Brethren,

The core purpose of a business is primarily about finding and keeping customers. Making transactions to add value by delivering upon needs and wants. It exists to make money. A Lodge exists for a fundamentally different purpose. We exist as a mechanism to make good men better. A refuge where like-minded men can come together and share ideals related to integrity and honour. Knowing that a body full of men who prize honour and virtue exists...men who hold themselves accountable to a high standard of conduct and dealings; is refreshing for those of us who can get weighed down and caught up in the ongoing grind of our lives.

On Monday I talked about the Seven Habits of Highly Effective Masons leveraging the writing of Steven Covey. Dr. Covey writes about the need for a character ethic, as the foundation of success. He wrote about using seven habits to describe how to develop “The Character Ethic” which cultivates integrity, humility, fidelity, temperance, courage, justice, patience, industry, and the Golden Rule.

So here are the **7 Habits of Highly Effective Masons.**

1. *Be proactive.* Mason*s t*ake the initiative step up and ask their Lodge and Brothers how you can help.

2. *Begin with the end in mind*. Masons consider the lessons in our ritual, and define personal, moral, and ethical guidelines to express and fulfill themselves.

3. *Put first things first*. Prioritize and organize what matters. Masons make a decision that Lodge provides a meaningful experience and is a priority in their life.

4. *Think win-win.* Seek mutual respect in every interaction. Masons build a “we first” mentality. A team thought model than enables everyone to succeed.

5. *Seek first to understand, and then be understood.*  Masons learn the meaning of the work from your heart, and then work with others to communicate it.

6. *Synergize.* Masons areactive in the Lodge, working together to deliver something meaningful. The sum of the parts is greater than its pieces.

7. *Sharpen the saw.* Masons undergo constant renewal in the four basic areas of life, being: body, mind, heart and spirit.

I find it intriguing that the Ritual we practice and words of the Work, which can be traced back to before the 1700’s, are reflected in This “Character Ethic” so aptly described by Dr. Covey in the 1990’s. When reading his book the Eighth Habit I kept coming back to the practices we are taught in Lodge and how the lessons we learn throughout all the degrees resonate with the teachings he endorses. People go around the world teaching and consulting with individuals and organizations on how to apply the 7 habits which we endorse, practice and learn in every meeting.

The Eighth Habit is a book about using the seven habits, to move from effective to great, or if you prefer good to excellent. As an illustration of how we already have his much sought after advice given to us on a platter I want to focus on **Habit 7 - Sharpen the Saw®** and where we are taught to consider this in our Work.

First an example from the Work. Consider the lessons of the working tools in the first degree, but particularly the 24 I.G. An implement put in the hands of the workman to ascertain the work and calculate the labour and cost. By this you can determine the cost versus value of your efforts. With this implement we are taught to consider our daily activities and are directed to apportion our efforts accordingly in P, L, R and S

Now consider the Seventh Habit.

Suppose you were to come upon someone in the woods working feverishly to saw down a tree.

"What are you doing?" you ask.

"Can't you see?" comes the impatient reply. "I'm sawing down this tree."

"You look exhausted!" you exclaim. "How long have you been at it?"

"Over five hours," he returns, "and I'm beat! This is hard work."

"Well, why don't you take a break for a few minutes and sharpen the saw?" you inquire. "I'm sure it would go a lot faster."

"I don't have time to sharpen the saw," the man says emphatically. "I'm too busy sawing!"

Habit 7 is taking time to Sharpen your Saw. It surrounds the other habits on the Seven Habits paradigm because it is the habit that makes all the others possible.

As a Managing consultant who walks a tightrope of pressure every day; I have found Lodge to be the place that I sharpen my own saw. Sharpening the saw means making time to **rejuvenate** and help prepare you to work better in the future. This often means relaxing, enjoying nature, meditating and spending time with high-quality relationships.

The 24 I.G. divides our lives into 4 quadrants to manage. Similarly, the purpose of this habit is to regularly exercise the four components which many believe make up the human being: body, mind, heart and spirit.

* **Body**: Exercise for a sense of well-being.
* **Mind**: Exercise to sharpen the intellectual abilities.
* **Spirit**: Exercise with meditations and inner reflections.
* **Heart**: Exercise care for important relationships.

Within Lodge, I work my Body and am refreshed by doing the floor work, getting out seeing my friends and brothers and stepping out of the rat race for a few hours.

Working my Mind. It is called “**the Work**” for a reason. It takes effort and some heavy mental lifting to get it right. Learning the words, practicing the motions, developing and reinforcing the Character Ethic by delivering and being present for my brothers.

Working the spirit, we gather in faith, celebrating our successes considering the well-being of our fellows. Being insulated from the external pressures of family, work and cell phones. Focusing on the important matters of truth, honour and virtue.

And working the heart. Brotherly Love. Brotherly Love is much more than friendship, because it includes teamwork, unity of purpose, loyalty, harmony and tolerance. Teamwork unites individual contributions into a collective effort, while harmony joins these efforts together in sincere affection,

Outside of my family, most of my important relationships used to be contained within Temple Lodge. This journey this year has expanded my horizons and created a sense of belonging to the entire District. I fell like the proverbial Grinch whose heart has grown 10 times its original size.

To sum up, business exists to make money and add value back to the shareholders. Masonry exists as a benevolent fraternity. Individuals come together as Brothers to provide an opportunity to pause and reflect on the important matters. Teach each other what matters, prioritize our lives and learning to look beyond today’s horizon and consider the meaningful elements of our lives. To add value everywhere we go.

Thank you all for being here tonight. By your presence each of you have determined that being amongst your Brothers is one of the more important things in your life. I hope that these few hours together has let each of you dip into the well of friendship. To reflect on what is meaningful and to sharpen your own individual saw blades.