

T.F.S.

Three, five, and seven

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By Stan Shapiro MD, Grand Lodge Education Officer G.L. of MN

#197

The following article was received from Brother Gerald Edgar who lives in Garner, Iowa and is a member of our Grand Lodge Writers Guild and Education Committee. He writes well and his article will help you think about what is most important when you attend Lodge.

Masons are taught to be actively involved in their place of worship. That is good advice for any Mason seeking further light. Clergy are charged with assisting their congregation with improving their lives and those of their fellow man. The following is a good example from our Pastors' perspective but similar lessons relating to human-imposed barriers may be found in the holy scriptures of most if not all religions.

On March 27 our Pastor referred to the story of Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well. He noted given the mores' of the day, there were many 'barriers' to the two even encountering each other much less sharing a long conversation. "In the day" Jews did not casually speak with Samaritans and vice-a-versa. Men did not speak to women not of their family. Jesus' disciples were upset that he did not seek refreshment from one of them rather than a stranger. Our pastor pointed out the similar 'barriers' in our own church services. Some prefer the traditional liturgy, others the 'new' versions. Some members prefer the pipe organ, others an electronic keyboard. Many want a traditional steeple-topped edifice, others prefer meeting in a home-like atmosphere. All these societal barriers preclude believers from worshipping together because they forget the real purpose of worship: helping each other grow closer to God.

Do we Masons create this kind of barrier within our Lodges when some members want 'Proper' ritual versus a purely social gathering, formal wears vs. casual attire, or to focus on the past as opposed to the future? When we do this, we lose focus on the purpose of being in Lodge. We come to Lodge to improve ourselves in Masonry and become better men with the assistance of our Brothers. In the above account Jesus removed the 'barriers' imposed by his peers. We can go beyond our superficial barriers and reach our true goal – to improve ourselves as men and Masons. As we prepare to enter the Lodge room we must remember to ask ourselves 'what did we come here to do?' We must not focus on matters that neither help us or our Brothers but be clear we are there to refresh our minds and souls in the company of Brothers.

One can also consider this lesson in the vernacular, "when you are up to your waist in alligators, it's easy to forget you are there to drain the swamp". Let's rid ourselves of alligators! ---

Gerald Edgar

Words to Live by: *As you travel through life, brother, whatever be your goal, keep your eye upon the donut and not upon the hole.*

Masons with leadership responsibilities will find the book Generation to Generation: Family Process in Church and Synagogue by Rabbi Edwin H Friedman has recommendations about how to deal with members who have opposing ideas of how to do things or what is most important.

The Education Videos by our education committee can be viewed at:
<http://www.youtube.com/glmned> The latest Masonic Monday Question, and some of the past questions, can be viewed at www.Lodgebuilder.org and at www.mn-masons.org