

Pastor Dan Weyerhauser

Lakeland Evangelical Free Church, Gurnee



The identity of the man who sold all he had to buy the field with hidden treasure was never revealed in Jesus' parable, but there is a church in Gurnee whose mission is to be that man. As Dan Weyerhaeuser, senior pastor of this church puts it, "when you truly encounter God, you treasure Him so much, that you are willing to part with everything just to have Him."

And treasuring Christ through His word is among the top priorities of Lakeland Evangelical Free Church. Pastor Dan introduced "The Life" Scripture Meditation plan a few months ago; a weekly guide to help believers encounter God in His Word through slow, prayerful reflection on the passage of Scripture preached in the last Sunday worship. Along with a prayer and meditation guide, the church provides everyone with key Bible verse cards from each week's passage, so that they can "feast on God's word" together!

In addition to treasuring Christ through Scriptural meditation, they also seek to treasure Christ by sharing His word. Two of their vibrant ministries that help spread the Gospel are the Backyard Bible Clubs and Alpha. The Backyard Bible Clubs are Lakeland's version of VBS, and take place in, you guessed it, the back yards of Lakeland members, who invite neighborhood children to participate. Resolved to be bolder in proclaiming the gospel, The Clubs, so far, have resulted in professions of faith by half of those participating. Club leaders also intentionally follow up with families of the neighborhood children, particularly by providing them with information on Alpha, a ten week course used by churches worldwide that explores the Christian faith within a relaxed setting. God has worked dramatically in the lives of those who experience the course, and Lakeland is gearing up to launch several new Alpha groups in the fall. The fruit of treasuring Christ, however, does not simply rest in the unchurched coming to Christ, but also in the way this body has been interacting with each other. Dan has been amazed and blessed by the extraordinary acts of sacrificial kindness taking place among them. There has been much sharing of resources, time, and money to meet each other's needs!

So with all of these great things occurring, is Lakeland content to be an island in a sea of congregations in Lake county? Pastor Dan would say, "No!" He is in awe of the spiritual insight and maturity he has witnessed from the many pastors encountered, in part, through participation in Catalyst. To name a few, he is indebted to the pastors of Village Church of Gurnee, Sign of the Dove in Waukegan, Immanuel Baptist in Gurnee, and The Chapel for their council and availability.

Participation in Catalyst has also presented Dan with some godly challenges. He realized that he had unresolved issues with two different Christian brothers he reconnected with at different Catalyst events. God "forced holiness" on him to seek reconciliation with

potentially the only two people with whom he had unresolved issues. However, that hasn't changed Dan's perspective on the significance of the Catalyst ministry. "When God is in something, everybody is on the receiving end (there are no givers and receivers in one sense); Catalyst has not felt like a burden, [to the contrary] our participation in Catalyst, time, and money has returned to us ten fold."

Lakeland asks that other churches would pray that they would continue to depend on God in these days of progress, and to guard unity of their church. Pray that the leaders would have a clear sense of Jesus' heart and where He's leading them, and for grace to communicate that vision to the body, so that they all walk together with Him. "He wants this to be the best days of our walk with Him, because who wants to live in the good old days?"