

Selfishness

The Positive Impact on Modern Masonry

Presentation at Masonic Perspectives Night at Lexington
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It's an honor and pleasure to be speaking to you tonight. I would like to thank the Worshipful Master for his invitation and to the Brothers here in attendance.

Masonic Perspectives Evening is something that I have been looking forward to for some time now and I applaud the Officers and Members of Lexington Lodge No. 1 for their continuance of Masonic education, discussion, debate and further enlightenment.

First, allow me to introduce myself. My name is Brad Drew; I am a member and Past Master of Latonia Lodge No. 746, located in Covington KY. I am the sitting Secretary as well as District Deputy Grand Master for District 18, which includes Boone, Kenton and Grant Counties. I am a Customer Service Supervisor for a Multi-Billion Dollar Telecommunications Company with almost 10 years in a professional leadership position. Employee

Development, leadership, mentoring and continued growth are my areas of focus and excitement.

The statements, thoughts and opinions expressed in my short presentation this evening are solely mine. They do not represent any lodge, Grand Lodge, Appendant Body or Masonic group to which I belong.

Brothers, my presentation tonight is titled, *Selfishness: The Positive Impact on Modern Masonry*. I'm not here tonight to dig deep into why being selfish may be a good thing for you and your lodge. I don't intend to stand in front of you and tell you why you should go out and be selfish first. The hope is simply to make you think, sit back and consider why being more selfish may be beneficial to you and what the positive impact may look like on **your** own Freemasonry.

First, allow us to define selfish, according to Merriam-Webster;

1: concerned excessively or exclusively with oneself: seeking or concentrating on

one's own advantage, pleasure, or well-being without regard for others;

2: arising from concern with one's own welfare or advantage in disregard of others; a selfish act.

So first and foremost, a simple dictionary definition doesn't make the word, selfish, sound positive does it? When preparing my thoughts for this presentation I read that definition over and over and over until I couldn't see the letters anymore. Being called selfish doesn't sound like a compliment, but according to some psychologists the trait can actually make you a better person.

Bob Rosen, author of *Grounded: How Leaders Stay Rooted in an Uncertain World* says, "When you take care of yourself first, you show up as a healthy, grounded person in life."

Now how does this relate to Freemasonry and my own Masonic journey?

Let me start by sharing something personal with you. As a Past Master, Secretary and District Deputy Grand Master, I have always said the same exact thing with any newly initiated, passed or raised Brothers. After the crowds of men congratulate the Officers for their mediocre ritual work; after applauding the men who delivered the rushed lectures and after finally acknowledging the new Brother; I personally connect with that young Brother and share a few words of advice.

"Congratulations and welcome to this great Fraternity. You asked for the petition; you sought the light and you took the first step. You've been a selfish

Mason since the beginning, and I encourage you to be a selfish Mason to the end. This is **your** journey; not mine or his, but yours. Focus on yourself – your proficiency – your education and your time as a Mason. I can tell you how I've traveled, and another Brother can tell you how he's traveled, but none have traveled as you will. Stay the path and create your own roads. Good Luck!"

Now why do I say this? In hopes to scare this young Mason? To make him feel like no one is willing to help guide and direct him? To send him on his own and make him feel lost? Not at all, my brothers. The point of this is to let the Brother know that **he** is in charge of his Masonry. Along the way he'll have more tools and mentors and guidance than he'll ever need, but **he** chooses the path – not us.

Masonry is an organization where many feel they need to be selfless and put others first day after day, week after week. Brothers, to be selfless is an incredible feeling and a strong virtue we should all follow; however, if we join this fraternity to "take good men and make them better" why are we focused on others first. Wouldn't that change the time old saying to "taking good men and having them make others better, first?"

I'd like to spend some time reviewing a few areas of Masonry that we should consider being more selfish.

First and foremost, all things that encompass a Masonic Lodge should be a priority of anyone looking to become more Masonically selfish.

- **Dress:** This is a hot topic for Masons. We hear time and time again,

“It’s the inward not the outward” or “it’s what’s inside that counts.” Brothers, there is a time and place for jeans and a t-shirt and there is a time and place for a tuxedo and shiny shoes. Your lodge and/or Grand Lodge have the decision in what you wear, if such a requirement has been placed. My challenge to you is this – why not dress your best every single time you step into your lodge hall? Others will see your dress; they will ask themselves “why is he in a suit and tie” and when that man gets dressed for the next meeting, he may just pick up that collared shirt or tie (bow tie preferred) because you, my brother, sparked something inside him. As humans we tend to lead by example—this includes dress. Stay selfish – dress to impress and others will follow suit.

- **Regalia:** This is a simple one. Why are we depending on lodges to supply our aprons, for example? Why do we depend on lodges to provide our collar and jewels? If you’ve ever heard Worshipful Bro. Patrick Craddock of The Craftsman’s Apron present his lecture on Masonic Aprons, you understand the importance of personality and pride in our lodge regalia. Coffee stains, ketchup and mustard spots, torn pieces of cloth and old regalia is nothing, my brothers, to be proud of. I commend Lexington No. 1 on their choice of regalia, and thank you for taking a selfish approach, as a lodge, to dress your best. To visiting Brothers, Past Masters and members – go out, find a Masonic image you enjoy and connect with a proper regalia supplier to create

your own apron. Put yourself first and be proud of your own regalia. Don’t wait for someone else to provide it for you.

- **Ritual:** I was raised in October 2011 and in November 2011 received my first lodge ritual guide. I was asked to start learning the 3rd Ruffian part of the Master Mason Degree. Month after month, year after year I studied and practiced. Finally, in October 2014 I delivered the part and couldn’t have been prouder of myself. Was it word for word? Not at all. Was it rushed in some places and slow in others? Absolutely. Did I give it my 120% because I knew who it was meant for? You bet. Ritual work is not for the lodge to come together and “practice” or pat themselves on the back because “we finally had another degree.” Ritual work is meant for that man or men who kneel before you. Quickly studying, reading from a script; having multiple prompts from the sidelines (most of which are incorrect anyway) are all ways to diminish the experience and remove the importance of the degree from the candidate. If you are asked to take part in any ritual, and I encourage you to seek out parts if not asked, be selfish with your studying and practice. Don’t worry about others who you think may mess up. Clear your mind, put your own learning first and come to rehearsals ready to give 120% every – single – time. Imagine what a degree would be like if all officers, speaking and non-speaking parts came prepared like this. What an experience.

- **Fellowship:** This one may sound strange. How can I improve the fellowship in my lodge if I am being more selfish and only worrying about myself first? Brothers, if you're always looking for others to fill your emotional needs or to make you happy, are you really doing it right? Putting yourself first, loving yourself first and enjoying yourself will always help you live an enjoyable life. When other like-minded Brothers come into the picture, imagine the level of fellowship we would experience. As a human being, it is our job to take care of ourselves and get what we need. Relying on others to fill gaps in our lives causes us to become vulnerable. Being selfish and enjoying Masonry as we wish is the cake Brothers; the fellowship is that icing on top.
- **Education and Leadership:** Lastly my Brothers, an area in which each person in this room should be Masonically selfish in is that of education and lodge leadership. Let me start with leadership; some Brothers don't ever wish to go into a chair or hold office. That's great! They were selfish in making that decision as they knew someone else would be a better fit or stronger leader. Those that wish to become an officer or leader in their lodge should focus on being selfish as a crucial part of their "lodge leader application." Focusing on your own success and not watching or listening to others may be the best thing for an upcoming leader. Too often we worry about this Brother getting this appointment or this Brother being asked to be on this

committee. Keep your head down, focus on your own work and goals and when the time is right you will be the most qualified Brother in the room. Secondly, education is an area in which we could all learn to be more selfish. Ask yourselves – in this lodge hall tonight, how many Brothers have I heard present an educational piece? (Pause) Lexington Lodge No. 1 is blessed in the fact that you have many, however, those visiting tonight may go back to their own lodges and say "1", "2" or **maybe** "3." Each of you are here tonight because you want to learn, you want to listen, and you want to take something discussed tonight and apply it in your Masonic life – somewhere, somehow. You're being selfish – taking ideas and thoughts from others to improve your Masonic Journey. Doesn't that take us back to the comment I share with our new Brothers? You've been following the right, selfish Masonic journey this whole time. Why aren't others? I encourage you to be the one standing up here presenting next time. Write a reflection paper from this experience tonight and share it at your next lodge meeting. Research the most important Masonic influence in your journey and share it with your Brothers. By doing so, you are allowing others to be selfish and take from you what they can to improve their own journeys.

In closing my Brothers, being selfish is not a bad thing. It's not something we should worry about or move away from.

If you think about your Masonic lives, and what we've talked about tonight ask yourself, "How am I **already**

being selfish in my Masonic journey?” and “What am I doing in lodge or with my Brothers that shows I am putting myself first and them second?”

As a selfish Mason, your journey will be stronger and brighter. You will be more confident in your abilities to deliver ritual and education as well as speak to large crowds of Brothers on a Monday night in August or just to a small group of men interested in your fraternity. Selfishness creates a feeling of independence, and by experiencing this you'll feel stronger in your lodge and its work and will feel the need to worry less and expect more.

I leave you with this thought my Brothers: on an airplane when an emergency occurs we're not instructed to help our neighbors first with their oxygen mask and then afterwards fit our own. We're told to fit our own mask first, to be selfish, and then help our neighbors.

Sometimes you have to be selfish to be selfless. Our Masonic Journey is no different.

Thank you.



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