

Fanning a Spark

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Brethren, in recent weeks I've had the opportunity to meet with several new prospective candidates for Freemasonry which prompted me to reflect upon that drive which prompts a man to approach Freemasonry. When a man approaches the Craft, some pivotal event has recently occurred to prompt this change in behaviour. Perhaps he has taken time to reflect upon himself, perhaps he has found himself bearing witness to events which have driven him towards the craft such as the death of a prominent family member and Mason, or perhaps it is something as simple as a discussion over a cup of coffee which touches on the topic of Freemasonry. In any case, this man has made a tremendous life altering decision to which he is thus far, yet unaware.

In meeting with these men, a series of questions are raised which inevitably uncover the answer of why has this man approached freemasonry – why now? and why in this manner? Brethren, the answers to these questions provide a small glimpse of the spark in this particular applicant and it should be recognized as such because it is this spark that will carry this man through the degrees that await him.

The next step in this man's journey, all things going well, is the night of the Initiation. The evening of this man's initiation will undoubtedly leave him with a range of emotions from bewilderment to excitement, but most importantly this man will be left with a curiosity beyond all else. A curiosity to explore further and learn more about our Craft.

Brethren, it is this brief window of time in this man's life between the conclusion of the night of his Initiation to the night of his being raised to the degree of a Master Mason that will determine whether he becomes a lifelong member of our Craft, or whether he drifts away and is lost to the Craft.

At this point, our new Mason has excitement, a healthy dose of anxiety, curiosity, and above all else that spark reminding him of how he ended up travelling down this path. In my experience this spark is a yearning for one or more of three things. These consist of education and knowledge, fraternity, and challenge to improve oneself.

Education can take the form of knowledgeable senior members of the Lodge passing on interesting bits of knowledge or wisdom, masonic education within the lodge program, the lending of a book, or bearing witness to a speaking engagement.

Fraternity has its roots within the culture of a lodge, its events, wider district events, and the overall interactions with fellow brethren both near and far.

Finally, the drive for challenge to improve upon oneself is the most difficult and the most lasting of the three elements we've mentioned. Improving upon ourselves as all long term Masons know, comes from an earnest reflection upon the Ritual and the Work and upon one's own life. Our experiences in our own lives, in combination with the tenants and principles of Freemasonry is what drives us to these ends. As Masons however we can embrace this effort by further engaging with the Work, learning parts, and taking part in degrees and ceremony.

Brethren, the ratio to which these three elements, Education, Fraternity, and Self-Reflection are approached by this man and this Mason are directly proportionate in these early days to that initial spark which is so clearly visible in that initial discussion. I encourage you to seek that out, find it and commit it to memory.

If these three needs are met for this man, we then see a transformation of this spark into a glowing ember with far more staying power. Over the years, these three needs will change and evolve as this man travels throughout his own Masonic journey. A period of time will sometimes pass where the man feels that something is lacking from Lodge, and typically it's one of these three things. A particularly engaging speaker, or a unique dinner table companion, or new book will revive that interest and suddenly a fresh bout of energy and zeal for our Craft will be found in that man.

So brethren, I invite you to reflect upon this subject, and I ask you not what you are providing for new Masons into your lodge, but rather, what are you doing to fan your OWN spark?

R.W. Bro. Devin L. Tuinstra