

The Title of Brother

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Regional Provost Newsletter, Region 10

May 1, 2023

When sitting around or working with your Brethren or others not of the Craft, how often do we brag about Freemasonry? It probably happens a lot. Our extreme excitement in our belief in the Craft and its tenets can no longer be restricted. Then the phrase or something close to it comes out in an explosive high tone above others, "We are to be the best of humanity." Then all the good deeds and proper accountabilities spill out of our mouths. We all know or have experienced something close to this situation. Nevertheless, what follows is the failure of the earlier phrase.

The split tongue from ourselves or another offers a different account of our precious Craft. The "Instructive Tongue" is allowed to become malicious in its words, usually of another Brother or Brethren. We knowingly break our obligation and promises purposely or by not knowing the factual circumstance or instance that we discuss. By our Creed, if this occurs, we must stop a Brother or another and whisper good counsel, mainly if it would prevent a Brother from meeting his obligations or cause him to say something offensive. However, we tend not to do this because our human condition wants to hear the verbal stabs. Let's face it; this happens all the

time, not saying it is proper, but it does. So, let us delve into our Craft a little to understand how to improve ourselves.

Our Fraternity is not a group of friends, it is a group of Brothers. This bond is a crucial understanding of who we are, because to view someone as Brother is different. As members of the Craft, we all have to go through a process of inquiry and investigations to meet the requirements outlined in our Methodical Digest and the Constitutions of Masonry. What does that mean? A candidate must be of proper age, upright, of good report and a few more is just plain common sense. However, does that man also meet the principles and standards of Freemasonry or what is known as the Tenets of Freemasonry? We are a Fraternity of all nations, with many different languages to communicate with each other. Yet, we as a fraternity must exhibit this particular morality to preserve the most excellent Tenets of Freemasonry. Not having this trait, a man cannot become a member of the Craft. The applicant must meet the criteria and all Lodge members are to agree to membership. If accepted and initiated, he acquires the most important title in our Craft, "Brother" (Thank you, Most Worshipful Alan Adkins).

As the candidate comes into Masonry under his own free will and accord, so do we choose to allow him under our own free will and accord to become a "Brother." When we hear "Brother," we understand him as a Mason. It is his

title to bear to all, meaning a fellow Freemason, a title that comes with responsibility and regard.

To accomplish our purposes, we need harmony with easy and free conversation. Many Freemasons do not understand that Masonic parameters can exceed these boundaries. We all do not have the same thoughts or views; to debate or converse is to give growth to enlightenment. If we cannot discuss pertinent topics with other Brethren, we have failed at who we are. Remember that as a Mason, Etiquette and Protocol in any discussion are expected and gracious.

We have a "Code of Conduct" per se when interacting with others, Mason or non-Mason. Yet when one carries the weight of the title "Brother," we are not to harm physically or verbally, for he has conformed to the same obligations we all have and has earned respect without quarrel. Respect for the hard work a "Brother" has put into their Masonic Order, whether it be years of service to instruct or mentor, committees, or other Masonic endeavors. We acknowledge the memorization and the degree work, merit, and ability. This hospitality or "Etiquette" is guaranteed by our rules and regulations that command respect, and jurisprudence that enforces those rules.

This form of Etiquette is where we can fail as Masons. Rhetoric is one of our seven liberal arts to Master. As we may be able to converse "Backbiting" or

"Gossip" about a "Brother" or his family is not acceptable. We may often vent to let off steam when a Brother has upset us. Or when we are in a group and have conversation, a question may get asked and someone gives up information without fully understanding the situation.

Moreover, the number one reason and please do not take this phrase more than what it is, "Everyone talks." It is our nature to collect information, one must converse or engage in conversation with others. However, what the Brother does with this information can cross lines. What you say, how you say it, or who you say this information to is where a Brother can get himself in trouble. First and most importantly remember that the Brother or Brethren that may be the topic of discussion, has earned the same title "Brother." Words may not inflict bodily harm, but they can inflict character harm.

Backbiting or gossip is a form of delinquent behavior due to an inferior complex. It diminishes the individual, restores their self-esteem, and creates a dominance hierarchy. But remember in whom you put your trust, just as this other "Brother" has put his trust in also. If one is inclined to know the story, go to the Brother in question and ask if you have heard the truth. In other words, "Go to the stables and get it from the horse's mouth." Nowhere does it say one cannot ask for the truth? However, remember, they do not have to say anything if it does not concern you.

If you are the "Backbiter or Gossiper," STOP. If you are the Brother being frowned upon, go to the Brother who has commented and explain the error. It is okay if either Brethren cannot find common ground on the subject. Agreeing with someone is not a requirement to be a Freemason. Disagreement is not a cause for hate or strife with others, especially a "Brother" Mason. There is a code of conduct that Freemasons have in interacting with one another. Speaking without knowledge has ruined harmony in Lodges and amongst its members over a misunderstanding that initially started with gossip among its members. Those Brethren who enlist in this behavior create trouble and cause anger, bitterness, and pain among the Brethren.

In today's society, many people have taken sides for countless different reasons. Our Craft, by nature, is supposed to be able to find common ground and unity. It is said by many and even offered in the news, "Society needs Masonry more than ever." How can we be the best of men when we do the worst to men. Our teachings tell us that the ruthless hand of ignorance destroyed monuments of antiquity, and even the "Temple of Solomon" was not spared.

My father explained it this way, "If you can say it behind his back, you can say it to his face. If you cannot, then do not say anything. Honorable men do this and if you cannot, it is probably not worth talking about in the first place."