



Independent Order of Odd Fellows
Dedicated Members for Change

January 15, 2014

Dear Dedicated Members for Change,

What Constitutes a Lodge?

This is a subject all of us must grapple with constantly. Each lodge is entirely different. Of course, the Roberts Code of California defines a lodge as being five or more members with at least one qualified to preside but that is simply the skeletal view. If your own lodge has only five members you are in danger of not being a real lodge. In my personal view, a lodge must be much more than that. The simple facts of today's fraternal world are that many of us are scrambling simply to survive, and in order to survive, I believe in many ways we do have to hearken back to an earlier time. I agree that we have to modernize many sectors of our order but there are certain areas which I believe we almost have to go back to our beginnings as an order to emulate. Let me try to show you what I am talking about. If you look at a successful modern lodge, you will see that they possess these characteristics, while those that are less successful are not quite there, and the first three basic traits are absent and the last two rear their ugly head. There are those who may laugh at these words but if we really believe in Friendship, Love, and Truth, these go hand in hand.

- 1) **Heart.** Many of our failing lodges have lost all sense of heart. They give nothing and are not open to anything either. If we want to grow, we need to realize that all people want acceptance, all people want love, all people desire friendship. Let's stop throwing rocks at each other. If we want our order to grow, first we have to lose the hatred within ourselves.
- 2) **Soul.** Many of our failing lodges have no soul. This seems rude, but generally what you feel in a lodge that is failing, is emptiness: not just the emptiness within four walls, but the emptiness one feels when there is nothing returned, most members have left or passed on, and those whom are left are drowning in sorrow and self-pity. Is it any wonder no one joins?
- 3) **Emotion.** A logical progression, when you lose your heart and soul, the emotion is lost as well. Many failing lodges seem to show no emotion whatsoever. Their meetings are dry and meaningless with little or no flesh to their agenda.
- 4) **Bitterness.** Then, comes the natural outcome – the heart, soul, and emotion have left the premises, so bitterness takes over. The last few members are bitter at almost faceless villains. They are bitter at everyone and everything, and don't sense the ludicrous direction of their own bitterness.
- 5) **Nada.** Modern philosophers call it “the nada of the dark”, meaning closest to nothingness. Lodges that are nearest closure, pretty much close themselves. Not even



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due to a lack of members, it becomes more a lack of caring. If you don't care, is that living?

It should be obvious that the most successful lodges have heart, soul, and emotion and this can be easily verified by meeting their kind and happy members. Meanwhile, the failing lodges are full of bitterness and a lack of caring that also can be verified by looking at the overwhelming mood of their failing lodge. The best thing about anyone of us we can say is that we care for each other, and through this caring, we may make our lodges bright and cheery places. We are in this together and should remember that through caring we may conquer our space versus a lack of caring wherein we mainly fail ourselves.

In Friendship, Love, and Truth, Rick Boyles, Grand Master

All my love, Rick Boyles, Grand Master