

Official Visit to Seymour Lodge No. 272
April 8th, 2014

“Communication; A Powerful Tool”

If I were to ask you to identify different types of communication, I am sure you would jump to expose the myriad of technological wonders we have at our disposal for keeping in touch. I suppose others might suggest Verbal and Non-Verbal communication.

I may be splitting hairs, but as I see it, the aforementioned are *methods* of communicating and not *types*. To my way of thinking, there is good communication and bad communication.

For human beings, communication is as vital to our survival and happiness, as food and water. The sharing of ideas, the dissemination of knowledge and the expression of our feelings are just a few of the things we share that bind us to one and another. The information we share amongst ourselves can motivate, inspire and lead us to action or it can discourage and be of something to the contrary. Far be it from me to limit the list to these items alone, as there are literally thousands, if not millions of ideas that are shared each and every day.

I believe the value of any communication is measured by its effectiveness. Does the message being communicated get the desired result?

Does your audience, be it one person or a large group understand what you are saying or what is being asked of them? Is the communication, honest, complete and absent of ambiguity that might lead to misunderstanding? If we can answer yes to these questions, then we might have identified some qualifiers of what is considered a good communication.

Perhaps having come from a sales background, I have come to believe that nothing happens until there is a meeting of the minds; until at least two people have shared ideas through clear and concise dialogue. It wasn't that long ago that a meeting of the minds meant either face to face or over the phone. From that time, a quarter of a century later, we now have access to the Internet and all of the various social network feeds that give us a variety of 'meeting forums'. Betty White, a beloved Hollywood TV star, now in her 90's once hosted the popular TV show, Saturday Night Live and said that in "her day, we didn't reach out to people through Facebook, we had Phone Book". My, how times have changed.

It seems to me that our lives are becoming more hectic and greater demands are being placed on our time. The time necessary for personal dialogue and interaction is becoming the exception and not the rule. If there is any truth to this, then we must use the time at our disposal to make the most of our communications.

Whether we speak in person or through some electronic media, we must ask ourselves if we have answered the 'golden' questions; who, why, where, what, when and how?

A friendly chat would obviously not be so demanding or structured, but if you were sharing information about an upcoming event or an important date, I think the details previously stated are essential.

As an example, when I was 13 years of age, a school friend of mine invited me to celebrate his Bar Mitzvah along with a couple of 100 other people. The invitation said the Ceremony would take place at 10:00 am at the Synagogue on Main Street West near McMaster University with a reception and meal to follow.

Being Presbyterian, the ceremony of course was unfamiliar to me, and I did my best to stand and sit as required, taking my lead from the others in the congregation. It was curious however when I looked about that I did not recognize a single other person. At the end of the ceremony, the Rabbi finished his blessing, my good friend stood and turned, and to my total surprise, I had sat through a Bar Mitzvah for a complete stranger. Had the invitation been a bit more specific or had I sought clarification, I would have found out the Synagogue I was to be at was the one on the *other* side of Main Street.

It is so easy to get caught in a rush about sending an email to your brethren about an upcoming event or occasion that some important detail is neglected. This one minor oversight will then lead to multiple questions and comments via 'Reply to All'.

What was to be a simple communication has now turned into a multi page thread of epic proportions. On one hand we are fortunate that an email can be sent so quickly and errors amended with a followup, however, our ability to keep track of multiple messages with minor variances and corrections is difficult. I have overlooked some important detail in emails because I am seeing the same email 20 and 30 times over with minor changes. I am sure we have all experienced the same. It's a good thing we don't have to handle missing information or corrections with the same frequency through regular mail, especially with the rising cost of postage.

Therefore, I think its fair to say that a good exchange of information includes all the pertinent information that allows your audience or recipient to act or understand without requiring any clarification. Patience and planning will win the day in this regard.

One perhaps might conclude that a bad or poor communication is everything that a good communication is not. This may be true, but allow me to introduce the Fundamental Tenets and Principles to assist in elaborating on the distinction between the two.

We are taught that Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth are fundamental. They are indeed, fundamental forms of Masonic Communication.

Brotherly love is the expression of support and admiration and any communication or conversation that is in keeping with this ideal is desirable and should be encouraged.

Relief is also a form of communication. Well-chosen remarks may be considered as comfort to the distressed or uplifting to the downtrodden. It is within our power to give relief by our words, when our deeds may not be enough.

Truth is that sincere bond we share with each other and is the greatest of all communications. Truth amongst Masons is not just a concept, but also a principle we are obligated to observe and embrace.

We may find from time to time that we are at variance with a brother and that is only natural and bound to happen. I think when these difficult circumstances arise, a truthful communication between the offended brethren is the most constructive and desirable resolution. It is certainly preferred to a general dissemination by whispers, which has a habit of turning into a rumour, and hence a bad communication. Would you not agree? Quite often, the last one to find out there is a problem or concern is the one who should have been informed in the first place.

Naturally, derisive comments or remarks amongst Masons or anyone for that matter, constructed both with or without malice should be discouraged and disallowed.

Remember Brethren, “Endeavour to be happy ourselves and communicate that happiness to others”. Good communication is a powerful tool; use it wisely.....and use it often.

Before I conclude, allow me to share for your amusement, an article from an advice column that highlights the importance of good communication.

Dear John,

I hope you can help me. The other day I set off for work, leaving my husband in the house watching TV. My car stalled and then it broke down about a mile down the road and I had to walk back to get my husband's help. When I got home, I couldn't believe my eyes. My husband was in our bedroom wearing my negligee. He broke down and admitted he has secretly been wearing my clothes for the past 6 months. I am 32 and my husband is 34. We have been married for 10 years and he refuses to go to counseling. I am a wreck, what should I do?

Sincerely, Sheila.

Dear Sheila,

A car stalling after being driven a short distance can be caused by a variety of faults with the engine. Start by checking that there is no debris in the fuel line. If it is clear, check the vacuum pipes and hoses on the intake manifold and also check all grounding wires. If none of these approaches solves the problem, it could be the fuel pump itself is faulty causing low delivery pressure to the injectors. I hope this helps.

John

Thank you for your kind attention.

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