

Temple Lodge No. 324
November 12, 2013
“To Know and Remember”

‘To perceive or understand as fact or truth; to apprehend clearly and with certainty’, or perhaps ‘to be acquainted with...by sight, experience or report’.

Brethren, these are just a couple of dictionary definitions of the word ‘know’...as in...to know something or someone. So, you may not know, but as a young man, I was very shy and introverted. I think I took the expression of ‘seen and not heard’ to the extreme. I was actually terrified of speaking in public and the thought of any utterance beyond “Nice to meet you” after shaking hands at a formal introduction was traumatic. Now, if my wife were here right now, she would undoubtedly burst into laughter because she feels I never shut-up. So, at a young age, what did my mother do to assist with my fear, she encouraged me to act...on a stage. Now there’s an idea...take a fear of public speaking and push it front and centre under the lights, on display for a large audience. You know what...against all odds...it worked!

From that initial experience, I gained a subtle confidence, but I also learned that asking questions in what I perceived as awkward social situations was a perfect substitute for trying to think of something clever to say. I would leave the witty repartee on the pages of the script for when I was again on the stage.

I discovered that asking questions of other people opened the doors to a vault of interesting information. People naturally love to talk about themselves. I could engage a person for quite sometime by only asking questions and afterwards they would comment on what a fine conversationalist I was, when in fact, they did all the talking.

I would propose a person is closer with those individuals with whom they are more familiar, in other words, to those with whom they have a greater knowledge. It just makes sense.

My inspiration for writing about this subject of 'knowing people' came from a recent experience involving several other brethren. On a particular occasion, while chatting in a relaxed atmosphere and sharing ideas, I became aware of the dynamics and layers of the persons I was speaking with. I was learning of my friends, things that I had never known before. For me, this was embarrassing because our acquaintances reached back many years and I had not taken the time to learn more about those individuals I considered to be my friends. Fortunately, this occasion gave me the opportunity to redeem myself.

This new familiarity did by no means breed contempt as the expression goes, but in fact, it brought me closer. There was a greater kinship.

When shaking hands with these brethren, there was suddenly a greater depth and warmth and their smiles seemed to shine with a greater sincerity. This increased awareness and knowledge did not come about solely because I used my ears-to-mouth proportionately, but rather because I asked the right questions, questions that were personal and expressed a sincere interest in them.

We already shared a deep-rooted connection through our Masonic Brotherhood, so further discover and inquiry was not considered intrusive, but rather natural and appropriate. The topic of which any person is an expert and who can speak with clarity and accuracy is the subject of themselves. For us to experience the treasure of our fellow human beings and friends is..... 'to know them'. We may find in our commonality a sincere friendship and in our differences, unique talents and perspectives.

Try questions and inquiries of career, community service, family, hobbies, travel and the like. You will be absolutely fascinated by what you discover.

Lets try something for a moment. Everyone look at the brother to your left and, now to your right. The chances are pretty good you are sitting next to a brother with whom you are friends or are most familiar. Nothing wrong with that...it is the natural gravity of human nature. Now expand your view further along in both directions and the chances are pretty good you are less acquainted with these

brethren as they are of you. Last night at a Chapter meeting I looked around the room and I could quickly identify most of the members by name...by the pieces of ritual they traditionally did....and.....maybe the odd other tidbit. For the most part, the other details were a little fuzzy. I thought to myself “I am missing out on a great opportunity by not knowing more”.

I am not one for suggesting or asking of someone, something that I am not prepared to do myself. I am making a conscious effort to learn more about my brethren and I am asking you to do the same. If we already feel such a bond with a brother when we know little more than the information disclosed on his examination for membership, then just imagine how fruitful the bond will be when you know a great deal more. There is a pay-off...I can assure you.

It is my observation of those lodges that appear to have a greater familiarity and knowledge of their members; have a greater sense of community, co-operation and overall enthusiasm. These lodges hold social functions, tournaments, fund-raisers, blood-donor and food drives and so forth. In essence, they function as a family. I know the general feeling and perhaps the comical sentiments of a family is dysfunction, but lets assume for a moment that this is a perfect world.

You may well now be sitting next to 30, 40, 50 or more years of life experience embodied in the person beside you. Is this not a person with something to say and worth getting to know? I think you will

agree he is. Young and old alike, we have much to learn from each other. By engaging someone, you may soon find yourself immersed and living vicariously through their experiences...and it will probably be something you will remember the rest of your life.

Having so recently acknowledged Remembrance Day, I feel a connection between this solemn occasion and what I have just previously been talking about. Knowing People!

Remembrance Day is a day of reflection, a day to remember the sacrifice of so many, for the protection of our freedom and liberty. We generally associate this day of Remembrance with the two World Wars of 1914 and 1939. It by no means should be limited to these conflicts alone, as men and women have been fighting and sacrificing both since and before these times.

As I have no personal life experience with war itself, I need only to look into the face of a Veteran and watch as he slowly bows his head in reverent reflection to know the reasons why I must remember and why I must never forget. I must remember to honour the sacrifice of those who fought so bravely for our freedom...by never forgetting to live every day of my life in such a manner as to promote peace amongst men.

The following might put the significance of Remembrance Day in perspective:

During World War I, there were 37 million casualties. Just imagine waking one morning to find everyone, and I mean everyone in Canada was gone except for yourself. It is unimaginable, but the human loss was the equivalent to the entire population of our great country. World War II suffered casualties of more than 72 million, nearly twice the loss of WWI.

We remember the sacrifice so we may never forget

I will share with you an excerpt from a speech made by David Lloyd George, Minister of Munitions, “An Appeal to the Nation” delivered at the British Parliament on September 19, 1914; speaking on the defense of Belgium. I think he captures beautifully the spirit of good people coming to the defense of others; and I quote...

“Why is our honour as a country involved in this war? Because, in the first instance, we are bound by honourable obligations to defend the independence, the liberty, the integrity of a small neighbour that has lived peaceably. She could not have compelled us; she was weak; but the man who declines to discharge his duty because his creditor is too poor to enforce it, is a blackguard.”

Lloyd George went on to become Britain's Prime Minister in December 1916 and was later credited with bringing the war to an end in 1918.

Brethren, the more we know, the more we remember. The more we remember, the more we understand. And the greater our understanding....the less likely we will ever forget.

Thank you for your kind attention.

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