The other night at Seymour Lodge, I talked about Ken Blanchard’s three legged stool, Big Bucks, Raving Fans and Gung They come to together to deliver the elements that an organization needs to have in order to be successful. I failed to mention that within Masonry we have our own three legged stool, The Festive Board, The Board of General Purposes and The Work. All three legs are important, and when you host a Pie Night, I know that Dufferin Lodge understands the need for all three.

In that Talk, I mentioned that our Grand Lodge Website notes the following

“**A LODGE IS NOT A BUILDING…IT’S THE MEN THAT FORM IT.**

The foundation of the Masonic family is the Masonic lodge. It is here that Masonry teaches its lessons: kindness, honesty courtesy, fairness, concern for the unfortunate and respect for one another.“

I also ended my speech with a question on the Test of Value. Have you considered the value you place on the privileges and mysteries you have been exposed to, mused upon and practiced? Can you share that value with your Brothers?

So if the Lodge is not a building, who are these men that comprise it? Our website also has an answer, it states that “Masons are spiritual and moral men who choose to associate with groups of like-minded individuals for mutual benefit. What they find in Freemasonry is a disciplined and systematic course of self-improvement based on the Golden Rule: always do to others what you would like them to do to you.”

We are in a special place, Masonry offers something unique in the world. We offer a ways and means for people to perform self-discovery. To consider what is really important in our lives and to focus on the 4 main things.

An organization focused on education, working and moralizing on the lessons of the ritual to determine what matters most. Instructing our new members, and perhaps learning a few new lessons or insights along the way. Learning, perhaps some self- discovery and taking time to contemplate our appointed tasks. Acting and being men who are happy within themselves and finally who communicate that happiness to others.

To make this work for the candidates, our members and ourselves, we need to offer a quality organization. Deserving of men who are willing to pay the price of admission to be allowed a participation in the privileges membership offers.

Our Grand Master has said that today’s Masons are seekers, and this year I have spent each lecture citing amazing resources and leaders, the aforementioned Ken Blanchard “Penetrating the Veil” by David C. Bradley, Tom Peters, Dr. Steven Covey’s Seven Habits, Zig Ziegler, even Aristotle have been researched and referenced to provide insight into that can help us in our researches. To improve our perspective and enable us to do what we do. To consider what matters to us. All these gurus of industry and philosophy write on character and leadership and develop plans and strategies that people need to follow for success. Tonight I want to consider our own amazing resource. Can anyone guess what it is?

In the little black book we call The Work, there are tremendous lessons to be learned.

From penetrating the Veil, On the Three Degrees

“The three degrees are the method by which candidates attain the rank of Master Mason and, although each is a discrete ceremony, together they form a unity of teaching. Each degree is necessary for the completeness of the whole. Notwithstanding the reference to three degrees, the system is actually one initiation unfolded to the candidate in three parts. The aim of the ritual is to be a total and profound experience, in which an understanding of the threads that have run unbroken for several centuries are seen as a strength in a member's life. Starting at a low level the ritual works upward to create the impression that it is leading the candidate to greater matters. In essence the candidate is transformed into a new man with a new range of thought, possessing a new feeling of mankind, a strengthened confidence in God.

The first section attempts to clear the mind of a" worldly influences to enable the candidate to seek the principles of moral truths without interference from the outside world of emotion and instinct.. The candidate is told that he represents a foundation stone upon which he may build a personal and satisfying character.

The second section leads the candidate to use his intellectual faculties to find the path to his God and to discover Truth. The Mason is urged to steer a medium course through life and not to be swayed by passion or prejudice in his dealings.

The final section brings the candidate to an awareness of his inner character is completed. It is hoped that the candidate begins to realize that Masonry is a lifetime study of the meaning and purpose of a true existence. The aim is to seek perfection. From a rough ashlar to a perfect one. As he progresses through the degrees he realizes that a system of morality is being illustrated by which he is taught proper conduct towards God and his fellow man through the use of social and moral virtue.”

But many of us miss out on the opportunity the performance of the Ritual has for us. Learning the work, inculcates a deeper appreciation for the lessons. Seek first to understand what you are saying, then to be understood by the candidate. Don’t just mouth the words, but consider the timing, the pace and the reason for the words that were chosen

Knowledge of the degrees will unlock the inherent power of the mind to form a gradual comprehension of the moral, ethical and intellectual absolutes that have guided mankind for centuries. Nourish life and find the sacred in the ordinary. Members must find time for this song of the heart. Simple admiration of the ritual is not sufficient. A Mason is not made simply by taking the degrees; that process merely makes him a member. The system is not the end of a journey, but the beginning. A fourth part to the system is essential: learning and teaching. The ritual, therefore, is a learning experience in the moral and intellectual areas of human life. If members are not aware of this, they cannot give the necessary excitement, dignity and importance to the ritual.

One last thought, our Grand Master has stated that there are three things that we all must o. Our personal masonic three legged stool to borrow a concept once again. First, create a welcoming and friendly supportive lodge. Second, use the skills and energies of all your members in Lodge, make everyone part of laying the cornerstone and building the foundations. And third, focus on work life balance, ask yourself “how is my life?”

Live wide, but stay in balance is. Learn from the leaders who have gone before. And support each other along your path of enlightenment. Communicate our joy and make sure the privileges you share are valued.