

CALIFORNIA KNIGHTS TEMPLAR

A monthly publication supplement of the California Cross & Crown Bulletin



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Life Management & the 24inch Gauge

by Sir Knight Craig L. Flagtwet

Few would find argument with the statement that the first degree is the foundation upon which we build our Masonic lives. In it we receive instruction that should allow us to build square and true and to go forward with increased knowledge and ability. Unfortunately, most seem to become so chased by the thought of secret knowledge that they never let the practical information in our degrees have the value in their thoughts that they should.

We are having a commitment crisis in our fraternity. I am of the belief that we can remedy this by further education of our brothers in the symbols of our beloved craft, and the true foundationally critical lessons contained in them by giving our brothers practical lessons on the application and use of these tools, and to allow them to accomplish great and important works.

In the first degree we are taught that “24-inch gauge is an instrument used by operative Masons to measure and lay out their work. But we, as free and Accepted Masons, are taught to make use of it for the more noble and glorious purpose of dividing our time. It, being divided into 24 equal parts, is emblematic of the 24 hours of the day, which we are taught to divide into three parts (notice it’s not three equal parts), whereby we find a part for the service of God and a distressed worthy brother; a part for our usual vocations; and a part for refreshment and repose.” So let’s be practical and have a look at this important lesson for success.

In America the average work day is 8 hours. We can all agree at the very least it takes another two hours getting ready—going to and returning from work for most—so let's remember 10 hours. In addition, we know from health studies, and for those of us who try to get by on less, that 8 hours is an important amount of sleep. But let's use the number 7 to account for the average Americans number of hours of sleep. So now let's remember the number 17. We all agree that there are 24 hours in a day, 17 of which are used up by our usual vocation and sleep. We have 7 left. Out of this amount of time, we have to make sure we eat properly, so we would use up 1.5 to 2 hours daily in our three meals. Some would argue that they only eat once a day, some only twice, so let us call it 1 hour for refreshment. We are now at 18. Of the 6 hours we have left in the day, the average American watches 5.5 hours of television. So our day is done.



This is where the lesson of the common gavel comes into to play as a very important tool for success and achievement. Just stop and think of the impact on our average Americans life by committing to watching 5.5 hours of television a day. First, many of us pay over a hundred dollars a month for our TV service, a service that exposes us to all of the advertising and mind control of the best in the field of making you want what they tell you to want, and to buy what they tell you to buy. So you can be skinnier, faster, richer better, prettier, more successful and on and on and on.

In addition, many of the shows are now called reality television and so now we pay to be bombarded and manipulated and entertained instead of having our own life and experiences. We live ours through observation of theirs, not to mention there is no time left for the service of GOD and a distressed worthy Brother—and we are surprised that America is having a moral crisis.

Let's look at the common gavel. *"The common gavel is an instrument used by operative Masons to break off the rough and superfluous parts of stone, the better to fit them for the builders use. But we as Free and Accepted Masons, are taught to make use of it for the more noble and glorious purpose of divesting our hearts and consciences of all the vices and superfluities of life; thereby fitting our minds as living stones for that spiritual building, that house not made*



with hands, eternal in the heavens." This tells us that we must get rid of the unneeded and the unworthy and when taken together with the lesson of the twenty four inch gauge gives you a very good lesson in life management, Mason style.

If we heed the lessons of these important symbols and get rid of our vices so we are clear minded and healthy we can then use the time left in our days to allow us to accomplish many great and glorious things. This then allows us to consciously commit to our labors of building. We are all committed to too many things in our lives, some on a daily bases. Unfortunately for many, most of their commitments are unconscious commitments that have not been clearly thought out. These then become our routines and how we spend our time. These then become our values, habits and so on. When we apply these lessons and make clear minded commitments to our plan to build our life our family and fraternity, we then have the time and energy to accomplish our tasks.

For some reason in our fraternity, the value of these fundamental lessons, those provided by the aforementioned symbols, is overlooked and rushed past in pursuit of more—more mysterious, important and more secret knowledge. Very few, if any, in my Masonic career, went back and taught me about the importance of these symbols and their lessons. Few, if any, are currently actively teaching in our lodges these or any important truths.



It's interesting that the value of things that have a practical application, or use in our daily lives and the lives of so many around us, is found not worthy of study and application. But when we make them mysterious and vague, we chase them like a thirsty man after cool water. Once we have captured them somewhat, but not fully mastered them, we seem to lose interest and are off to the next great mystery. We must invest in our members our time and mental energy and teach to them these great mysteries of self management and clear mindedness. Stop and think just for a minute, do you think that currently the average American is engaged in the pursuit of knowledge to enable him or herself to become a better leader, a better teacher, a better master to his or her apprentice? Yet we have spent years learning and gathering and thinking. We just need to take what we have and use it to make better the lives of those who come behind us.

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The foundation that we build upon, it must be true, square, plumb and strong—in short: well built. We wonder why more men don't come and of those who do come, why more don't stay. Perhaps, if we started teaching the lessons contained in our ritual in a different manner than is currently being done, as in not at all, then we could truly say that we make good men better and they would commit to the fraternity because we showed a due veneration for doing the same. We would then offer what we purport to offer and would back it up with action, education and commitment.

The current system requires the candidate to memorize his working tools, his obligation and the grips and words. Think about the fact that we have grouped these three import things together and given as much value in their placement side by side to each other, yet we do not capture this opportunity and spend very little time teaching. Most of that time is centered around a proficiency to be overcome as a means to move on to the next

lesson that we intend to climb over and on and on., Instead if we teach that the tools of the first degree allow you to manage and correct your life to allow you the time and clear mindedness to learn the lessons of the seceding degrees, we would be in far better shape as a fraternity and would not be suffering from the current lack of commitment of the new members.

We have thus far chosen to continue in our current direction. It is clear that this direction is not producing the leaders of the days of old. Men who have the desire and ability to build and rebuild that which has been neglected. Think for just a few minutes of the level of commitment possessed by the men who built the Masonic edifices that we use today. The time, money and energy required to accomplish these deeds. Where did it come from? and where did it go? We must answer these questions and then take action, action

beginning with changing the way we teach at our local lodges and the lessons we impart.

I don't condemn the esotericists for their love of the mysterious and the efforts they go to to teach and attempt to make clear that which they believe to be worthy and important, and in many cases is. I do however, express great frustration at the lack of practical instruction in the daily usable lessons held in our store of knowledge. If we do a better job of imparting this information to ourselves and our new Brothers, Companions and Sir Knights, perhaps we can, as I aspire to, continue the work of rebuilding our fraternity to take care of our structures and our assets. We can then share them with the next properly educated generation and have the benefit of being secure in the knowledge that we have accomplished our labor and can return to our Creator secure in the knowledge that we have given our clear minded, best efforts to improve a group of men, who can in turn improve others to the benefit of mankind.

So it becomes clear that we must, as the craftsmen of old, take on our apprentices. We must teach the practical application and use of the tools given to us by our wise Masters of the past. We must, as is taught in our lessons, "make darkness light before them and crooked things straight." We need to take a more active role in coaching our new candidates, and during this coaching, impart to them the very important, NAY, critical lessons of the working tools to their success in life and the fraternity. This lack of experienced educators, or candidate's couches at the local level, is clearly at the heart of the crisis we are having in the lodges and the appendant orders.

How can we expect those who come after us to understand or value the lessons we want to impart to them if we do not teach them, from the beginning, in the ways of Masonry. What is currently going on is the same thing as a group of men building a block wall without a proper foundation or mortar. We stand, dumb-founded and stare at the fallen wall with wonder and frustration trying to figure out why, when after we worked so hard to build it tall, it fell over. Instead we should return to the beginning and heed the lessons given us in the first degree—that unless we build a proper foundation, the wall cannot and will not stand, let alone sustain its own weight, and will topple under the forces of gravity every time.

Our new and current members are the blocks in the wall we labor to build. We are obligated too, as Masters of our fraternity who are by title Masters

of our craft, to impart the practical knowledge of the proper use of our tools to the coming generations. If we neglect this, we will continue to suffer. The walls of our fraternity are collapsing. So stop and think and come to the clear minded conclusion that one person can make a difference. It is the great lie of society and the adversary that you cannot make a difference. History and the lessons of our fraternity are full of great accomplishment; accomplishments of a clear minded individual who decided they could make a difference, who committed to the idea of building. So Sir Knights, let us build and rebuild our great fraternity. The work is long the labors tuff and sometimes exhausting. But as with the building of anything great, time patience and perseverance accomplishes all things.



You will know them
by their works,

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