

**Grand Lodge
Free & Accepted Masons
Of California
Grand Oration 1996**

**Grand Orator
Howard E. Lewis III
“MASONIC MENTORING”**

Most Worshipful Grand Master, fellow Grand Lodge Officers, Distinguished Visitors from other Grand Jurisdictions, members of the Grand Lodge. Brethren all

I am deeply impressed with the high honor bestowed upon me in being chosen to address this magnificent body of men representing the constituent lodges at the 147th Annual Communication of the Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of the State of California. What a great privilege it has been to represent you throughout this golden state at a variety of functions and ceremonies during the past Grand Lodge year. Most Worshipful Grand Master Charles Alexander, on behalf of all of your appointive Grand Lodge Officers, I sincerely thank you for the opportunity we have had to serve this Grand Fraternity through you.

I have heard it said that a man is what he does, and while we all came from the place of our father's father, we do not know where our life quest will lead us. It is certain that each of us came into this world and that one day we will go from it is equally certain that we will not go until we have lived our day and left our mark by which the significance of our manhood may be measured. As Masons, that significance is measured by faithful, consistent, and unselfish service - service to our God our country, our family, our neighbor, and ourselves. If you and I can but realize that as Master Masons we have been given the plans and specifications drawn by the Supreme Architect of the Universe for the erection of the sublime structure of our own character, we will then have caught the real spirit and mission of Masonry, and will at last have understood the true essence of His eloquence.

In like manner, the measure of the worth of an institution is its effect upon the individual and upon society. To gain a better bearing on where we are bound, let us look at where we have been. Some say that Masonry began with Adam, others Noah. Still others say it was the Roman College of Workmen and Artificers the Greeks, the Medieval church builders, the Knights Templar, or the building of King Solomon's temple. These craftsmen whose work was exemplified in pyramid, monument, and temple, were men of genius, art, and skill. They worked with mathematical precision, and geometrical exactness.

When we reflect upon the men who with inspiration from Heaven, took from nature in the construction of the wonders of the world, our romanticized concept of work comes to mind. It is based on the idea of a craftsman who works with his own hands, controls the process of his labor, and fashions from Earth's bounty and his own knowledge and skill, artistic structures of stone which are as magnificent and pleasing today as they must have been for their ancient masters. They are truly an honor to themselves and a glory unto God. While the modern world has progressed much technologically, this ideal still conforms to our notion of service, and what work satisfaction and work ethic are all about. Each had his own work to do, each his niche to fill, or as R. L. Sharpe reminds us, each his own

Bag of Tools

Isn't it strange
That prince and kings
And clowns that caper
In sawdust rings,
And common people
Like you and me
Are builders for eternity?
Each is given a bag of tools
A shapeless mass,

A book of rules;
And each must make -
Ere life is flown -
A stumbling block
Or a stepping-stone.

It was at the dawn of the Christian Age when architecture reached a perfection in Greece and Rome. Later in Europe, during an era renowned for rebuilding and rebirth. Masonic fraternities became increasingly augmented. Men of notable learning were being initiated into the art at this time of the great Cathedral Crusade. This was when the majority of the majestic monuments, triumphal arches, magnificent bridges, exquisite cathedrals and impressive temples were erected throughout the continent. In 1275, a Masonic Congress was convened at Strasburg and attended by architects from many countries. It was during this period that words and signs were invented, and Apprentices, Craftsmen, and Masters were received with peculiar ceremonies, beneath which were concealed the secrets of architecture.

In 1350 the York Constitutions were revised, it being prescribed among other things, "That in the future at the making of a Brother, the Master of the Lodge shall read to him the Constitutions and Ancient Charges." It is apparent then, that during this period of time Masonic Lodges were presided over by competent officers, patronized by the wealthy, the learned and the scientific, privileged by the statutes, and independent in thought and action. These men were literally Free Masons. From that date Speculative Masonry, under the contemporary acceptance of the term, was practiced commonly by the Craft. With the increase in intelligence and education among the masses, its operative element was gradually exchanged for a more speculative form until the year 1700.

At that time a complete transformation ensued, and Masonry became entirely speculative in character. This Speculative Temple, founded on the four cardinal virtues and created by the wisdom from above, is supported by the strength of a firm faith, and adorned in the beauty of a noble purpose. Its broad portals open to all, scenes of intellectual grandeur, portrayed in the preeminence of the Fatherhood of God under the Brotherhood of Man. Thus in 1717, the first Grand Lodge of Freemasons was held in London, England, at the Apple Tree Inn.

Though the origins of Masonry may be shrouded in the mists of the dim and distant past, it is not vital today to discuss all of the exact particulars under which Freemasonry originated. A celebrated tradition is just as sacred as an established fact. What is vital today is that we recognize the legacy of the ancients as the glorious Temple of Truth and Light, crowned with its capstone of Brotherly Love and Charity. Yes, you and I have inherited this beneficent agency known as Freemasonry, and as the leaders of this Great Fraternity, are gathered here today, as its stewards and guardians to discuss its future - a future as bright as any evening star in the far off firmament and brilliant as the blazing orb of another sun.

The sculptor's vision makes him an artist; without it he becomes merely a stonemason. The key to noble doing is to see clearly and then perform in obedience to our Craft's highest vision. You see, the men who will ultimately make Freemasonry survive and thrive in the future are not yet Masons, but the visionary men who will teach them are. This exquisite Temple of Masonry is only as strong as its foundation and as lasting as its individual stones. When we look to the quarry for strong stones, we find the rough ashlar of a friend, relative, neighbor, or co-worker to be only a stone's throw from our own individual lives and relationships.

Chesterton, in prefacing Charles Dickens' *The Pickwick Papers*, reminded us that, "The whole difference between construction and creation is exactly this: that a thing constructed can only be loved after it is constructed, but a thing created is loved before it exists." Just as our Heavenly Father loved us even before we were born, so then must we love our fellow man, most especially our new brethren in Freemasonry. We must not only share with them the proper tools, but their correct usage.

It is up to each of us to help the novitiate understand the bounty of our benefits. When the young man asks, "Why should I become a Mason?", the response should be simply that through a very practical experience in the liberal arts and sciences, our members derive a desire to pursue knowledge, to venerate that which has stood the test of time, and contemplate that sense of wonder evoked by the grand designs of the Great Architect of the Universe.

As vanguard of the modern Masonic movement, and bearers of its banner, we here today recognize that to be a real Mason is to be a better man in every relation of life - a more considerate, loyal, and loving husband, a more devoted father a more involved citizen, and a truer friend. How then do we convey this covenant to those under our tutelage in the proper context of our ancient Masters?

Remember the generous and compassionate veteran in the vineyards of Freemasonry that explained to you the secrets of our society, answering your inquiries, guiding you along, and most importantly, always present when needed? In the Odyssey, Homer informs us that Odysseus appointed Mentor, the teacher, philosopher, and guardian, to educate and guide his son during his absence following the fall of Troy.

When we touch each others' lives in this way, something very special happens. For if some thing comes to life in another person because of you, then you have truly advanced along the path towards immortality. Yes, like the Great Warrior of old, you too realize that mentoring creates a compound stronger than cement, uniting us all into one common mass of educated and enlightened Masons.

There is a mentoring program based on consideration, respect, and cooperation presently in use in other Grand Lodge Jurisdictions. It is a team effort aimed at developing each brother to his fullest potential. This continuing curriculum of support through mentor counseling, fraternal visitations, and Lodge participation could be the stimulant some of our newly raised brothers need to stay active after the Third Degree. Could your Lodge make use of such a program?

Then, contact your Grand Lodge Education Committee or the Masonic Service Association of the United States about this formal mentoring program. It consists of the Master of the Lodge assigning each candidate a well-informed brother, knowledgeable in the Art of the Craft, to act as his mentor, educator, and companion for a year. The mentor can either be assigned upon receipt of the petition, or upon election of the candidate. He will contact the candidate and advise him and his Masonic friends of his upcoming degree dates at the Lodge.

The mentor will assist the candidate throughout his degree work, but he need not necessarily be his coach. However, he may be part of your Lodge's Masonic Education Committee. Above all it is essential that he become imbued with the spirit of the Fraternity and accept its purposes, ideals, and tenets as his own, prompting the mentor to properly pilot the new Mason into this Grand Order of Brothers and Friends.

The candidate meets with the mentor for a minimum of five one-hour sessions. Beginning before the First Degree, and continuing between the three degrees, it is completed after the new brother's first Stated Meeting. After that, it is up to he and his mentor, but commonly this friendship continues through life.

Oh, what a difference a year makes. The new candidate is brought into the Craft enthused and eager, an educated, oriented, and invested member of your Lodge. The mentoring program in conjunction with your Lodge Masonic Education is the first step in an enduring adventure leading to renewed membership and expansion.

It is not only the candidate that profits by mentoring as part of the Lodge 2000 program. The Lodge itself is strengthened from members who are more active and come better prepared for this labor of love. Let us then never leave our new brother alone to fend for himself, especially during the most critical initial period in his Masonic career.

Let us instead furnish him suitable assistance, guidance, and encouragement until he has formed the appropriate habits of interest and activity applicable to an alliance of brethren seeking to erect their spiritual building in accordance with the designs laid down by the Supreme Architect of the Universe. This moral edifice endures the test of the plumb, square, and level, and stands forth as a beacon to the seeker of knowledge and truth.

This institution, therefore, of men of such great antiquity and wonderful vitality, must by necessity leave their valuable impression upon civilization. All along the highway of progress are employed a host of brethren whose lives are symbolic of the perfect ashlar. Their measure of significance is adorned by temperance, fortitude, prudence, and justice. Their fidelity in the doing of good and the practice of virtue leads quietly one day at a time, and one man at a time, toward the honorable advancement of humanity, preparing for that house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

Freemasonry has outlived all other institutions and has continued to exist beyond the rise and fall of nations and empires because it is founded upon the moral law, upon the natural formulas of human nature, and upon principles known everywhere to be self-evident. Among good men and true, of whatever nationality or political or religious opinion, this beneficent brotherhood will continue its march as an illustrious illustration of the human spirit.

The Supreme Grand Master of the Universe will require at our hands a strict account of the talent entrusted to our care. Let us therefore, be forever vigilant, and live by the working tools of our profession, estimating the true value of even the humblest instrument in the building of our common humanity.

Many of the great monuments of antiquity have survived the lapse of time, the ruthless hand of ignorance, and the devastation of war. Yet the work by which we are measured often outlives us when our names are inscribed into the Regal Register. Let our legacy therefore be one of brotherly love manifested by suitable assistance and friendly mentoring. Let it be said of each of us here today, as we march together toward that Temple on High, the resounding refrain captured in pen by the unknown soldier poet long ago while:

Touching Shoulders

There's a comforting thought at the close of day,
When I'm weary and lonely and sad,
That sort of grips hold of my crusty old heart
And bids it merry and glad.
It gets in my soul and drives out the blues
And finally thrills though and through
It's just a sweet memory that chants the refrain:
"I'm glad I touched shoulders with you!"
Did you know you were brave, did you know you were strong?
Did you know there was one leaning hard?
Did you know that I waited and listened and prayed
And was cheered by your simplest word?
Did you know that I longed for the smile on your face,
For the sound of your voice ringing true?
Did you know I grew stronger and better because
I had merely touched shoulders with you?
I am glad that I live, that I battle and strive
For the place that I know I must fill;
I am thankful for sorrows, I'll meet with a grin
What fortune may send, good or ill.
I may not have wealth, I may not be great,
But I know I shall always be true,
For I have in my life that courage you gave
When once I touched shoulders with you.

I shall never forget this year when I once touched shoulders with you Thank you.