

And in verse 1, he actually tells us a couple of really important things about unity.

First, you will notice that he begins this call to unity by referencing Christ, the agape love of the Father, and the Spirit. **This is really important because it shows us that our triune God is the foundation and creator of the unity we are supposed to pursue and live out.**

Our God exists in perfect union within himself, and through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, we have been brought into a perfect union with Him. This is why scripture consistently tells us that we are "in Christ." As Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 5:17:

***[17] Therefore, if anyone is in (united with) Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.***

And because we are united with Christ, we get to participate and have fellowship with his Spirit who empowers us to do the good work of pursuing a joy-filled unity as his people. **A unity that will reflect our unified and triune God to a watching and needy world.**

If we look at Philippians 2:2 we can get a glimpse of what this kind of unity is supposed to look like.

***[2] complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.***

God honoring, Christ exalting, and Spirit empowered unity is supposed to be full of joy as we work towards being like-minded (same mind), as we pursue a love for Christ and for one another (same love), and as we work together to pursue the same goals as a church (being in full accord).

Now, I understand that this description alone doesn't answer all of the practical questions surrounding what it means to grow one another into the image of Christ. But it does give us a starting point for our answer.

## **It let's us know that it:**

- It starts with God.
- It's empowered by the Spirit.
- It's about reflecting the unity of our great God.
- It takes work.
- It's a group effort.
- It requires us to be pursuing like-mindedness, to have the love of Christ, and to be working for the same goals.

## Illustration

When we think about the opening illustration, everything the man was doing seemed to be either superficial and passive, or it was about getting what he thought he needed from his church experience.

## **Application**

To be sure, we all come to this place needy of God, needy of fellowship, needy of encouragement, and there are times where we don't have what it takes to pursue the kind of unity were talking about.

In fact, what we need in that moment is someone else to pursue and help us along so that we can once again trust and lean into the love of God and our perfect union with Christ.

But for most of us, when we interact with the local family of God, we should be thinking about how he wants us to pursue unity within the body of Christ.

How does he want me to pursue a unity of heart, mind, and soul with my brother's and sisters? How does he want me to grow in my love for him and how can I help others to do the same? How does God want me to use my time, talents, and my resources to build up the body as we look to invite people to follow Christ and be backyard missionaries in the Coulee Region?

This is the kind of mindset that we want to cultivate in all of God's people at LEFC. And we believe that God will use it to produce a Christ honoring oneness that will result in transformed lives, a life-giving community, and lost souls being saved. This is exactly what we see in the first church community in Acts 2.

**Acts 2:42-43, 46-47**

***[42] And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. [43] And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles.***

***[46] And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, [47] praising God and having favor with all the people. **And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.*****

**So let's not settle for superficial interactions, but instead, work to pursue a deep and fruitful unity in Christ.**

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But if we are going to get there, it requires more than a mindset. It actually requires us to pursue it. And if we keep going in Philippians 2, we can see that one of the practical ways that Paul tells us to pursue this kind of unity is through humble and loving service.

## **2. Humbly serve one another in love.**

**Philippians 2:3-4**

***[3] Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. [4] Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.***

### Illustration

When I first preached Philippians 2:1-4 back in November of 2024, I used an illustration related to coaching my youngest soccer team. I mentioned at that time that the boys were all over the place and that it took a really long time for us to get on the same page so that we could actually begin to improve and win games as a team.

But there was another issue that hurt us as a team. One of the boys, who admittedly was one of the best players, struggled to stay in his assigned position because he always felt like he needed to be touching the ball. **He knew he was good, and he selfishly thought he could win the game by himself.**

And unfortunately, this cost us some games, because he was out of position, which allowed the other teams to score and win.

## Text

In Philippi, the church was dealing with something similar. Certain believers were pursuing their own selfish ambition, and it was producing negative results. Division, fear, and infighting were creeping into the church, as some even began to turn away from Christ.

The point is that the selfishness of these believers was hurting the body. It was hindering the unity and growth of the church, minimizing their gospel witness, and with it, stunting their joy and peace in Christ.

Now, I realize that outside these walls, the concept of humbly serving others is a foreign idea. We live in a nation and economy that prizes selfish ambition and applauds it as if it is something to be emulated. **It's a dog-eat-dog world and we should do whatever we can to get ahead and get our fair share.**

## Illustration

In fact, I just read a story where a major league pitcher hurt his team by rigging pitches in at least 48 games over past two seasons. **He did it because he was paid \$7,000 for every rigged pitch he threw.** He purposely hurt his team for his own advantage.

## Text

But the kingdom of God tells us a different story. Because selfish ambition and vanity may allow us to attain worldly gain and accolades, but they can't give us the lasting treasure that Christ supplies.

Those things are only found when we turn to Christ and lay aside our own selfish pursuits. Because he is the one who supplies all that we need. As Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 9:8:

***[8] And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.***

And if he supplies all our needs, then we are a part of his upside-down kingdom where real and lasting joy, blessing, and growth are found when we make it our aim to serve others as we have been served by Christ. As Paul said in Acts 20:35:

***[35] In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'***

And gain in Philippians 2:4

***[4] Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.***

**1 Thessalonians 5:11**

***[11] Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.***

### **Application**

Church, try to imagine for a moment, what it would look like for us to be a family of God where love, humility, selflessness, and service were the air we breathe.

Where we are so caring for one another's burdens that no one ever feels like they have to endure their struggles alone. Where we love the church and God's people so much that no need goes unmet. Where we so desire to experience the radical blessings that come from giving that we would always be on the lookout for opportunities to love, bless, encourage, and build up.

Can you see it in your mind and heart? The joy, unity, love, and growth that God would produce within our body?

If you see it, even a little bit, hang on to that vision and pray that God would make it a reality here at La Crescent Free. Because the overflow of that love, service, and growth will be a living testimony of Christ to the world and will be used by God draw people to himself.

As Jesus says in John 13:35:

***[35] By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."***

So, let's make it our aim to be a community of givers. A people who grow one another in Christ by pursuing unity through service, and who humbly look for opportunities to love, bless, encourage, and build up.

**Because through it, God will bless us and he will build his church.**

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But we also need to realize that serving isn't just about meeting needs, **though that is great.** It's also about equipping one another to live for Christ in a lost and dark world.

### 3. Disciple and equip others into Christ.

#### Ephesians 4:11–14

***[11] And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, [12] to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, [13] until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, [14] so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.***

#### Illustration

I know that many of you either have children or have worked with children. Part of working with children, especially small ones, is that you have to spend a lot of time meeting their physical and emotional needs, **because it is a necessary part of helping that child grow and thrive in the world.**

But now imagine that you only ever met their needs, but you never taught them how to walk, to talk, to know right from wrong, how to interact and think about the world, to work hard, or how to be a faithful citizen. Would you be a good parent or child worker? No.

#### **Text**

So as Christians, we do need to do the good and fulfilling work of meeting people's needs when they arise. And, I will even go so far to say that God uses this kind of service as an example to be emulated and to grow others in their love and devotion to Christ.

And yet, scripture is clear that each person in the body also needs to be equipped and disciplined. Again, look at Ephesians 4:11-12.

**[11] And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, [12] to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,**

Now, I know what you're thinking, **"Pastor Ryan, isn't Paul saying that it is your job to equip us?"** And I would answer that with an emphatic **"yes!" That's a big part of our job as elders.**

This is why we are taking seriously the call to raise up new leaders and elders, and to equip each person here to be a back yard missionary right where they live.

But don't miss the fact that verse 12 tells us that it is everybody's job to build up the body. And if we keep going on to verses 13-14, we can see what that supposed to look like.

- Helping people to be unified in Christ.
- Growing people in the knowledge of Christ.
- Growing people to maturity in their faith.
- To do it so that they can stand firm in Christ, both in the church and out in the world.

My point is that we are all called to grow one another in our faith which will include equipping and discipling one another so that we can be mature, faithful, and fruitful Christ followers until he returns.

In fact, this call on our lives is clearly seen in the opening words of the Great Commission which says:

### **Matthew 28:19**

***[19] Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...***

Equipping and disciple making are an important part of what we are supposed to be about, it is how God wants to spread the gospel to the ends of the earth. **So we need to take it seriously as a church.**

### **Application**

Now, I realize that there are a lot of questions surrounding what exactly equipping and discipleship can and should look like in the church. Unfortunately, I don't have time to parse all of that out this morning. But I will say this...

Equipping and discipling someone as a Christian in many ways begins with a willingness and an open heart. A willingness to spend time with them, to open your life to them, to share your successes and your failures, and to continually point them back to Christ as their only treasure and source of fulfillment.

### Illustration

The 10 years I spent working with Pastor Dan were so transformative, not because he was some great theologian or ministry tactician. It's because he prayed for me, he shared his life to me (both the good and the bad), and he help me to see and love Jesus more.

I believe that there are many of you here, especially those of you who are seasoned saints, who can do that for someone in this body.

So it's my hope that each of you will begin to pray about who that is, and that you will take the first step to open your life and invite someone in.

**Because God wants to use you to build them up to maturity. To the measure and stature of the fullness of Christ.**

## **Conclusion**

Now, church, I don't have any grandiose illusions that we will be able to any of this perfectly. And I also know that apart from the Spirit of God working in and through us, it will come to nothing.

I say that because I know that many of us, when we hear commands like this, start to feel pressure, like somehow we have to measure up to some standard of service and excellence.

**But remember, Christ already fully measured up for you.** Which means that you are totally accepted by God and are free from having to earn anything from him, because he has already given everything to you.

This means that you can pursue unity, serve others, and you can disciple and open your lives to those in the body of Christ knowing that God will love you no matter how good or bad you feel like you're doing at it.

And you can experience the full joy and blessing of God's upside-down kingdom knowing that he is the one who will ultimately build his body and grow us together into the image of Christ. As it says in Ephesians 4:15-16

***[15] Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, [16] from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.***

Therefore, church, let's do all that we can to build up the body. Seek unity, serve others, and open your lives so that we all can love God, grow in Christ, and be equipped to be backyard missionaries right where we were planted.

**Let's pray**