

Masonic Vitality Begins with You

Brethren Thank you in advance for your attention to what I am about to deliver.

I want to start by asking you how many Masons it takes to change a light bulb ? Well no one knows because it's a secret ! However, a more relevant question in Masonry these days would be how many Mason's does it take to mentor a new member ? Or to help bring a new applicant into the Craft ?

My talk this evening is about how the Timeless Vitality of Masonry begins with you. It is based on excerpts from the new Long Range Strategic Plan developed by the Grand Lodge of Canada, and is available in full detail on the Grand Lodge web site. I have extracted some of the key points that I would like to convey to you this evening, which are so well written I cannot begin to think I could put them in my own words more eloquently.

Freemasonry's timeless lessons, from their simple clarity to their sublime interpretation, may have never been more applicable to the lives of men as we believe they are today.

Firstly, It is important for every member of the Fraternity to *live the Craft* each day through the application of the working tools in one's life and by embracing the message that Freemasonry conveys to each of us at the most personal of levels. The most effective and powerful promotion of Freemasonry occurs when our daily actions as men reflect the virtues communicated to us on the floor of the Lodge room.

We have the means and the ability; we must now seize the opportunity and *create the circumstances* for renewed Masonic vitality by reaffirming the Lodge room as the dynamic centre of the Masonic experience.

Vitality, defined as "*the power to live and grow*" and "*the capacity for survival and the continuation of a meaningful and purposeful existence*", is critical to our future growth.

Our timeless vitality is not dependent on wealth, power or physical presence. We need only one thing to sustain vitality: for “good men who prize honour and virtue above the external advantages of rank and fortune” to experience and embrace the powerful message found within the Craft. We foster vitality when we exhibit the courage to embrace Masonry's message and translate it into a lifestyle, both in and out of the Lodge room. Applying the lessons of our *working tools* on a daily basis, we continually reinforce the Craft's current and future vitality.

Vitality is enhanced when the enthusiasm of Lodge members facilitates the delivery of near-perfect ritual, when they address the needs of elderly members, and when members reach out to the extended families of their Lodge.

Vitality is demonstrated when the *operational and financial needs* of both the Lodge and the Temple are properly attended to, ensuring their existence for future generations of brethren. Most importantly, vitality is demonstrated when the growth and development of our *newest members* is seen to be an utmost responsibility of the *entire membership*.

Vitality is both an objective and a means.

Each member of the Craft has the opportunity to demonstrate vitality. And each member will be challenged to enhance the vitality of their local Lodge, and by extension, to support the vitality of Freemasonry across the jurisdiction.

Each local Lodge is dependent on the periodic admittance of new candidates and an ability to maintain a minimum number of active members. Therefore, *a Lodge's success can only be measured in its ability to facilitate personal transformation in the lives of its members*. This is achieved through the effective delivery of ritual and the practical instruction of Masonic philosophy.

If we are to be successful at strengthening the West Gate, each Lodge must fully manifest those most fundamental of Masonic virtues; *brotherly love, relief and truth*.

In medieval times, the practical secrets of the Mason's art were communicated with great care and diligence from master to apprentice. The education of a chosen Apprentice was a significant commitment for a Master Mason to undertake and took no less than seven years to complete. Meticulous training was conveyed by the Master Mason in the ancient methods of proving uprights and horizontals, the use and care of various tools and the essential ability to create an angle of ninety degrees in order to prove a stone square.

To convey these secrets to an Apprentice took time, commitment and patience.

Following a lengthy apprenticeship, a man worked as a Fellow of the Craft for a number of years while honing his skills under the supervision of a Master of the art. For a man to eventually be raised to the degree of Master Mason was the culmination of *years of dedication not only by his master but by each member of the local Lodge*, who took the time to guide, instruct and mentor the Apprentices and Fellows of the Craft in the ancient ways of Masonry.

Thus, to be a true Master Mason was not just to attain the knowledge for oneself, but to convey the knowledge to those that would follow.

A timeless proverb states: "It takes a whole village to raise a child". In Freemasonry, it takes a whole Lodge to raise a single Master Mason.

What role do you satisfy in the ongoing development of the craftsmen in your Lodge?

There is nothing inherently wrong with our system of Freemasonry. However, If Freemasonry in Ontario is to include the hundreds of thousands of mature men who are searching for meaning in their lives, we must both acknowledge and *align ourselves to their needs*.

In the material culture of today, which promotes wealth, youthfulness and pleasure as paramount goals in life, frequently manhood is fraught with intense personal uncertainty, feelings of inadequacy and moral ambiguity.

Freemasonry fosters an opportunity for men to embrace a life based on principles, on timeless values such as integrity, diversity, toleration, sacrifice, kindness and a myriad of other virtues that exist within the philosophy and degrees of the Craft.

Freemasonry is a serious organization, attracting mature men who share common values. When a man is admitted through the West Gate he is offering himself to be placed on a path of self-improvement and personal transformation. As our mission statement asserts, *Freemasonry exists primarily to transform men*. When we open the West Gate, we are welcoming these men to a way of life. But we must now align Freemasonry's timeless value to today's modern culture.

During this time in history when anxiety and confusion is on the rise, Freemasonry offers a model of personal development and inner strength, guiding a man based on timeless and proven virtues, regardless of the changes we experience in the world around us.

Today, men at the West Gate are looking for truth embodied in an ancient moral framework that can be applied to their personal life. They seek the strength of group experience and the benefit of access to wisdom from those men who have come before them. They seek mature masculinity at its finest, embodying those virtues that have underpinned humankind's proudest achievements. They seek an opportunity to partake in inspiring conversations, marvel at ancient wisdom, and share their deepest fears and delight in the simple joy of spending quality time with other good men who are on a similar journey”

Brethren we are building the future of Freemasonry in Ontario one man at a time. Quality over quantity should be our focus. Let us all do our part to insure the timeless vitality of the Craft !

Thank you for your kind attention.