

OUR MASONIC CHALLENGE

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Committee on Masonic Education/DEO District 35-A

I would like you to consider two questions this evening:

First, what inspired you to leave the comfort of your home and family to gather with your Brethren in this Lodge room? And second, what was it, sometime in the past, that inspired you to bravely knock at the door of Freemasonry?

We need to examine these questions, and thereby gain a better understanding of our relationship with the Fraternity and our responsibility to it.

As a Freemason, we are each challenged to project a positive public image and proudly represent our Fraternity; but to do so, we must be able to express what it stands for and why it is important to each of us personally. This is essential in furthering our personal progress in Masonry, in contributing to a meaningful Lodge experience, and being able to discuss the Craft with potential members, as well as those merely curious about our Fraternity.

In an era when free time is a precious commodity, which we are expecting candidates and members to choose to invest in our organization, we must consider whether we are providing them with a valid reason to make the choice to

come to Lodge. This requires us to understand the expectations of our members and candidates.

The appeal of Freemasonry is based on a combination of its traditions and historical perspective, its worldwide scope, and the ritual lessons of its symbolism and philosophy. We must be able to recognize what brings men to our door, and do what we can to mature their initial interest into an abiding and lifelong concern for the welfare of the Fraternity. Freemasonry differs from other organizations in its goal of encouraging members to improve themselves within a fraternal framework of trust and fellowship.

With that as our goal, can we afford to be satisfied with getting a large number of petitions in the Lodge, but then leaving the candidates with an unfavorable impression of Masonry due to poor delivery of the ritual or failing to make them feel welcome during the hour of refreshment? And is it enough to have proficient ritual, but failing to mentor our members when they seek to further their understanding of the Craft and their place in it? The answer to each of these is a resounding "NO" !

A balance must be found so that we are equally interested in the Getting, the Making, as well as the Keeping of a Mason. To do all 3 of these things, we must be able to:

- attract viable candidates;

- instill a desire and interest in our Brethren to share in the fellowship of the Lodge; and
- mentor the new Mason, so he will continue to grow and learn, both during and far beyond the period when he is receiving his degree work.

This is the challenge before us. That challenge of developing and retaining members in the Lodge might be expressed through the attributes of the Entered Apprentice, which are: freedom, fervency, zeal.

Freedom: In that we need to recognize that we expect men to come to the Fraternity of their own free will and accord, but also that they are free to choose another use of their time, if we cannot excite their interest in Freemasonry and the fellowship it provides;

Fervency: To develop an approach to our existing membership that shows an interest in their welfare and a concern for their situation, which is reflected in the fervent desire to strengthen the fellowship of the Lodge;

Zeal: We must be able to kindle an interest among candidates and our members, so they want to know more about Freemasonry, and hopefully create a desire to share what they learn with the rest of the Brethren and apply it in their daily lives.

Let us seek to better understand our Fraternity, and our motivations for being a part of it, so we may strengthen that mystic tie that we share as Masonic Brethren with current members as well as candidates starting on their journey into Freemasonry.