

Sermon
Lanier Christian Church
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What The Church Can Learn From Geese SL#1 Acts 2:42

A few weeks ago I heard the distinctive sound of geese flying over head. If you've been around Lake Lanier for any length of time, you know that there are Canadian Geese all around the lake. Sometimes they inhabit certain areas and don't seem to leave. You can often see geese hanging around the entrance area of Gainesville Marina. They are beautiful and majestic birds.

Sometimes we can learn some valuable lessons from the animal kingdom. We learn about deceit from spiders. They weave their webs in such a way that you or small insects often run into them without realizing it, until it's too late. We learn about persistence from the ant kingdom as they build their elaborate colonies. We learn about soaring above our circumstances from the eagle.

In John Maxwell's book, "Developing Leaders Around you", Maxwell has reproduced part of a story entitled "Are You A Goose?" from a 1992 magazine article that tells us a few things that scientists have learned about geese regarding why they do what they do.

I want to use this little section of the article as a skeleton for today's outline for our message.

What are some lessons that the church can learn from the world of geese?

1. GEESE ILLUSTRATE THE CONCEPT OF FELLOWSHIP

SL#2

What is fellowship exactly? Does it mean to eat together and talk with each other? No, fellowship means "to have in common", "to share", "to participate for a common cause".

ACT 2:42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

Geese seem to be able to do something that we in the Church should want to do. Their flocks get larger. Geese do this by reproduction, but they also must invite other geese to come join them. Is that what we do as Christians? Do we invite others to join us? If the geese can do it, sure we can do it!

Let me ask a searching question: "As Christians, what are we doing together, other than meeting on Sunday?" Why do the geese get together before they head south for the winter SLIDE #3 The geese get together because, together, the journey is easier. The same should be true for Christians as well! We need each other! We should not just attend church, we should work alongside each other for the cause of Christ.

When you see geese heading south for the winter flying along in a "V" formation, you might be interested in knowing that science has discovered why they fly that way. Research has revealed that as each bird flaps its wings, it creates an uplift for the bird immediately behind it. By flying in a "V" formation, the whole flock adds at least 71 percent greater flying range than if each bird flew on its own.

People who share a common direction and a sense of community and fellowship get where they are going more quickly and easily because they are traveling on one another's thrust. As the Lord's church, we must constantly work together.

Part of being in fellowship with one another is making sure that we are going in the same direction and that we are flying in formation. Geese don't fly in all directions as they head south – they do it together.

Whenever a goose falls out of formation, it suddenly feels the drag and resistance of trying to go it alone. It quickly gets back into formation to take advantage of the lifting power of the bird immediately in front.

When we fall out of formation with God, we also feel the resistance pulling us down away from our goal of growing closer to Jesus.

But, if we will embark on our journey to heaven together, the journey becomes easier.

The geese, because of their instinct given to them by God, get together and head south for the winter for their survival. As Christians, we need to get together and walk together, we need to spend time together and grow together. We do this for our spiritual survival.

1 John 1:6, 7 says: SLIDE #4

If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. ⁷But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

The geese stay together and head south for their survival;

we too must work together as one body for our survival. If we as a church have as much sense as a goose, we will stay in formation with our eyes on Christ, seeking the light of His truth. There is true fellowship, a true sharing together for a common cause when we work together in the same direction.

2. GEESE DEMONSTRATE THE CONCEPT OF SHARING THE WORKLOAD SL#5

Throughout my years in ministry I have heard a general rule regarding giving and getting work done in the church:

In the average church, "80% of the work and giving gets done by 20% of the people."

For a church to really grow and blossom, then, the more people involved in the work of the church, the more that gets done.

What happens when 80% of the work gets done by only 20% of the people? The people who are doing the work become tired and discouraged and sometimes get burned out.

Look at the geese. When the lead goose gets tired, he rotates back in the "V" and another goose flies the point. You see, it is really beneficial to take turns doing hard jobs. What would happen to the geese if only 20% of them would take the lead? The geese would not achieve their goal of survival.

Sharing the workload ensures that the work will get done.

It prevents burnout. It gives an opportunity for refreshment and renewal. In the church we often see people take on a task or be asked to serve in a certain area, and suddenly they have unwittingly signed on to that responsibility for life!

The church has been guilty of burning people out in their service because we expect them to do it alone. Even Jesus had 12 men who accompanied him in ministry! The biggest mistake of my ministry was saying: "I can do it by myself."

Sharing the work makes it easier. Sharing the work increases the impact of what you are doing. Sharing the work eases the stress load. Sharing the work means sharing with another the victories that are won. Sharing the work means having someone alongside you to help you endure the tough spots.

The work of the church is important; we are building the kingdom of God. There are many of you with various talents that could enhance the ministry of this church, so make sure that you use them.

1 Corinthians 12:12 reminds us that we are one body with many parts, *"Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ."*

If all of the parts are not working in the body, the body does not function properly. What if 80% of your car engine decided to quit working? We'd be in a real fix wouldn't we? By instinct, geese share the work-load among all the geese, as a church, we should do the same thing.

3. GEESE SHOW US THE CONCEPT OF ENCOURAGEMENT SLIDE #6

Have you ever heard a flock of geese flying high overhead? They are making all kinds of noise, they are honking at each other as they fly. I know that on the highway, the only honking you hear from behind is someone wanting you to speed up or get out of the way!
Why do geese honk as they fly?

The researchers tell us that geese honk from behind to encourage those up front to keep up their speed. If we are going to learn from the geese, then what do we say when we honk from behind?

1 Thessalonians 5:11 says: *Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.*

More times than not, the noise that we hear behind people who are working is not the voice of encouragement, but instead, the voice of criticism.

These geese are trying to encourage one another as they are on their long journey south. As Christians, we should do the same thing. We are on a long journey to Jesus and we need encouragement.

In the New Testament, Barnabas was known for being an encourager. Acts 4:36 says that his original name was Joseph, but they called him Barnabas which means, "Son of Encouragement." We need to encourage one another!

4. GEESE LIVE OUT THE CONCEPT OF SHARING BURDENS WITH ONE ANOTHER SLIDE#7

This last concept is one that is desperately needed in the church... The concept of sharing one another's burdens.

When a goose gets sick, or is wounded by gun-fire and falls out, two other geese fall out of formation and follow it down to help and protect it. They stay with the goose until it is either able to fly again or dies, and then they launch out on their own or with another formation to catch up with their group.

Galatians 6:2 says: *Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.*

Romans 15:1 says: *We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves.*

If we have the sense of a goose, we will stand by each other like that.

People need to know that when they need someone, they have a brother or sister in Christ that they can reach out to. We all need encouragement. We all need someone to help us and just be with us when life becomes hard, when burdens are more than we can bear.

We are being Christ-like when we take the time to tend to the needs of those who are hurting

CONCLUSION SLIDE #8

There are many things that we can learn from God's creation. The concepts that we can learn from watching geese are concepts that can help make the church stronger.

I hope that as a church we will fellowship and fly together in formation, that we will share the workload of the church, that when we are honking at each other from behind, it is to encourage, and that we will share one another's burdens.

And...I just got to say it.....If the community knows that is the way this church operates, people will flock to us. Are you doing your part? Get involved and share your heart and life so that others will be blessed!

Adapted from an outline by J. Anselmi