



Lessons From The Geese

This fall, when you see geese heading south for the winter flying along in “V” formation, you might consider what science has discovered as to why they fly that way.

Fact: As each bird flaps its wings, it creates an “uplift” for the bird immediately following. By flying in a “V” formation, the whole flock has at least 71% greater flying range than if each bird flew on its own.

Lesson: People who share a common direction and sense of community can get where they are going quicker and easier because they are travelling on the thrust of one another.

Fact: When a goose flies 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 birds immediately in front.

Lesson: If we have as much common sense as a goose, we stay in formation with those headed where we want to go. We are willing to accept their help and give our help to others. It is harder to do something alone than together.

Fact: When the lead goose gets tired, it rotates back into the formation, and another goose flies to the point position.

Lesson: It is sensible to take turns doing the hard and demanding tasks and sharing leadership. As with geese, people are interdependent of each others skills, capabilities, and unique arrangements of gifts, talents, or resources.

Fact: The geese flying in formation honk from behind to encourage those up front to keep up their speed.

Lesson: We need to make sure our honking is encouraging. In groups where there is encouragement, the production is 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. We need to make sure our honking is encouraging and not discouraging.

Fact: When a goose gets sick, wounded, or shot down, two other geese will drop out of formation with that goose and follow it down to lend help and protection. They stay with the fallen goose until it dies or is able to fly again. Then, they launch out on their own, or with another formation to catch up with their flock.

Lesson: If we have the sense of a goose, we will stand by each other in difficult times as well as in good.

Written in 1972 by Dr. Robert McNeish of Baltimore