

WHAT'S GOOD FOR THE GOOSE

SPEAKING TO AN ANXIETY-RIDDEN CROWD, JESUS SAID: "I TELL YOU NOT TO WORRY ABOUT YOUR LIFE...LOOK AT THE BIRDS IN THE SKY!" YOU SAY, "WHAT CAN I LEARN FROM LOOKING AT A BUNCH OF BIRDS?" HAVE YOU EVER BEEN TO PENNSYLVANIA IN EARLY WINTER? IF SO, YOU'VE SEEN THE SKIES LITERALLY DARKEN AS MULTITUDES OF CANADIAN GEESE GATHER FOR THEIR ANNUAL FLIGHT TO THE SUNNY SOUTH. LET'S LOOK AT THEIR BEHAVIOR, AND LEARN:

THEY FLY UNITED. GEESE DON'T FLY SEPARATELY, IN RANDOM STYLE, BECAUSE NO GOOSE ALONE CAN GO THAT DISTANCE. THEY'RE DESIGNED TO FLY IN THEIR CHARACTERISTIC "V" FORMATION. WHEN A BIRD FLAPS ITS WINGS, THE AIR MOVEMENT CREATED PROVIDES AN UPLIFT, EASING THE WORK LOAD OF THE BIRD BEHIND IT. TOGETHER, THEIR FLIGHT RANGE INCREASES ABOUT 71 PERCENT. EVEN THE YOUNGEST, WEAKEST AND OLDEST GEESE CAN MAKE THE TRIP. THEY ACCOMPLISH TOGETHER WHAT THEY COULD NEVER ACCOMPLISH SEPARATELY. THERE'S A LESSON HERE: WHEN THE BIBLE SAYS, "LET US NOT GIVE UP MEETING TOGETHER, AS SOME ARE IN THE HABIT OF DOING, BUT LET US ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER" (HEB. 10:25 NIV) IT MEANS, "STAY IN FELLOWSHIP WITH ONE ANOTHER, AND ENJOY THE UPLIFT IT PROVIDES.: YOU'RE NOT CALLED TO FLY SOLO. "THE EYE CANNOT SAY TO THE HAND, 'I DON'T NEED YOU!' (1CO 12:21 NIV). OCCASIONALLY A GOOSE STRAYS OFF ON ITS OWN BUT SOON BECOMES EXHAUSTED, LOSES ALTITUDE AND ULTIMATELY PULLS WEARILY BACK INTO THE FORMATION. "LOOK AT THE BIRDS," AND LEARN.

***EVERY GOOSE IS A "PINCH-HITTER."* WHEN ONE GOOSE GETS IN A PINCH, ANOTHER "GOES TO BAT" FOR HIM. EVERY FORMATION HAS TO HAVE A "POINT GOOSE," OUT FRONT, LEADING, SETTING THE PACE FOR THE OTHERS. IT'S A TOUGH POSITION BECAUSE THE POINT GOOSE CUTS THE HEADWINDS, MEETS THE CHANGING WEATHER CONDITIONS, IS FIRST TO FEEL THE RAIN IN HIS FACE, THE SNOW IN HIS EYES AND THE ICE ON HIS WINGS. HE KEEPS THE FORMATION ON TARGET WHATEVER THE SITUATION. IT'S HARD, EXHAUSTING AND LONELY AT TIMES BECAUSE THERE'S NOBODY AHEAD OF HIM TO BE THE WIND BENEATH HIS WINGS. THE FORMATION DEPENDS ON HIM TO PERSEVERE, STAY ON TRACK AND GET THEM SAFELY TO THEIR DESTINATION.**

EVERY CHURCH HAS IT POINT GOOSE; THE PASTOR. EACH DEPARTMENT HAS ITS POINT GEESE: YOUTH, FINANCE, EVANGELISM, CARE MINISTRIES, ETC. THEY LEAD, SET THE PACE AND GIVE DIRECTION TO THOSE WHO FOLLOW. THERE ARE TWO COMMON ROLES IN THE CHURCH; THE UNDER EMPLOYED AND THE OVER-FUNCTIONING. POINT MINISTRIES ARE THE LATTER, SO THEY TEND TO BURN OUT FREQUENTLY. JUST BEFORE THE POINT GOOSE IS EXHAUSTED, A SPACE OPENS IN THE FORMATION AND HE SLIPS BACK INTO IT WHILE ANOTHER BIRD REPLACES HIM, SEAMLESSLY BECOMING THE NEXT POINT GOOSE. PINCH-HITTING FOR EACH OTHER PRESERVES THE LIFE OF THE FORMATION. THIS IS WHAT PAUL MEANT; "THE WHOLE BODY (IS) HELD TOGETHER BY WHAT EVERY JOINT SUPPLIES, ACCORDING TO THE PROPER WORKING OF EACH INDIVIDUAL PART" (EPH. 4:16 NAS). DON'T BE CONTENT TO BE A CONSUMER, BE A PRODUCER! A GREAT

CHURCH ISN'T ABOUT PAID STAFF; IT'S ABOUT VOLUNTEERS WILLING TO PINCH-HIT WHENEVER NEEDED.

IN THE WORLD OF GEESE, THE AGED, VERY YOUNG, AND INFIRM ARE KEPT PROTECTED IN THE REAR OF THE FORMATION. BUT THEY AREN'T ISOLATED, DISCOUNTED OR CONSIDERED USELESS; THEY FULFILL THE VITAL ROLE. THEY BECOME THE HONKING SECTION AND CHEER FOR THE LEADERS. INEVITABLY BAD WEATHER THREATENS THE MISSION. THE GOING GETS TOUGH AND THE TOUGH ARE STRUGGLING. FROM THE REAR OF THE FORMATION A LONE HONK SOUNDS, INITIATING A GOOSE CHORUS HONKING ENCOURAGEMENT TO THE POINT GOOSE. PAUL UNDERSTOOD THIS: "ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER AND BUILD EACH OTHER UP" (1TH 5:211 NIV). HE KNEW WE NEED A "HONKING SECTION" SUPPORTING US WITH UPLIFTING WORDS AND PRAYER. WE NEED THOSE WHO SAY, "WE ARE BEHIND YOU. WE'VE GOT YOUR BACK!" BUT..YOU, BRETHERN, DO NOT GROW WEARY IN DOING GOOD" (2TH 3:12 NKJV). MANY A SERVANT OF CHRIST HAS CROSSED THEIR DEEPEST VALLEY ON A WING, A PRAYER, AND A HONK FROM SOME OLD POCKMARKED, BATTLE-HARDENED, STRAGGLE-FEATHERED, HALF-BALD HONKER OF ENCOURAGEMENT WHO WAS TOO STUBBORN TO LET A BROTHER OR SISTER QUIT ON THEIR WATCH! OCCASIONALLY A STRIDENT, OUT-OF-TUNE GOOSE COMPLAINS LOUDLY AND IRRITATINGLY. WITHIN MOMENTS THE HONKING SECTION KICKS IN, DROWNING OUT THE GRUMBLER, RESTORING ORDER AND UNITY. THE CHURCH'S PROBLEM ISN'T TOO MANY PEOPLE SPEAKING NEGATIVELY; IT'S TOO FEW SPEAKING POSITIVELY! WHEN SOMEONE CRIES, "DEFEAT," HONK BACK, "VICTORY." WHEN THEY CRY, "FEAR", HONK BACK "FAITH". A FEW WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT CAN OVERPOWER A STORM OF COMPLAINTS.

SO JOIN THE HONKING SECTION AND BE KNOWN LIKE BARNABAS, WHOSE NAME MEANS “SON OF ENCOURAGEMENT” (AC 4:36 NIV).

***WITH GEESE, THEIR RELATIONSHIP IS “TILL DEATH DO US PART.”* THEY TAKE IT SERIOUSLY. THEY’RE FULLY COMMITTED. WHEN THE RAVAGES OF TIME OR CIRCUMSTANCES MAKE IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR A BIRD TO CONTINUE THE TRIP AND IT BEGINS TO LOSE ALTITUDE OR FAILS TO KEEP ABREAST OF THE FORMATION, THE GAGGLE PROVIDES IT COMFORT, NURTURE AND PROTECTION. TWO STRONG GEESE LEAVE THE FORMATION, FLYING WITH THE “PATIENT” SAFELY BETWEEN THEM, FIND A SHELTERED LOCATION WITH FOOD AND WATER AND MAKE A HOME FOR THE NEEDY BIRD. THEY’LL STAY WITH THEIR WARD TILL IT WITHER RECOVERS OR DIES BEFORE JOINING ANOTHER FORMATION. FOR THE, EVERYTHING GOES “ON HOLD” TO CARE FOR ANOTHER BIRD! WHAT AN EXAMPLE OF CHRIST-LIKE RELATIONSHIP AND SELF-SACRIFICING LOVE. “GOD HAS COMBINED THE MEMBERS OF THE BODY... THAT ITS PARTS SHOULD HAVE EQUAL CONCERN FOR EACH OTHER. IF ONE PART SUFFERS WITH IT” (1 CO 12:24-26 NIV) IN TODAY’S CULTURE WE DISCOUNT AND MARGINALIZE THE NEEDY, INCLUDING THOSE NO LONGER FUNCTIONING AS THEY ONCE DID. BUT GOD DEMANDS WE “HAVE EQUAL CONCERN FOR EACH OTHER,” ESPECIALLY WITH THOSE SUFFERING. IF A GAGGLE OF BIRDS CAN DO IT, SURELY GOD’S FAMILY OUGHT TO DO IT TOO. “LOOK AT THE BIRDS IN THE SKY!” JESUS DIRECTS. IF THEY CAN DO IT FOR EACH OTHER, “AREN’T YOU WORTH MORE THAN BIRDS? (MK12:31 NIV). WHEN WORD CIRCULATES THAT WE LOVE EACH OTHER THIS WAY, THEY’LL BEAT DOWN THE DOORS OF OUR CHURCH TO GET IN!!**

LOST AND STRAY GEESE ARE ALWAYS WELCOMED IN THE FORMATION.

IT'S NOT AN EXCLUSIVE CLUB FOR THE ELITE. BIRDS SEPARATED FROM OTHER FORMATIONS, ISOLATED BY WEATHER, ACCIDENT OR INFIRMITY ARE GIVEN FULL FAMILY STATUS. THE FORMATION WILL ALTER ITS PLANS, RESCHEDULE ITS ARRIVAL TIME AND INCONVENIENCE ITSELF TO ACCOMMODATE ANY STRANGERS SEEKING ITS ACCEPTANCE. MANY NEWCOMERS ARRIVE DIRTY, BEDRAGGLED AND ILL-FED. THEY'RE NEVER TURNED AWAY. GOD'S CHURCH, ISN'T A MUSEUM FOR MASTERPIECES, IT'S A HOSPITAL FOR THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN HURT BY LIFE. (EVEN, SELF-INFLICTED HURT) JESUS SAID: "ALL.. WHO ARE WEARY AND CARRY HEAVY BURDENS" ARE ACCEPTED (SEE MT 11:28 NLT). "I HAVE OTHER SHEEP THAT RE NOT OF THIS SHEEP PEN. I MUST BRING THEM ALSO.. THERE SHALL BE ONE FLOCK AND ONE SHEPHERD" (JN 10:16 NIV). CHRIST HAS NO HIGHER AGENDA THAN TO RECRUIT, SAVE AND ADOPT THE STRANGER INTO HIS FLOCK. YOU SAY, "BUT THEY'RE NOT MY KIND OF PEOPLE; THEY DON'T LOOK, TALK OR SMELL LIKE ME!" SO WHAT? WE DON'T GET TO CHOOSE OUR BIOLOGICAL OR SPIRITUAL SIBLINGS; GOD DOES. IF THEY RUB US LIKE SANDPAPER THEY'RE HELPING RUB OFF ROUGH EDGES AND POLISH US UP. WANT TO SEE THE MATERIAL GOD BUILDS THE CHURCH WITH? PREPARE FOR A SHOCK. "THE UNRIGHTEOUS .. FORNICATORS .. IDOLATERS .. ADULTERERS .. HOMOSEXUALS .. THIEVES ... COVETOUS ..DRUNKARDS REVILERS EXTORTIONERS . AND SUCH WERE SOME OF YOU. BUT YOU WERE WASHED, BUT YOU WERE SANCTIFIED, BUT YOU WERE JUSTIFIED IN THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS AND BY THE SPIRIT OF OUR GOD" (1CO 6:9-11 NKJV). WE WERE TAKEN INTO THE FORMATION, WASHED, SANCTIFIED, JUSTIFIED AND GIVEN FULL FAMILY STATUS!