

# DISCOURSE

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## “Is Masonry for everyone”

Dear Brothers,

In many of my presentations, whether verbal or written you have heard me speak of Quality vs. Quantity. This subject has plagued us since our humble beginnings. We have experienced and suffered the consequences of “quantity over quality thinking” many times in our nearly three hundred years of history, yet many of us not recognizing our past continue to think that quantity will lead us out of our present situation.

In 1772 a short 55 years after the organization of the Masonic system as we know it today, Brother William Preston wrote: **“Were the privileges of Masonry to be common, or indiscriminately bestowed, the design of the institution would be subverted; for being familiar, like many other important matters, they would soon lose their value, and sink into disregard.”**

During this period in England, Masonry had grown so fast and had moved away from its principles that confusion reigned among the Craft, this was our first uncontrolled, unregulated growth, seeking members to find strength in numbers between the Moderns and Antients.

By the 1820’s the Lodges in the United States had experienced the same circumstances of indiscriminate rapid growth, which led us to one of the lowest points of Masonry in the history of our Fraternity in this country and perhaps the world. A mark, which has been used against us to present day and no doubt into the future. This particular incident affected all the Lodges in the United States, to the point where many Lodges closed and Grand Lodges were forced to temporarily discontinue their work. This was the direct result of quantity vs. quality.

Once again, less than a century later we experienced a growth in membership that was indiscriminate. This you can read in The Grand Lodge of Florida Proceedings and/or History of the Grand Lodge of Florida, Volume V. You can read of the fast growth and how many in our leadership built and expanded perhaps beyond our means, based on our new found members only to find within less than one decade the truth that those that joined in great masses also exited in great masses the first time things became difficult. This particular time the market took care of those that didn’t have Masonry in their hearts but were just joiners seeking personal benefits.

This created another period of slow growth having learned the lessons once again the hard way, which almost cost us our Grand Lodge Building, if it was not for the benevolence of a few Brothers.

This was soon forgotten and after World War II, we started another period of growth. First it was slow and deliberate, following the principles of our Institution and investigation guidelines were developed that we may not fall again to the failures of indiscriminate growth. However, a few decades later we were back in the same situation, we were expanding at a very fast rate and we were growing while others were shrinking, however we missed the writing on the wall.

Our leaders had the foresight to create a System of Education by which they could teach these Brothers about the values and principles of our Fraternity. Something we had lacked in the previous growth of the 20's. They also created a Lodge Officers Training Program to assist the leadership in guiding the business of the Lodge and seeing that the new Brothers were mentored properly to create true Masons in heart and spirit.

Although we peaked a few decades later than most other jurisdictions in our country once the shrinking in membership started instead of uniting, consolidating and redirecting once again we placed the emphasis in quantity instead of quality. We keep missing the lessons taught and re-taught that Masonry is not for everyone.

I do not know of any business or organization that would consider expansion versus consolidation during hard times. Also, I don't know of a business or organization that will continue to promote its commodities at a loss year after year, seriously considering that the more they promote the better they will be off. In other words bring more people at cheap rates, do not expect anything from them, as you are not giving them anything of value. You are making no investment and neither are they and yet we expect success in retention and participation, obviously it will not happen

Of course, there is always the exception to the rule, and these are the first to be pointed out, unfortunately, we cannot depend on the exceptions to maintain our Fraternity.

Therefore, a different approach is necessary and that is to consolidate and solidify our base. Our primary problem is not the loss of membership, but the financial impact they have in our Lodges. This was demonstrated once before in our jurisdiction and we should have listened to those Brothers that survived and led our Fraternity to see better days. The other problem we face is that of participation and again this will only be resolved when we concentrate our efforts in creating a "Masonic Experience" worthy of participation in our Lodges. Unfortunately, we will need to have the financial ability to create this experience and we can start by raising our Degree fees as well as our dues that we can arrive at a comfortable financial status where the needs of the Lodge and Membership can be met. This can also be achieved by Lodges pooling their resources working together to achieve set goals proving the old cliché that united we stand divided we fall.

There are many Lodges in this country and around the world that based their membership in quality and have remained unharmed by the membership decline and by the popularity or lack thereof of the Craft, as well as economic woes that may at times affect our society.

Our problem like those of our Brothers in the 20's is addressing the loss and like them, we must solidify our base and plan. A future that is not dependent on membership growth to sustain our financial needs; but, dependent on the quality of the organization we have built, based on our principles and education of our membership, which can understand the needs of the Fraternity and would happily contribute to its needs whether financial or personal participation in the duties and responsibility we are charged as Masons in our various "Obligations and Charges". Masonry is not for everyone. Just for the few, the brave and the worthy.

Respectfully and Fraternaly Submitted, I remain your most humble servant

Jorge L. Aladro  
Deputy Grand Master

*If you would like to receive, these newsletters make request at email below if you would like to forward to your list of friends you have my permission and thank you in advance.*

*"My Brothers, the newsletters are intended to be thought provoking, to get you to think creatively, to get you thinking what if?, to dare you to improve yourself and your Lodge."*

***Note: If you would, like to have any of these presentations made at your Lodge or District Associations feel free to call.***

Comments can be send to [ilageorge@bellsouth.net](mailto:ilageorge@bellsouth.net)