

COLD STOVES GIVE NO HEAT

What Determines Our Rewards in Life?

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In the late 1960s, Earl Nightingale spoke every day for ten minutes on a radio show called, *Our Changing World*. I was a cadet in a military school at the time. My roommates and I listened to Nightingale's calm, baritone voice, every morning for five years while preparing for class.

Nightingale was on the USS *Arizona* during the attack on Pearl Harbor and was one of fifteen surviving Marines on board that day. Following the war, he pursued a career in radio and within a decade, he became well-known commentator, writer, speaker, and author of his time - dealing mostly on the subjects of human character development, motivation, excellence, and meaningful existence. Since the 1960s, his books, translated into thirty different languages, have sold millions around the world. His program, *Our Changing World* was heard in over twenty-three countries and was the biggest syndicated radio program in the history of broadcasting.

Of all the men I've heard speak, read about, and admired over the years, Nightingale is the one I would have wagered was a Freemason. Many of his presentations were deeply rooted

in the tenets of our fraternity. But, he was not a member of the fraternity.

Many of his short stories and lessons within them stuck with me. In fact, I have a collection of his works and periodically go back and read his writings. Each of them stand as true today as they did decades ago - just like the lessons of Freemasonry.

I want to share this one with you tonight because it relates directly to what we have often said about our fraternity - what Freemasonry can do for a man - and what it cannot do for a man - especially if he does not understand one of the great laws of our universe.

Nightingale often talked about what he called "great laws," and referred to them as "universal laws" in his broadcasts. He defined them as those laws that affect us and are at work all the time, whether we agree with them or even know they exist.

He lamented the sadness of those people who go through their lives failing to learn or recognize these laws that govern our universe and us. He put forth the question that had many just learned about them

and put them to use how an untold number of lives could have been more constructive and different. As he frequently and aptly noted – those “great laws” could clearly determine the direction of our individual destinies.

He told the story of a group of laborers in a third-world country hired to work on a farm. These people came from a small, very remote village where motor vehicles were virtually unknown. They were enjoying the new experience of being transported on the back of a truck when they came to the place where they thought they were supposed to get off.

Apparently, without giving it a thought, they just stepped off the back of the speeding truck.

Fortunately, they fell on a soft, dirt road and not a paved highway. But even so, the results of their unconventional method of disembarking were, to say the least, astonishing – at least to them.

They went bounding, spinning, sliding, and cartwheeling along the dusty road for quite a distance *until gravity and friction, working together*, finally brought them to a halt. None was seriously injured. In fact, by the time the terrified driver got back to them, they were laughing uproariously about the whole thing.

In explaining the incident later, the truck driver put the blame on their never having ridden in a truck before. That's the obvious answer, but it's not the true one.

The amazing circus tumbling act on that remote farm road had been caused by ignorance of a law - a law that operates the same whether a truck, a boat, an airplane, or any moving body, is involved.

Although the laws have been in existence forever, it was Sir Isaac Newton, an early Freemason, who further clarified this law and gave it a definition we commonly use today- and it goes like this: "*A body in motion tends to remain in motion until acted upon by an outside force.*"

When the workers stepped off the back of the speeding truck, they were going the same speed as the truck itself. The outside force was gravity, which pulled them down to the road.

But they were still traveling at the same speed as the truck, and -well, you get the idea.

They had been hurt, confused, frightened, and turned up- side down because they didn't understand the principal law on which everything in the universe operates: *the law of cause and effect.*

This law has been written thousands of times by the greatest minds the world has produced, and, as a result, it has appeared in many forms. *For our purposes, it might best be put this way:*

"Our rewards in life will always match our service." It's another way of saying, *"As ye sow, so shall ye reap."* And it's been written in many ways, in every language on earth.

Sir Isaac Newton, in promulgating his laws of physics, puts it in this specific way for science: *"For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction."*

What Newton was building on, however, was Aristotle's Principle of Causality - what we today call the Law of Cause and Effect. In Aristotle's time, some 2,500 years ago, most people believed in gods on Mount Olympus who amused themselves by toying with human fate and destiny, Aristotle figures out something completely different.

It changed our view of the world forever, although many didn't accept it. He came up with The Law of Cause and Effect stating that everything happens for a reason; for every effect there is a specific cause.

The law asserts that we live in a world governed by such a law - not chance and that everything happens for a reason, whether we know what it is. Every cause or action has an effect of some kind, whether we can see it and whether we like it or not.

Now, when you hear it said that *"Our rewards in life will always match our service,"* you will *almost always* get general agreement. People will nod their heads and say, "Yes, that's certainly true." They will then go their ways and never realize, for the most part, that this truth is so great and all-enveloping that their every thought and action is affected by it.

Nightingale suggested we think of this law in the form of a giant apothecary scale - the kind with the cross arm from which hang two bowls on chains.

One of the bowls is marked "Rewards"; the other is marked "Service." Whatever we put into the bowl marked "Service," the world will "match" in the bowl marked "Rewards."

"How we think, work, talk, and conduct ourselves is what we have to put into the bowl marked "Service." And the extent and nature of our service will determine our rewards.

If any person alive is discontented with his rewards, he should examine his service. Action; reaction. "As ye sow, so shall ye reap." What you put out will determine what you must get back in return.

It's so simple, so basic, so true-and yet, so misunderstood. It would seem the same for Freemasonry.

Any man who is discontented with his rewards (in our case let's say "wages") from being a Master Mason, should examine the way he projects, practices, and adheres to the principles of Freemasonry.

This applies as well to a business that is not expanding to the quick and exciting tempo of the times. Such a business must examine its contribution - its service. If a person is unhappy with his income, he must examine and reevaluate his service.

So, Nightingale asks: whom do we serve? And his answer again brings back again to our Masonic philosophies.

Each of us serves a portion of humanity. And humanity, to any given person, is the people with whom he comes in contact.

It is family, friends, neighbors, coworkers, customers, prospects, employers - all those a person has chosen to serve. Everyone - everyone with whom we have any kind of contact - is to us humanity. And our rewards will be determined by the extent to which we serve.

Never in the history of the world have human beings been so interdependent. It is as impossible to live without serving others as it would be to live if others were not constantly serving us. And this is good.

The more closely knit this interdependence becomes, the greater will be human achievement. We need each other, and we literally cannot live without each other.

Every time we turn on a light switch, drink a bottle of water, turn on a computer, look at our smartphones, drive our cars, put on our clothes, take a bath, mow the lawn, or go fishing, hunting, listen to music or pursue any hobby, we're being served by other people.

Just to have all we do tonight for our meeting we rely on eleven brothers to

conduct it, another group to accommodate it, the presence of the body tonight to participate, the hundreds of people who make it possible to have continued lighting, heat, water, the shell of this facility, our families who support what we do, the people who keep us safe in our community, the assurance of quick response to our safety needs, the industries that provide us fuel to run our cars to come tonight, and the thousands of people responsible for making our cars, and building our roads to bring us to our meeting tonight - and that's the short list.

We all seek rewards, and we should understand that rewards come in two forms: tangible and intangible. That is, rewards include the money we earn, the home we buy, the car we drive, the clothes we wear; and they also include our happiness, our peace of mind, our inner satisfaction, the people we meet and enjoy.

But remember this brother... *whatever you seek in the form of rewards, you must first earn in the form of service to others.* All attempts to sidestep this law will end in failure, frustration and, ultimately, demoralization.

Is this not the message of the wages paid to Master Masons?

How many times have you been in the position of the man who sat in front of the empty fireplace and said, "*Give me heat, and then I'll give you some wood*"?

People seem to be divided into those who understand that the wood must

be put in before they can expect warmth and those who feel they should get warmth whether they do anything about it, or who feel they should get maximum heat from too small a supply of wood

In closing, let's review.

The Law of Cause and Effect states, *for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction.*

The French writer, philosopher, and Freemason Voltaire said: *words like luck, chance and coincidence were invented to express the known effects of the unknown causes.*

Every cause has its effect; every effect, its cause. There is no such thing as *chance* or *luck* for that matter.

Everything that happens has been caused to happen by something else.

Everything happens according to the Law of cause and effect – we either do something or we don't do something and that is what causes the results we get.

Now, aside from the old worn out and familiar Masonic adage – *“That's the way we've always done it...”* there is another old worn out and Masonic saying, but as worn out as it is – it's true. We've just heard it said so many times it's become trite and we soon become deaf to it.

But it is exactly the point of what you've listened to this evening.

How many times have you heard the phrase *You get out of Freemasonry what you put into it.*

We may get tired of hearing that said, but we can't argue its truth. Behind it is the Law of Cause and Effect. *Whatever we seek in the form of rewards, we must first earn in the form of service to others.*

We came here to improve ourselves through Freemasonry. The reward we seek is self-improvement. A reward we do not receive for just being made a member.

Our service to others comes from learning, applying, and practicing the lessons of Freemasonry – that is our service to others.

From doing so, we are paid our wages – wages that are intangible, but wages of reward by serving others. *We are* better men when we embrace the habit of doing so.

The question we might think about on the way home this evening is, *what I have done today to be in the service of others?*

The question we might think about when we wake up tomorrow morning, perhaps every morning, is, *what can, and will I do today to be in the service of others?*

Remember: the genuine rewards in your life will always match your service.

If you still aren't convinced of how the Law of Cause and Affect

produces the results of what we do as individuals, organizations, and certainly as Freemasons, think about this example.

You're sitting in a cold room. You want and need heat. There's a wood burning, but cold stove in the room with you, a pile of kindling, a stack of wood, and a matchbook.

You can stare at that stove, cuss it, wish it would make itself warm, and demand at the top of your voice, *Give me heat!* You can do that all day long, but there's only one way that stove is going to produce heat. Until you do something yourself to fuel that cold stove, you are destined to remain cold.

Apply that example to your Masonic journey and the institution of Freemasonry. It works the same way. It will not- it cannot work for you, unless you learn about it, and then practice what you've learned.

It's always a matter of cause and effect.