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# The Lyceum

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A Publication of  
The Masonic Education Alliance

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# From the Desk of R.H. Johnson



## History:

Started in xxxx, The Lyceum, an e-magazine dedicated to Truth and Progress in Freemasonry, has undergone a necessary evolution in order to adapt to changing circumstances. Originally a publication of the Committee on Masonic Education of The Grand Lodge of Illinois, the magazine was the collaborative effort of two committee members. However, with the departure of one member and the Grand Lodge's change in direction, The Lyceum faced the threat of going defunct. In response, all previous issues have been rebranded, removing any association with the Grand Lodge of Illinois. While previous versions may still be available on certain websites, they are no longer offered by the publisher. These changes in branding ensure that The Lyceum can continue as a free and independent publication, focused on promoting Truth and Progress in Freemasonry, regardless of oppositional forces in any Grand Lodge organization. It is important to note that the content, authors, and publisher of The Lyceum do not represent any statements or positions of any Grand Lodge, unless expressly stated.

## About:

The Masonic Education Alliance, a groundbreaking initiative, has emerged as a beacon of Light in the realm of Freemasonry. Born out of the necessity to bridge the gap left by dwindling education committees within various Grand Jurisdictions, this alliance has taken on the responsibility of providing a limitless educational magazine dedicated to all things Freemasonry. Unrestricted by the restraints of any particular jurisdiction, the Alliance unites Masonic scholars, writers, and enthusiasts from around the world to create a platform where knowledge can flow freely and uninhibited.

In the past, education committees were the pillars of Masonic educational activities, disseminating knowledge and fostering a deeper understanding of the Craft within their respective jurisdictions. However, due to various circumstances, these committees have been effectively gutted, leaving a void in the educational landscape of Freemasonry. Recognizing this critical need for a comprehensive educational platform, the Masonic Education Alliance was formed.

Unlike traditional Masonic publications, which are often confined by the limitations of a specific Grand Jurisdiction, the Masonic Education Alliance embraces the power of collaboration and inclusivity. Its mission is to foster a love for learning, share profound insights, and explore all aspects of Freemasonry in an unbiased and global

manner. By removing these boundaries, the Alliance opens doors for Masons and non-Masons alike to delve into the mysteries, history, philosophy, and symbolism of Freemasonry from diverse perspectives.

Through the publication of a cutting-edge digital magazine, the Masonic Education Alliance brings forth a wealth of articles, essays, research papers, and creative works that elevate the intellectual understanding of Freemasonry. Drawing upon the expertise of its contributors, the Alliance takes readers on a journey of intellectual expansion, inviting them to explore the depths of Masonic teachings and traditions.

In this rapidly changing world, where traditional modes of education are transforming, the Masonic Education Alliance stands as a beacon of progress and innovation. By harnessing the power of technology, this alliance is able to disseminate knowledge to a wide audience across continents and jurisdictions. As a digital platform, the Alliance ensures that no Mason is left behind and that access to Masonic education is available to all seekers, regardless of geographical boundaries or political constraints.

In essence, the Masonic Education Alliance is more than just a magazine; it is a revolution in Masonic education. With an unwavering commitment to intellectual growth, unlimited collaboration, and global connectivity, the Alliance cultivates a vibrant and dynamic community of Freemasons hungry for knowledge. Together, members of the Alliance strive to preserve the essence of Freemasonry while embracing the transformative power of education in an ever-evolving world.

## The Seal:

The seal of the Masonic Education Alliance embodies the organization's commitment to providing rich and unbiased content to its readers. The golden hue represents the wealth of knowledge and information offered, while the borders ensure the protection of the Alliance from external influences and attacks. The Square symbolizes the Alliance's dedication to staying true to its research and providing accurate information to its readers. The presence of the All-Seeing Eye signifies the recognition of a higher power, while the book represents the Book of Nature, with a stalk of vegetation on one page and an illustration of a germ and the solar system on the other. Absent is the Compass, for the search for knowledge knows no boundaries.

*R.H. Johnson*

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# FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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Brothers all,

Last month our committee decided to put our heads together and choose themes for the issues as we advance. I'm happy to say we had some fantastic theme ideas, and the first of these themed issues is this very issue. The theme in this issue is one that all Masonic Lodges struggle with--Mentorship.

Mentorship is one of those things we seem to take for granted. At best, it's meeting with our candidates and intermediary Freemasons many times between Lodge nights. At worst, it's letting the candidates, EAs, and FCs leave the Lodge with the words, "Call me if you have questions."

This month we've curated several articles focusing on mentorship from a Masonic perspective. Some pieces will immediately hit home for you, others may make you cringe, but all will make you think a little differently about the best way for you, personally, to be a better mentor to someone else. Of course, it goes without saying that it wouldn't be terrible if you ended up using those extraordinary mentoring skills outside the Lodge walls, either.

Freemasonry has always espoused that we are leaders. In reality, leaders tend to join Freemasonry, not the other way around. Good men exist--we just make them better. To continue making the world a truly better place, we should necessarily look to our secular Masonic values and apply them in the world around us--If we gain a few members along the way, great. The real testament to Freemasonry is not the number of members we have but the impact we make--even if it's only a few of us.

I hope you enjoy this month's articles!

R. H. Johnson

*R. H. Johnson*



# From the Chairman



My Brothers,

We have reached November. I have no idea where the year has gone. The sands in the hourglass seem to pass faster with each successive year. I wanted to apologize for

being unable to make our annual Communication; I had committed to starting a side job and felt it was unfair to them for me to take off after just starting-- have no fear. I have high expectations for next year.

You might ask, "Mike, why a side job?" which is a valid question. I am a big fan of Dave Ramsey-- he has a lot to say about living better lives. I've learned some excellent lessons from him.

Granted, some of the lessons I learned from Larry Burkett. We recently had some costly home improvements, along with some unexpected emergencies. I soon discovered that I was not alone. I have found a handful of Brothers from my lodge under the same pressure. So, I took one part-time job, and then I got a second part-time job and started my own business to put the icing on the cake. I work 80 to 90 hours weekly while working on my side hustle.

In our Ritual, we can find this called out in the Charge in the Entered Apprentice degree," And to yourself, by such prudent and well-regulated course of discipline," along with patience and prayer used in all three degrees. As I journey through this, I will try to submit my ramblings.

This month's "Ramblings -

Two things I wanted to cover that might be overlooked in our Ritual are Patience and Prayer.

First - "No man should ever enter upon any great or important undertaking without first invoking the blessing of Deity." And Second - In every degree, you are told to wait with patience. This, for me, is the hardest thing in the world. I want it to happen now, not later--in almost every circumstance. In our recent business undertakings, I expect results to

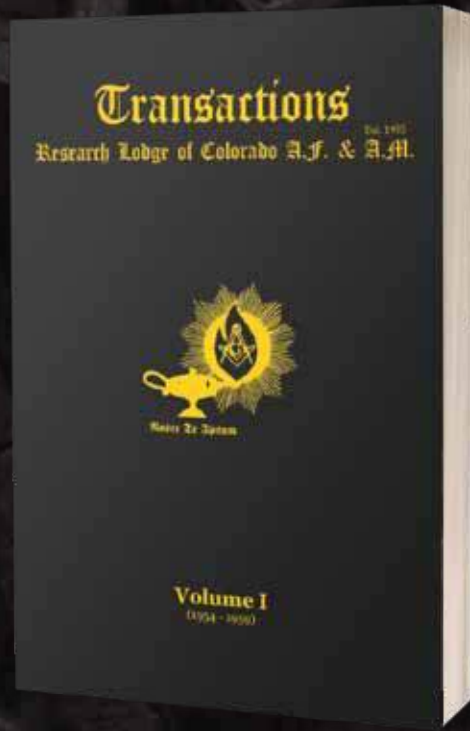
occur in a few weeks, but alas, it's a slow process. Whether hunting for a new job, building a start-up company, or getting out of debt, you must have patience.

I have always told people looking for a new job that it is a pipeline; you must first fill it before any results are seen, and this holds true also for a start-up business or getting out of debt. If you are struggling, put out the fires first (Home, Auto, etc.) and take care of the basics. If the wolves are knocking on your door, talk to them, don't avoid them, and explain the situation. Next, assess the situation and get an idea of where the problem is. Plan and understand that actively working is a surefire method to solving a problem, even if it isn't glamorous.

As for Prayer, Prayer is a moment to yourself, talking directly to deity. Sometimes during our conversations, I lack a particular filter, but that is how I am wired. Use this time in prayer to give yourself some space. It will quiet the mind and ease your anxieties-- plus it allows you to hear what the universe is trying to tell you.

If you know a brother struggling, share this with them and have an open conversation, listening is paramount.





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# Mentoring

by WB.: Dan 'Doc' Gentry, PDEO

One topic that is always on my mind is mentoring and how we need to step it up in this area! You see, it is each and every Master Mason's job to mentor the next generation of masons working their way through the steps of Freemasonry. The problem seems to be that most Master Masons have no idea what they are doing. Perhaps, because they've never been taught--so here are some tips.

First and foremost, and I cannot stress this enough, encourage the possible candidate, from the first time they petition until a year after they are raised to keep a journal of all their experiences. Encourage them to write their feelings during the degrees and possible problems they may have encountered during these times. At the end of the time frame, let them have the floor in the lodge to tell about their experiences. This will benefit not only the Brother but the lodge in general!

Second, and equally as important, is to make sure you have an available "class" to present to potential candidates and their families, and yes, I said, families. The Grand Lodge of Illinois already has one available for you. It's called "On The Threshold"! I'm sure other Grand Lodges have similar items, but I can only speak from experience. DO NOT just hand the potential candidate the material and say something like, "Call me if you have any questions." Oh, how I hate this. It misses the main reason for a significant opportunity. I've said it before, and I will repeat it, no one takes a step in Freemasonry alone! Sit down with the potential candidate and their family members. Remember, once a person takes their degrees, without bonding or fraternalism, their family will feel like they are in the dark, something we need to avoid if we are to have active Masons and supportive families. Take the time to answer all their questions to the best of your ability. At this point, you should know what is actually a secret and what is not. I suggest you end this session with a tour of the lodge room.

After this, if they petition, the mentoring continues. Invite at least the candidate, if not their family, to dinner to break bread with and talk before lodge. Also, if you see persons like this at the lodge, everyone



should make themselves available to them. Let them ask questions and feel like part of the family. If your lodge does not do meals, at least invite the candidate to come for fellowship before lodge starts so they may be able to meet the brethren. Remember, all this is still even before they are initiated into the Craft.

After they're initiated, the new Brother will receive an official Intender or Mentor--at least in my jurisdiction. I suggest we stop waiting until the end of the initiation to introduce them to each other and let them meet and talk beforehand so the Intender can give some advice, something simple like, "Make sure you try and listen to everything going on." or something similar. Afterward, make sure you, as a Mentor, are available to the new Brother for questions, and also, before leaving the lodge room, make sure the new Brother knows how to say and perform their newfound craft fundamentals. I remember when I was initiated, it was unlike anything else I had experienced, and I remember my "Nic at Night" from basic training. The new Brother will probably feel the same way and overwhelmed with all that had happened. At this point, DO NOT just give the new Brother some material to prepare for the next step. Make time together to prepare and study for their next step together.

Know the material, try to have answers ready for questions, but DO NOT be afraid to tell the Brother that you honestly don't know an answer to a question and that you will find out and get back to them, oh, and then actually get back to them with the answer! Once the Brother is made a Master Mason, DO NOT just hand them the last bit of material and

then not continue to be available. They finally have all the information, and now you are there to help them process it and help them grow. Another note, love of Buddha, if you have a short or fast version of the steps that is a quicker version of proving you're ready for the following degree, DO NOT push the new Brother to do this. The joy is in the journey, not the destination. Let them experience the full version of Freemasonry, not just some short version to be lazy!

A few final thoughts, protect the new Master Mason from the petition vultures and encourage them to process the information they have just received in Blue Lodge. Second, DO NOT stop teaching. They are as impressed upon and overwhelmed as you were when you were raised. Finally, and most importantly, never say, and I know I'm repeating myself, but this is important; never say, "Ok, call me if you have any questions." Continue to set time aside, and let them continue to learn from you, and ask questions of you. Be the Freemason that the Craft needs you to be!







# Does Freemasonry Develop Talent?

by WB:. Darin A. Laherns,  
AEO Eastern Area and Member of the Committee on Masonic Education

Freemasonry does very little to no talent development. For an organization that claims to take good men and make them better, that's a pretty damning statement. However, I stand by it. In business, talent development refers to the organizational processes designed to attract, develop, motivate, and retain productive, engaged employees. If a business is to succeed, it has to do this and put a lot of effort into doing this. Otherwise, they will see a significant turnover of employees. What is Freemasonry doing to attract, develop, motivate, and retain members? In my personal experience, very little. Is it any wonder we are struggling with getting new members and retaining the ones we have?

What is Freemasonry doing to attract members? In business, a value proposition is an innovation, service, or feature intended to make a company or product attractive to customers. For our Fraternity, it should show what Freemasonry will do for each man individually or why a man should choose Freemasonry over another community organization. While we shouldn't be joining Freemasonry for mercenary motives, we should be selling ourselves better. Instead of saying: "We take good men and make them better," our value proposition should list what we will do to make you a better man and how it relates to the individual.

Until recently, we relied on campaigns like 2BE1ASK1 and other outdated methods to gain membership. In fact, until three Masonic appendant governing bodies, namely the NMJ and SMJ of the AASR and Shiner's International, decided to sponsor [bea.freemason.org](http://bea.freemason.org), minimal effort was put forth to attract membership. My Grand Lodge has an invitation to petition program, but it is not used to its full effectiveness, nor is it being pushed by them as a program that Lodges should be using. Lodges should be using this program to have its members identify their friends, neighbors, and other community members who would be active and engaged members. As part of this process, once the invitation is accepted, we should be giving a value proposition to the prospective members. We can no longer rely on

our history or reputation as an organization to be an effective recruitment tool.

At my last meeting at St. Joseph #970, as Worshipful Master, I had six "invitation to petition" forms submitted and read, which will be voted on at our next stated meeting. Assuming the vote for these members is favorable, I plan to write each of the prospective members a letter, along with a value proposition about how I think Freemasonry can benefit them. I also encouraged members to think about men that they know and encouraged them to do the same. St. Joseph has not had a new member in over two years. If we do not bring in new active and engaged members, we need to consider consolidating with another lodge seriously. We continue to lose members due to having them move away from the area or by having some pass away, and we are not gaining new members to replace that attrition. I doubt that we are the only lodge to experience this problem.

What is Freemasonry doing to develop members? It is my opinion that we are doing very little. Time and time again, Education is not given the same importance as other items on the meeting agenda. My girlfriend Lisa, who is the incoming Chair for the National Advisors for Chapters and an incoming board member on the Board of Directors for the Association of Talent Development, retweeted this today: "Learning shouldn't be begging for a place at the table, it should be setting the menu." Truer words have never been spoken. Masonic Education should be the highlight of our stated meetings, not an afterthought. Most of us would rather spend a meeting debating how many rolls of toilet paper to buy or (insert your own trivial matter of business) over working to improve ourselves. How in the heck does this make us better men? It doesn't. The ugly truth of the matter is that:

1. Not every man in Freemasonry is a good man
2. Not every man in Freemasonry cares about becoming a better man
3. Some men in Freemasonry have no interest in helping their brethren, who are good men, become

better men, which is why they don't support Masonic Education.

We also do a terrible job of identifying skills that our members might be good at and interested in and in helping them to use and develop those skills to help not only improve themselves but the lodge or Freemasonry in their area as well. We each have individual talents that we are good at and other areas where we lack skills. One member might be a strong natural leader but not be very good with technology, while another might lack leadership skills but be very good with technology. Doesn't it make sense to pair these people together to have them help each other improve their skills? In most lodges where there is a progressive line, wouldn't you want to ensure that the members succeeding them are good leaders?

We also fail when it comes to mentoring. In Illinois, we have something called the intender program. Under this program, each candidate is assigned an experienced Freemason to help them learn their catechisms and to help them through their degrees. I have seen time and time again where the experienced Freemason stops mentoring the individual who is their candidate once that candidate is raised as a Master Mason. This needs to stop. We've forgotten our obligations to aid and support our brethren. When was the last time you offered to help another member of your lodge with their ritual and floor work outside of a meeting? Or invited them to coffee for a discussion? Or generally, tried to get to know them? Are you taking an active role in trying to mentor and help develop the talents of your brethren? Yes, there might be times when the other member might be unwilling to accept your help or overtures of friendship. In these cases, make sure you're setting the right example for them to follow. Mentoring another member can be both active and passive.

How many of us have a formal or informal degree team in your area? All of the members of the "team" are the ones called are constantly called upon to put on degrees, and it's always the same brothers doing the same parts in the same degrees night after night. This is problematic because the members of the "team" aren't usually trying to mentor the members that are not on the "team," and they are not encouraging them to learn parts or participate in the degrees. The members that want to learn parts and become members of the "team" often aren't making their desires known to the degree "team" members.

Essentially, a situation is created where you have a small number of people doing work, and because of the perceived clique of "team" members, other members feel that they are not encouraged to learn and participate or feel that they don't need to learn or participate, because the degree "team" members have it covered. In my particular district, you have some older members of the "team," and when they pass away, there is no one to step up and fill that void. This is just one example of where we are failing to help develop talent and where we have no succession plan in place.

What is Freemasonry doing to motivate and retain members? Our wages of corn, wine, and oil don't seem to be bringing members to lodge, nor are they helping us retain our members. Multiple times, I've seen an enthusiastic new Master Mason be forced into a chair due to not having enough active and engaged members present. Then, have them not be given proper instruction about what to do in the meeting, and then, inevitably, have them approached by a grumpy past master after the meeting who tells them what they did wrong. Is it any wonder we continue to raise candidates and never see them return to lodge? I'll also take the opportunity to highlight the times as an Area Education Officer, where I've seen educational programs ridiculed because the majority of brethren don't want to take the time to explore our mysteries and symbols. They only seem to care about the stated meeting when they have something to complain about. However, once they've decided they're done complaining, they want to get the meeting over with. Then they might adjourn to the bar across the street to complain about everything they disagreed with within the meeting with their fellow complainers. An employee acting like this in business would be reprimanded, maybe even terminated, for creating a hostile work environment. However, in Freemasonry, it seems to be the norm.

Another major reason for this is that our stated meetings are not run efficiently. In fact, I would argue that the current model of stated meetings is completely and utterly outdated. In my mind, the one thing that the pandemic has proven is that a stated meeting is no longer necessary to handle a majority of the business of the lodge. Almost all of the business can be handled either through email or via a short zoom/skype/Webex/google meeting between the members. We need to change how we handle business to compete for the attention of our members in the current day and age. We are com-

peting with social media, streaming services, sports (our children's and professional), and other organizations like a church or school board that our members might belong to. If we want to compete, we must change how we handle our business.

In changing how business is handled, we can free up time during our stated meeting nights that were previously used for business to focus on personal development. You know, actually doing the work of making good men better instead of just saying that we do. We can use the time to implement skill development workshops to teach leadership, grooming, public speaking, budgeting/personal finance, listening, and, believe it or not, learning to be more sensitive and empathetic. We can also use the time to improve ourselves in Masonry, with Masonic Education programs and working on ritual and floor work. Comradery needs to be built between the lodge members so that they actually enjoy each other's company and want to seek more of it. This can be accomplished by holding festive boards or participating in other activities where the brethren can interact in a social setting outside the lodge room on stated meeting nights. It seems to be beyond the realm of my comprehension to imagine a time when I could open St. Joseph #970 for a meeting, have a short meeting (15 - 20 minutes max), close the meeting, and then adjourn to a festive board, or have the programs like what I mentioned above. Unfortunately, as long as we continue to have poorly run, long, boring, and sometimes toxic meetings, we will continue to lose members.

Not only that, many of us providing the energy and manpower to a lodge have become disheartened and unmotivated. I deal with this feeling more than I would like to admit when it comes to Freemasonry. Not only do the above examples show why we are failing to retain members, but also some of the reasons why many of us are becoming unmotivated. Couple this with how we see brethren mistreat each other within the lodge and on social media. We no longer seem to be practicing the tenet of Brotherly Love. Unfortunately, the Lodge room, which is a place that I consider to be a sacred space (which should be devoid of politics or religion at all times, not just when the gavel has sounded), is no longer sacred to brethren. Many brethren have decided they don't get enough discussion of these divisive topics on social media and need to engage in the same rhetoric within a lodge room. Many of us, myself included, are left bewildered by this when we try to

speaking good counsel to our brethren, and we're told that the gavel hasn't sounded, so they can discuss whatever they want. Apparently, I missed the section in the lectures in my degrees that instructed us only to practice Freemasonry between the gavels. Is it any wonder that many of us lack motivation and cannot retain our new members?

How do we change this? Freemasonry is local. Ultimately, you can only impact what is happening at your local lodge. Here are some things you can do to help change your lodge culture and develop talent.

1. You need to have allies. If you're the only one in your lodge that wants to change things, things will not change. You need to have enough brethren on your side to be able to implement change. You must ensure that all of you have the same vision and goals. Without this, you will not be able to implement programs to help develop the talents of or educate the brethren within your lodge.
2. You and your allies must act as role models and mentors. Survey your membership and identify where there are mentorship possibilities, and connect mentors with mentees. Be sure to set an example for the brethren in your lodge.
3. Build a process to support development. Implement programs to help develop the talents of brethren in your lodge. Prioritize lodge education in the meetings. Reduce the waste of meetings so that there is time for these processes.
4. Reinforce our shared values. Remind the brethren why talent development is essential in taking a good man and making him better. Help the brethren understand why this is important and how it will help attract and retain members. Use your allies to implement lodge bi-laws to make changes permanent.
5. Be adaptable. Each lodge is unique and has a unique culture. What works for one lodge might not work for another. Keep trying different approaches to development. Don't give up when one thing doesn't work. Note the successful things in your programs and those that are not. Learn from your experiences.

The choice is yours. You can either help be the change or slowly watch your lodge die. I know what I am going to choose.



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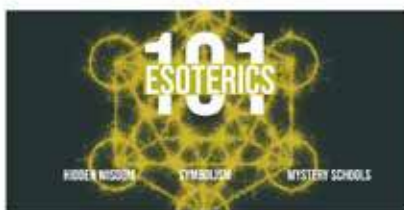
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# Any Tickets for Sale?

by Brother Randy Sanders

A scene from the Led Zeppelin concert film: The Song Remains The Same highlights a young woman standing outside Madison Square Gardens asking loudly to passers-by: “Any tickets for sale? Do you have any tickets?”

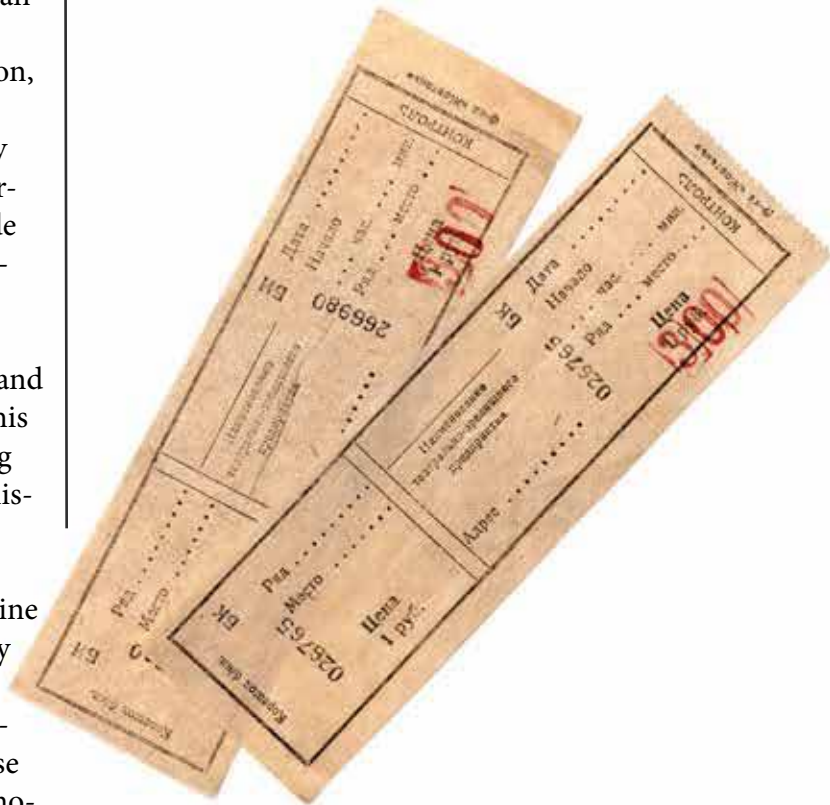
We see the parallels in Freemasonry when we consider the need for inclusion. We’re outside, looking for a key or some means of entry. The exact opposite is true. The key is within us, and Freemasonry provides tools to find that internal key. Freemasonry provides the means and understanding of stepping into that journey of self-discovery, but we must put the work in ourselves.

“You get out of it what you put into it.”

I heard this from many older Brothers when I joined, and I found myself using those words a couple of times. Stop using those words. They no longer mean what you think they mean to the younger generations. We live on the cusp of the Age of Information, where the initiatic experience can be looked up instantly and knowledge is at your fingertips. Why would a new Mason in the current society be interested in enigmatic phrases that, at their time, made sense but now simply ring hollow without demonstration? That new and perfect Mason standing in the corner needs to hear what the charge actually means, both to you and him. He needs to understand what the lecture means to you so he can come to his own conclusions. He’s still on the outside, thinking there’s a ticket that needs to be purchased for admission when in reality, he is his own ticket.

How do we adapt to make sure the breadcrumbs line up, because right now those breadcrumbs not only don’t align, those breadcrumbs don’t look edible? The new Masons coming into the craft already understand more symbolism than many of us because they learned to communicate with symbols via emojis, games, and anime, so let’s align the breadcrumbs. Make sure to include the new Masons in every lodge committee, function, or duty, and let him know he doesn’t have to do all of it. Make sure to assign at least one good verbal communicator to every function so the new Masons get learning opportunities.

Mentoring is only a part of it. It’s time to look beyond the mentoring to get deeper into symbolism right away. That way, the young Mason doesn’t have to go immediately into Appendant Bodies to get his best Blue Lodge experience. His ticket is already in his hand.



# What's (Not) in Your Wallet?

by RWB.: Chad Lacek, 33°



We have all heard the slogan, “Freemasonry takes good men and makes them better,” and it does. One of the most tangible ways it does so is by demonstrating what a good man looks like, what a good man sounds like, and the actions a good

man does or does not do.

I know several men who bought their first suit and tie when they became a Mason. I now keep blank ‘Thank You’ letters close at hand because I learned how nice it is to receive them when a Mason sent one to me. We stand a little taller. We speak with more confidence. We are quicker to lend a hand. All of these things help to make us better men. We learned these things either by emulation or by a Brother giving us a helpful suggestion. I would like to offer the following idea in the interest of continuing our collective self-improvement.

I have noticed with increasing frequency that many of my fellow Brothers do not carry cash. The reason I know this is because they are often standing next to me, asking if I have any cash they can borrow. This happens at vendor tables at a symposium, an author’s book signing, when the Masonic youth comes around trying to raise money for one of their programs, and countless other occasions. It happens a lot.

When I ask them why they don’t carry the currency of the country they live in, I always get the same answer, “I never use cash.” Well, you need it now! Where did this come from, Brothers? I have a credit card that pays me 3% cash back every month. I use it for absolutely everything I can. I even pay my utility bills with it. But, I am never without at least \$100 cash in my wallet. Why? Because there are plenty of times when you need it. It’s the same reason I carry a flashlight and a multi-tool in the glovebox of my car. Being prepared is one of the hallmarks of a good man.

So for those of you that “Never carry cash,” how do you contribute towards the cost of your dinner when you visit a Lodge? You know, that basket or bowl of cash on the table in front of the food being served?

What about when the Master of the Lodge passes the hat for a Brother in need that night? You can’t swipe your credit card on the brim of the hat. What about when the young woman comes around to raise money for Job’s Daughters?

And then there are real emergencies when cash is king. There are times when cash solves problems, and you’re in trouble if you don’t have any. This is when those men stick out like a sore thumb. When they need cash and are looking for someone that has it. Is that what a good man does? He looks around to find someone else to save the day? Certainly not.

So why don’t those men stick a couple of twenty dollar bills in their wallet and forget about them? Just to have it for when the need arises? Are they afraid they will spend money faster if it’s cash? That sounds like a problem of discipline, not of finance. Are they actively avoiding donating money for their dinner or a Brother in need? I sure hope not.

A good man insists on meeting his obligations and always seems prepared to meet life’s challenges. By always having a few bucks in your pocket, you’ll never get stuck in that awkward, embarrassing moment of a cash-only transaction, explaining that you’re the kind of guy that “Never carries cash.”



# The True Strength of Freemasonry

by WB:. Todd E. Creason, 33°

I've said it many times before. I was telling somebody the other night that I think one of the great strengths of Freemasonry is that a.) it allows us to use skills we wouldn't usually have the chance to use, b.) develop skills we wouldn't typically use, and c.) use skills we already possess to more significant effect and d.) have the opportunity to improve ourselves as we work together towards making the world a better place.

I went into Freemasonry with well-honed skills in leadership, management, and organization which I use in a variety of ways. From Masonry, I've gained skills in writing, researching, speaking, networking, and fundraising--as well as some refinements in how I conduct myself and present myself (got a lot more work to do there). And I've been given the opportunity to build on and use some of the skills I have in art in music.

But I never really appreciated the self-improvement aspect of the Fraternity until recently. I'm aware that I've changed over the years and gained a lot of wisdom from my mentors and teachers, along with a good deal of knowledge from my studies. I've always worked to pass that along to new members, and I think I've done a pretty good job as a mentor and teacher. But recently, I saw an example that showed me the potential of what Freemasonry can accomplish in a man's life when properly applied.

I've been mentoring a young man for about a year now. He contacted me through the Midnight Freemasons with some questions about the Fraternity, thought it sounded like something he could benefit from, and he's now a new Master Mason. He's very enthusiastic about Freemasonry, and it occurred to me in talking with him why. This is the first time in his life that he's been able to see what he has to offer, see the potential of what he can become, and see what the contributions of just one person can do to make one thing better in the world--and then compound that by joining forces with a group of like-minded men all with that same desire.

The Fraternity has opened his eyes, and there's a good chance he'll never be the same again. His life was off track when he joined--our original conversations were about whether a Lodge would even want him. Of course, they did, and he joined. Freemasonry

helped put him back on the right track. He's contributing to the work of his Lodge, and he's helping out in his community. He's got a new job he loves, replaced a few bad habits with a few good ones, and is in a new relationship that's much better than the one that got him off track. He's even begun attending church, which he hadn't done since he was a boy. He's transformed his life, and it's truly been a marvel to see.

I might get boos for this, but it isn't all about doing Freemasonry--attending events, degrees, meetings, etc. It's about living Freemasonry and, when given the opportunity teaching Freemasonry. Those of us who do, who take those ancient teachings and apply them to our lives and help others do the same thing, find the greatest strength of Freemasonry--the path to a well-balanced, peaceful and happy life.



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Please give us at least a month notice so that we can ensure it is added.





