

Sonoraville Baptist Church
Sunday, May 23, 2010 – 6:00 PM
Rev. Steve Skates, Pastor

Goose Sense

Introduction: There is a lot you can learn about life if you just take the time to just look around you. For example you can learn a lot by watching cartoons. When I was younger, one of my favorites was the Road Runner. Now, you might learn these lessons the hard way, but one thing you can learn from watching Wile E. Coyote chase the Road Runner is the fact that if you jump off a cliff, you won't hang in mid-air for 5 seconds before you fall. And right after you learn that lesson, you'll also learn that there probably won't be a branch halfway down to grab hold to. You can also learn the hard way that if a firecracker blows up on you and singes all your hair off your body, your hair won't grow back a few minutes later. But I think the lesson I did learn from watching the Road Runner is that you can't trust anything you buy from a company called "Acme." Their products never work!

But seriously, there are many things we can learn about God and His principles for life by just being observant. In fact, God designed nature to be a reflection of Himself. That is why God's Word often refers to nature to teach a lesson.

For example in **Proverbs 6:6 (NIV)**, He says to the lazy person, "*Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise!*" In **Luke 12:22-28 (NIV)** Jesus taught His disciples a lesson about worry: "*Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. Life is more than food, and the body more than clothes. Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds! Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest? Consider how the lilies grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith!*"

In other places, Jesus mentions various elements of nature in His teaching, such as the fields being ripe to harvest and the barren fig tree. While the psalmist talks about his shepherd leading him to green pastures and quiet waters. So, nature is a common theme running throughout Scripture.

Tonight, I want us to turn to another part of God's creation – the animal kingdom – and learn some lessons about how we can be the kind of church God wants us to be.

You've heard of the saying, "*He hasn't got sense God gave a goose?*" Well, let's see if we as a church has the sense God gave a goose. Let's look at the goose for a spiritual lesson, shall we?

Now, you may be asking, "*Why are we looking at geese?*" Well, we can learn a lot from geese because geese seem to be able to do some things that we in the Church should want to emulate. For one, a flock of geese seems to grow as they fly south. Of course they do this by reproduction, but they also grow by inviting other geese to join them in their journey. They make their particular gaggle so appealing that other geese who may have had to drop out of a group, want to join up with them.

We as a church could certainly learn something from geese about making our churches so appealing that people would want to join us in our effort to please God and fulfill His kingdom purpose. That is having good goose sense!

I want to talk about some of those appealing qualities tonight. Now a lot of what I will share with you tonight about geese comes from a story which John Maxwell reproduced in his book, "*Developing Leaders Around You.*" In this story, he relates how scientists have learned a lot about geese and why they do what they do. First, if we had the sense God gave a goose, we'd learn the lesson of:

1. Fellowship. The word "*fellowship*" means "*to have in common, to share, to participate in a cause.*" And certainly, this is something the church should want to model.

Fellowship was one of the distinguishing marks of the early church. **Acts 2:42 (NIV)** says, "*They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.*" Fellowship was just as important as Bible teaching and prayer. It was part of what made them so appealing.

Fellowship should be something the church does well. Getting together as a church is vital to our stability, our unity, and our future. Let me ask you...how often do we get together as a church? I'm not just talking about our regular times of meeting together, but I'm talking about times when we meet together away from the church building or away from an official church function. I'm talking about members and attendees going out to eat together, or going walking in the mornings, or socializing together. Yes, it's important to fellowship during the planned church functions, but it also important to not miss out on all the other wonderful opportunities for fellowship, because one enhances the other.

Geese get together before they ever begin to head south for the winter because it helps make their journey easier. That is the way God made them. They don't even have to think about it.

Also, if you've ever wondered why geese fly in a "V" formation, scientists have discovered the answer. Research has revealed that as each goose flaps its wings, uplift is created for the goose immediately behind it. By flying in a "V" formation, the entire flock adds at least 71% greater flying range than if each goose flew on its own.

A church which shares a common direction and a sense of community will get where it is going more quickly and more efficiently because its members are traveling on each other's lift.

You see, part of being in fellowship with one another is making sure that we are going in the same direction and that we are in formation. That is called unity, and it's something that geese have instinctively, because you never see geese starting out headed in different directions. The church will never reach its goal or fulfill its purpose if its members are headed in different directions, each one doing their own thing.

Again, we can learn a lesson from the goose. Whenever a goose falls out of formation, it feels the drag and resistance of trying to go it alone. That is why it will quickly get back in formation so it can take advantage of the lifting power of the geese immediately in front. When we fall out of formation with God, we will feel the resistance pulling us down from our purpose of growing closer to Jesus. But if we will go on our journey to heaven together, the journey will be much easier.

1 John 1:6-7 (NIV) says, *"If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But 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."*

So, just as geese instinctively get together and head south for the winter for their survival, we need to have the goose sense to not only get together, but walk together and spend time together and come up with ways we can stay together and grow together for our survival.

Secondly, if we had the sense God gave a goose, we'd learn the lesson of:

2. Sharing – You've heard the general rule about how most churches operate – 80% of the work and the giving get's done by only 20% of the people. But did you know that this rule applies to churches that **ARE NOT** growing? The fact is, growing churches are active churches where more people are involved in the work of the church than are not involved. And when more people are involved, more good things get done for the kingdom of God.

Show me a church where only 20% of the people are actively working and getting 80% of the work done, and I'll not only show you some apathetic or disconnected members, but I'll also show you some burned-out, frustrated, and discouraged workers! Those churches need to heed the lesson of the goose.

Whenever the lead goose gets tired, it will fall back into the "V" formation, and another goose will assume the point. This process is repeated until every goose takes its turn at the point.

Now, what would happen if only 20% of the geese in a formation ever took the lead? I'll tell you what would happen...they would not survive the journey! But by sharing the workload, they make it just fine and with far less effort.

The work of the church is the most important work we'll ever do. Building the kingdom of God by reaching folks with the gospel of Christ is our work...it's our journey. God has bestowed upon every one of His children gifts and talents and abilities that we are to be using together to do His work. As Paul says to the church in **1 Corinthians 12:27 (NIV)**: *"Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it."* And in vs. 18, He says, *"...God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as He wanted."* If all the parts are not pulling their load and functioning as they should, the entire body suffers.

By instinct, geese share the workload among themselves, and God's church should do the same.

Thirdly, if we had the sense God gave a goose, we'd learn the lesson of:

3. Encouragement – As geese fly overhead, the distinct noise that is heard is their honking. Have you ever wondered why geese honk as they fly? Well, research has discovered that the geese who are flying the point honk to encourage the ones flying behind to keep up, while the geese flying behind the point honk to encourage the lead goose to keep going!

1 Thessalonians 5:11 (NIV) says, *“Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.”* **Hebrews 3:13 (NIV)** says, *“But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today...”*

That's positive reinforcement! That's honking! But unfortunately, most of the time, the only honking we hear of is someone talking about us behind our back, criticism, whispers under the breath, or gossip over the phone. That's not very encouraging.

But geese are not that way. Geese encourage one another as they fly. And as Christians – as members of God's family – we should be encouragers. We are on a long journey to Jesus and we all need a little encouraging along the way.

We all would do well to emulate a man named Barnabas. In the early church, Barnabas was Mr. Encouragement! In fact, his name means, *“The Son of Encouragement.”* He was constantly and consistently encouraging the likes of Paul, Mark, and many of the early church leaders with his caring spirit. That is what the church needs today, and if we had the sense God gave a goose, that is what we would do.

Finally, if we had the sense God gave a goose, we'd learn the lesson of:

4. Bearing Burdens – Did you know that when a goose gets sick or wounded and has to fall out of formation, there are always two other geese who will follow it down to the ground to stay with it and help protect it? They do! And they remain with the stricken bird until it either dies or gets well enough to fly again. Then they all either try to catch up with their original flock, or they join another flock.

Galatians 6:2 (NIV) says, *“Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.”* If we as Christians had the sense God gave the goose, we'd stand by each other too. And we'd do it not just in the good times, but also in the tough times.

When the chips are down, people need to know that they will have a brother or a sister in Christ who will not let them suffer alone. They need to know there's someone they can trust to reach out to. The need to know there is a shoulder to lean on; a hand they can hold on to, and an ear that will listen to them. They need to know that not only is someone praying for them, but that there is someone who will help bear the weight of whatever it is they are going through.

Conclusion: The concepts we can learn from the goose are indeed concepts that can help make God's Church a stronger church. I pray that we will take these concepts and utilize them in the ministry God has given us here. I pray that we'll make our church more inviting to others by always flying together in whatever we do. I pray that we'll always be conscious of sharing the workload and not letting just a few do all the work. I pray that we'll be the kind of church that encourages one another and bears each others' burdens.

Can you imagine what kind of an impact we'd have in this community if people saw us acting like geese? They'd sit up and take notice. They would know that there was something different about us and they'd want to be a part of it.

So let's come together! Let's lift each other up and encourage each other. Let's bear each other's burdens, and be the church God wants us to be!