



Independent Order of Odd Fellows
Dedicated Members for Change

January 22, 2014

Dear Dedicated Members for Change,

What Constitutes a Good Odd Fellow?

I believe one of the issues hastening our order's demise is our desire to demean each other even though I feel most of us have our hearts in the right space. We need to stop making accusations, discontinue stressful encounters and learn that in order for us to survive we need to love each other first and foremost. I have been as guilty as anyone else in this and have decided that unless we unite as an order we will fail completely and very quickly indeed. I am sure that all of us mean well, as we all should, but there is little time left for belligerence, hatred, deceit and backroom deals. Our order in our state has plummeted to an extremely low level and I believe there is at least one remedy for this but it must be addressed at the Sovereign Grand Lodge level, however there are helpful efforts we can make within our own state to start the ball rolling. More at the end of this essay, but just as importantly, I think we should all strive to establish a list of proper etiquette or manners with which we treat all people within our order. I have had to intervene with quite a few disputes, dismiss numerous allegations, and otherwise calm various avenues of disorder, so this listing becomes almost imperative. It is time to act like adult men and women, and stop hoping for growth when we can't even get along with our closest fellow members. It is time to at least do the following:

- 1) Treat all fellow members with dignity, honor and respect. We joined under the mantel of friendship, love and truth, so we may as well honor it.
- 2) Ask your fellow members what they like, show interest in their opinions, share a laugh or two.
- 3) This is not a battlefield, don't make accusations, and certainly don't make public accusations. Some lodges have issues, but if they can't be resolved amicably, then the next recourse would be your District Deputy Grand Master, or one of the elective Grand Lodge Officers.
- 4) Don't just chant the code as some sort of verification of your right to make accusations. The codes are guidebooks not weapons. It is our duty to still try and resolve issues amicably.
- 5) Learn to live with each other's flaws. We all have them. Comedies on television and at the movies are predicated on the idea that we all must learn to live with each other's flaws. This is really one of the wonders of everyday life. Let's learn to embrace each other in spite or even because of our differences.
- 6) We're all volunteers on this bus. We all do what we can. No one should be judging us for what we can't do. We all have families and friends, private lives, some have jobs.



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Let's stop insulting each other because they failed to attend an event 300 miles away. One of the many ways in which our own members are killing our order.

- 7) Learn the value in each other's company. A lodge near me does a little jig at the start of their meeting to alleviate stress and I think that's a great idea! I may suggest that at this year's Grand Lodge Sessions. Most of all have fun and love each other.

Finally, the idea that has come to my attention has been brought up to me a number of times. We need to show present and future members a benefit for being a member. Other fraternal groups offer such things, and we need to do something if we need to progress much further. If we all focus our energy on it, we may make it happen. Frankly, we don't give our members much reason to remain members beyond our simple platitudes. We must do more. If we don't do something soon, we may become the wealthiest defunct order.

In Friendship, Love and Truth

Rick Boyles, Grand Master.