

Lessons From Geese

Ecclesiastes 4: 9-12; Hebrews 10: 24-25

God's Word will at different times refer to nature and it's creatures, to illustrate points and to give wisdom. Consider Proverbs 6: 6-11 (Read), see how Solomon warned the sluggard or the one who lacks self control, to learn from the ant, because the ant is an example of industriousness, diligence, and planning. In Matthew 6, Jesus said for us to look at the birds as they are not idle, but look for food all the time; He also uses the lilies of the field to illustrate how God clothes them, but neither the birds or the flowers worry about their existence, God takes care of them and provides for them.

I think most of us know how Ann Crawford loved to feed the geese at Tannery Dam, just maybe she knew some lessons that they can teach all of us, that can be applied to our relationship with one another.

The first lesson is that Geese practice synergy, which is where there are two or more agents working together, to produce a result, not obtainable by any of the agents independently. Consider this scenario, as each goose flaps it's wings, it creates an uplift for the geese that follow behind; by flying in a "V" formation, it is estimated that the whole flock adds 71% greater flying range, than if each goose flew alone. Speaking of the "V" formation, have you ever noticed that one side of the formation is longer than the other side, know why? Its very simple, there are more geese on one side than the other. Okay, back to the message, what is the

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lesson to be learned here? It is that people who share a common direction and sense of community, can get where they are going quicker and easier, because they are traveling on the thrust or uplift of one another. In Mark 6: 7, we are told that Jesus sent the twelve disciples out two by two, and in Luke 10 when Jesus appointed the seventy to go before Him, into cities and places where He was going to go, He sent them two by two. Why would He do that? Because the practice gave the disciples mutual help and encouragement, our Ecclesiastes reading today talked of the futility of laboring alone without satisfaction, as it said in verse 9: "two are better than one." The practice of two by two, ^{is} the principle of synergy, the wisdom of flocking together.

The second lesson comes from the fact that when a goose falls out of the formation, it will suddenly feel and experience the drag and resistance of flying alone. It will quickly get back into the formation to take advantage of the lifting power of the goose in front of it. What lesson do we learn from this illustration? Well, if we had as much sense as a goose, we would stay in formation with all those headed where we want to go; we should be willing to accept their help and also give our help to others. Strong Christians appreciate the value of mutual edification or building up. In Hebrews 3 and in our Hebrews 10 reading today, we are told to exhort each other or in other words: encourage, comfort, warn and strengthen each other. This mutual edification and exhortation should occur within the context of our local church. A group of inflight geese are called a skein, a group on the ground is called a gaggle, and a group of Christians is called a church.

The third lesson to be learned from geese is sharing the burden; when the lead goose gets tired, it will rotate back into the formation and another goose flies to the point position, this is similar to pace lining in bicycling. So what is the point to this lesson? It pays to take turns doing hard tasks and sharing leadership, just as the geese, people are interdependent on each others skills, capabilities, gifts, talents or resources. Listen to Ephesians 4: 16(Read)—godly, biblical church growth results from every member of the body fully using their spiritual gift—as members of the body of Christ, we are to do our part. Too often church members burn out because other members won't or don't help out or do their part.

The fourth lesson we can learn from geese comes from the fact that geese encourage those who lead, what happens is the geese flying in formation honk to encourage those up front to keep up their speed; the honking going on isn't any of the geese complaining that they are going the wrong way. My wife and I live near a small dam or lake, and when the geese are coming in to land or taking off to leave, all you can hear is their incessant honking, which can be annoying, but serves a useful purpose. The honking we as church members do, needs to be honking of encouragement, not honking of complaining. In groups where there is encouragement, the production or results are much greater. The power of encouragement (to stand by one's heart or core values, and encourage the heart and core of others) is the quality of honking we seek

and should be doing. The purpose of our honking, our words, is to build others up. As Ephesians 4: 29 says: "let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers." Our speech as Christians should be instructive, encouraging, uplifting, and suited for the moment. Think about it, this lesson could give a new meaning to the bumper sticker: "honk if you love Jesus."

The fifth and final lesson we can learn from geese is caring for one another. If a goose gets sick, wounded, or shot down, two geese will drop out of the formation and follow the ailing goose down, in order to help and protect it. They will stay with the goose until it dies or is able to fly again, and then they fly off with another flock or catch up with the original flock. The lesson here is, if we have as much sense as geese, we will stand by each other in difficult times, as well as when we are strong. In Ecclesiastes 4, it says: "for if they fall, one will lift up his companion", and in Ephesians 6: 1-2, it tells us to restore one another and to bear one another's burdens; these burdens are difficulties or problems that people have trouble dealing with.

So in conclusion, I guess the truth or fact is that God gave geese the wisdom to succeed in their flight and migration; in turn, by His Scriptures and by His creation, God gives us wisdom to succeed in our migration, our spiritual journey.

Praise be to the Lord God Almighty, Amen.