Connection To Unit Theme: *Connected: My Life in the Church* is a six session study from the book of Ephesians, based on *I Am A Church Member* by Thom Rainer. These theme-based sermon outlines will cover the same topics and Scripture passages as are being studied in the small groups. This will allow you as the pastor to reinforce what small group leaders are talking about. Session 3 of *Connected* is called “Connected in Growth” and The Point is, “Church members need one another in order to grow in Christ.”

The church needs every member to do his/her part. Without every member striving to be more like Jesus the church will slowly drift and become unstable. We are dependent on one another. Growth doesn’t happen without other believers.

**Introduction:**

On August 13, 2011, fans of the country music duet Sugarland gathered in front of the stage at the Indiana State Fair. As the sky filled with foreboding clouds, gusts of wind began to move through the area. The outdoor concert venue was nothing more than a temporary structure. Eventually the gusts of wind were too strong for unstable structure and it collapsed on the crowd. Seven people were killed and 58 others were injured.

The office report is that “The failure ... was due to the inadequate capacity of the lateral load resisting system, which was comprised of guy lines connected to concrete "Jersey barrier" ballast.” That’s a fancy way of saying that the structure was unstable and it ended up collapsing on its own weight.

The local church can have a similar experience. Some churches are unstable. Others are unified and have a solid structure. If winds come an unstable church will be tossed to and fro, and apart from grace it will end up collapsing on its own weight. In Ephesians 4:11-16 Paul contrasts the unstable church with a unified church. God has given us what we need to be unified instead of unstable.

1. **The unstable church (Ephesians 4:14-16)**

Begin by looking at verses 14-16 and looking at the unstable church. Notice in verse 14 that Paul says, “so that we may no longer be...” This implies that until we reach maturity we will have the tendency to be tossed to and fro.

What is it that causes us to be tossed to and fro? “…Every wind of doctrine”. In each generation until Jesus comes back there will be new teaching that is really not new teaching that attempts to subvert the gospel. If we are not grounded in Jesus and connected to the body we will be tossed to and fro. I like what Peter O’Brien says about this, “Unable to come to settled convictions or to evaluate various forms of teaching, they fall an easy prey to every new theological fad.”

Standing behind all of this fad-driven unstable Christianity are two things that Paul mentions, “human cunning” and “craftiness in deceitful schemes”. This is a reference to wicked men that are wolves in sheep’s clothing. It is also more than likely a reference to the demonic, to Satan,

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1 Quoted from here: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indiana_State_Fair_stage_collapse](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indiana_State_Fair_stage_collapse)
that is constantly roaming the earth attempting to defile the gospel, enslave humanity, and deceiving.

An unstable church is built on the wrong foundation. It is no longer centered upon the Lord Jesus but it has fallen prey to some new theological fad. Perhaps the church fell prey decades ago and has been drifting from her center ever since. Or maybe the defection is new. Regardless, the answer is to return to the Lord Jesus.

*Application:* What are theological fads that we can fall prey to? How are tempted to move away from the sufficiency of Jesus and embrace these unstable fads?

II. The unified church (Ephesians 4:11-13)

It only takes one piece of a structure to malfunction for the entire thing to collapse. In the same way the church needs all of her members to be stable. God has given apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers to equip every member to do the work of ministry. Note the difference between these offices.

The picture in verse 13 is wonderful. It has in mind a stated goal and it looks at a group of people working together toward that goal. The picture is not like a group of people separated on a starting line racing to get to a finish line. The picture is more like a large group of people attached by a string shuffling their feet trying to get to the starting line. If anybody falls or gets disconnect the group doesn’t just move on and live them behind it stops picks them up and starts shuffling again.

So what is that goal? In verse 13 it says, “...until we all to the unity of faith and to the knowledge of the son of God.” That’s one of the goals—to live in the unity that Christ has purchased. The other goal is to “attain full knowledge of the son of God”. In other words that we might truly know the Lord as He is and that we might live fully in redemption instead of rebellion. To be truly mature or is to be like Jesus.

*Application:* Are you doing your part? Are you becoming mature in Christ? Are you doing the work of ministry that God has called you to do?

**Conclusion:**

The difference between a stable and unified church and an unstable church is found in its members. If the members of a local church are like geese then it is likely a stable church. Consider these four things about the flight pattern of geese:

1. Those in front rotate their leadership. When one lead goose gets tired, it changes places with one in the wing of the V-formation and another flies point.
2. By flying as they do, the members of the flock create an upward air current for one another. Each flap of the wings literally creates an uplift for the bird immediately following. One author states that by flying in a V-formation, the whole flock gets 71 percent greater flying range than if each goose flew on its own.
3. When one goose gets sick or wounded, two fall out of formation with it and follow it down to help and protect it. They stay with the struggler until it's able to fly again.
4. The geese in the rear of the formation are the ones who do the honking. I suppose it's their way of announcing that they're following and that all is well. For sure, the repeated honks encourage those in front to stay at it. As I think about all this, one lesson stands out above all others: it is the natural instinct of geese to work together.
Whether it's rotating, flapping, helping, or simply honking, the flock is in it together...which enables them to accomplish what they set out to do².

Every goose doing its part. The entire team helping those that are struggling or wounded. That’s an apt picture of the church. We need one another.

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