

Some Thoughts About Leadership In Craft (Symbolic) Masonry

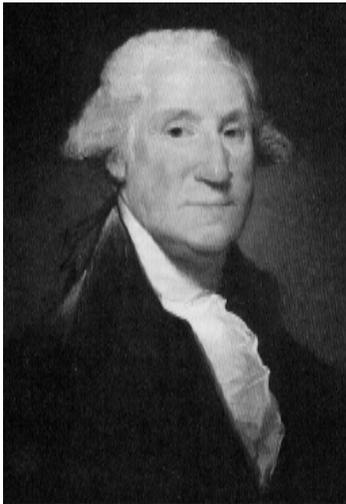
By Herman Nickerson Jr., FPS

PURPOSE: To make good men better so that they are examples of the “Brotherhood of Man under the Fatherhood of God.”

We are all friends and brothers, ritually speaking, and by our obligations, actually. We start as friends or fellows and earn our way in Masonry, whose lessons are taught by degrees only. We assume leadership roles as we demonstrate our ability to fill such roles. So, from friends and fellows come our leaders: from fellowship comes leadership. Thus we have those who lead and those who follow.

The leadership question is, “how do we develop leaders?” How do we develop followers with the essential esprit de corps which makes leadership a pleasant and rewarding experience? Our ingredients are followers and leaders, and when these two are in amity and esprit de corps is present, the “followership” makes the leadership a success.

The leader must have an upright character; he must be respected at home, in the community and in church. He must have integrity and his word is his bond. In brief, he must have strength of character.



Leaders reach out and touch followers, and the degree of influence a leader exerts varies with his or her personality and responsibility. The followers, in their turn, influence others; thus we establish a chain reaction—a chain of good men seeking other good men. The leader is always mindful of the needs of others. The needs of his people, be it a small group or large, are of utmost importance. Understanding others is one of the keys to leadership. George Washington, a man of strong character and great responsibility, is an example of true leadership, in that his stature was so commanding that his followers made him the unanimous choice to lead our new Nation as its first president. We know he was a Mason whose example we should emulate.

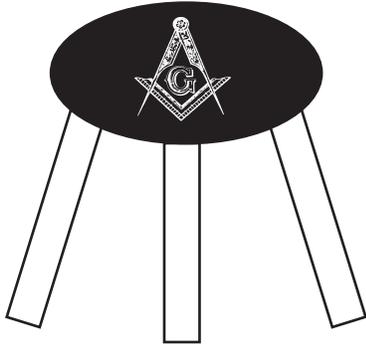
Ambition is also an essential quality because the leader must lead with the confidence that he can attain the common goal. Enthusiasm must be apparent and the leader must give himself wholly to the cause; he must not seek to satisfy his own vanity and achieve personal advantage. It is truly remarkable what can be accomplished when you don't care who gets the credit.

The leader must be a planner. He must look ahead and carefully plot the moves necessary to achieve the goal. When followers fail to participate, the leader has lost, or perhaps never had, his “followership.” This failure to participate could well be the result of an unattractive, unchallenging plan. Make no mistake, followers are equally as important as leaders for the success of the plan.

There is no need to ingratiate yourself or placate all the different points of view in your Lodge, but you must sample the memberships' opinions and needs. It is a truism that you first state clearly the objective, because by so doing you are defining the direction to proceed and the limits of the

same. Without these guidelines of directions and limits, you spin your wheels uselessly and go off on tangents. Stick to your objectives leading to your purpose of making good men better.

Let me turn to the example of the common three-legged stool. Symbolically, this stool has the leg of Ritual to demonstrate order and impart useful lessons; the leg of administration, to communicate the word, collect the dues, maintain the records, pay the bills and be the Masonic point of contact; and the leg of education to arouse new interest and enthusiasm in the craft. As to the leg of education, I suggest this education begins after the newly made Master Mason has learned his catechism and has had the benefit of learned coaches and instructors who have answered factually all his questions. The leg of education continues to build on his knowledge to make him a true seeker of light.



We all recognize that knowledge is power. We have our leader-trainer on the road, but we need to help him learn all he can about Freemasonry so that his followers will recognize him as one who

knows and therefore is someone they want to follow. Remember that those who ignore the hard lessons of history are the ones who repeat them. Don't reinvent the wheel by repeating past errors.

The Brother's potential for leadership is measured by his willingness and ability to contribute to the improvement of our Brotherhood. We have the obligation of continuing to challenge him with tasks that build on his strengths. We have a leader in the making. We have a follower on the road to leadership.