



The graphic above is a real map of the World Wide Web, the Internet. To map the Internet a packet of information was sent from a computer to all registered networks of the global database. The data were traced and graphed using special software created by Hal Burch of Carnegie Mellon University and Bill Cheswick of Bell Labs, a division of Lucent Technologies.

The implications of this map are incredible. Sitting alone at a computer in your home, you are instantaneously connected to this vast network that circles the globe. When you are logged on, you are in the web.

Not so surprising. The spiritual network that is the Church was designed by God to function as a collection of individuals from the beginning. The amazing thing is that you are not only connected to every believer in the world, but every believer who ever lived or will live. So your network spans not only space, but time.
 Who are you right now as you read this? Part of a world wide web.
 Who are you right now as you read this? Part of Christ's Church.
 What does that mean for the steward life? You are not alone, but joined at the spirit to God and every member of His Church. Awesome!

STORY:

“All You See Is the House”

Stephanie, age six, got a fairly complex set of LEGO™ building blocks. One day she put blocks of many different colors together to form a house. She was quite proud of her project, and excitedly showed it off to Dad when he came home from work. The variety of block colors gave the house a checkerboard look. But the over-all design was what Stephanie was after.

“You know, daddy, it’s neat,” she observed. “When you stand back and look at what I made all the blocks kind of disappear and all you see is the house.”

What a wonderful observation! Being so close to the building process, she had seen each individual block go into the pattern. But now, looking at the whole creation, the individual blocks blended into the whole house. In the same way you are an individual member of the Body of Christ, the Church. Yet you are not just an individual, but a

corporate member of the whole Body. When you fit as you should, you appear as one--in your own time and place--with your own position--yet built into one structure. May the recognition of your individual gifts and blessings never be disconnected from the family of God, the Church. You are being built as living stones into a spiritual temple. As such you are holy priests who bring spiritual sacrifices that God gladly accepts through Jesus Christ. (*1 Peter 2:5*).

STORY:

“The Geese”

“Therefore, encourage one another and build each other up....
Encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone.”

1 Thessalonians 5:11, 14

If you watch geese flying in formation during their spring and fall migrations, you might notice . . .

As each bird flaps its wings, it creates an "uplift" for the bird following. By flying in a V formation, the whole flock adds 71% more flying range than if each bird flew alone. People who share a common direction and sense of community can get to their destination quicker and easier because they are traveling on the thrust of one another. Whenever a goose falls out of formation, it suddenly feels the drag and resistance of the wind, and quickly gets back into formation to take advantage of the lifting power of the birds in front. If we have as much sense as a goose, we will employ the “power of we” and not struggle alone to stay in flight..

When the lead goose gets tired, it drops back into formation and another goose moves up to fly in point position. It pays to take turns with leadership roles and hard tasks because people, like geese, are interdependent and can use a rest once in a while.

The geese in formation honk from behind to encourage those up front to keep up their speed. We need to make sure we provide sufficient encouragement.

When a goose gets sick, or wounded or is shot down, two other geese drop out of formation and follow their fellow flyer down to provide protection for him until he is able to fly again with a new formation or they catch up with their old flock.

Christians stand by one another in difficult times.

EXERCISE

Read Romans 8:12-17

As God's saint, what do you leave behind?

Who are you by the Spirit's power?

When have you experienced suffering? Glory?

As a child of God you belong to a fellowship that spans time and space and has an everlasting inheritance. How does that truth affect how you live your life?

What power comes to you as a result of your relationship to God and to other Christians?

What will you do to solidify/broaden that relationship?

As an individual, how can you benefit the world?

STEWARDSHIP PRINCIPLES—PRINCIPLE FOUR

God's stewards are uniquely singular yet profoundly plural. I recognize that my life as a steward is a personal response to God, lived out within the community of faith to benefit the whole world. See Romans 12:4-5; 1 Corinthians 12:12-13; 1 Peter 4:10; 2 Corinthians 8:13-14; 2 Corinthians 9:11-14; Galatians 6:7-10. We emphasize the privilege and accountability of having specific gifts to honor the Lord and bless others, as members of the Body of Christ in kingdom work together. God showers blessings on those who manage His gifts wisely and well for the common good.

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