

Short Talk # 4

HOW TO ENCOURAGE NEW OR YOUNG COMPANIONS

in Your Royal Arch Chapter

As everyone Royal Arch Mason knows, a Chapter is only as strong as its members. We are constantly discussing, debating, and sharing our points of views on how to grow and expand our beloved York Rite and perpetuate its teachings to a larger group of men and Masons. We desire this because it is a goal we know deep inside that if we achieved it, our Chapters, our Lodges, our Charities, our Neighborhoods, our Towns, our Cities, our Counties, our States, and our Country would be a better place.

Our extension of the Masonic fraternity, as we practice it in a Royal Arch Chapter, leads us on a path to close and sincere fellowship. Some of this fellowship occurs from the degree work. Some of the spirit of fraternity dwells in the knowledge of 4 additional teachings among a group of Masons - further light. Yet, the degrees of Royal Arch Masonry elevate our minds and our self-esteem by gaining passage into this realm of further knowledge that builds on and enhances the Entered Apprentice, Fellowcraft, and Master Mason degrees.

In light of this knowledge, we must remember that the Royal Arch and the York Rite are a lifelong study. With this thought, I will describe how the leadership Past, Present and Future can attempt to gain the active participation of the New or Young Companions.

First, let us start from the beginning. How does a man become a Royal Arch Mason? Simply by being a Master Mason in good standing of a recognized Blue Lodge. He petitions a Chapter and is voted in. He receives his degrees either one at a time conferred by his Chapter, or participates in a festival with several other candidates in which the degrees may or may not be conferred by members of his Chapter. When concluded, he is entitled to be referred to by his fellow members as companion.

Question: Now what is there left to do for this New Companion? **Answer:** **GET HIM INVOLVED!!!!** *There are several strategies that can be helpful and we will now explore a few.*

Degree-work - Assign him a part on a degree team. With four degrees and numerous assignments, ask him which degree was his favorite, ask him if he wants to be the guy who knows that part and is in that position on the degree team. Give him ample time to learn his part and then work with him to perfect during a practice before a public conferral of the degree. Many of us who are accomplished ritualists have forgotten the hours and years it took us to learn the degree work we know. Let's not forget that the new companion will need the same time and encouragement we received. Many young men who say they have little time for meetings may be able to memorize the words to their part at home, then attend rehearsals to refine their degree work. This is a great way to help him with his desire to be an active member, even if his work or family life routinely interferes with regular attendance. By the way, I have found that overseers in the Mark Master Degree and the three veils in the Royal Arch Degree are great parts for new members to learn and become involved with.

Activity - Appoint him to an active committee. Surround him with the heart and soul of your Chapter. If you have a Strong Sick and Visitation Committee, have him help out the chairman. Align him with the

Wardrobe or Regalia committee to help out with Degree Conferrals.

There are many possibilities. The main idea here is to consult with the companion and encourage while making him feel wanted without feeling pressured. If he truly wants to be an officer and ascend those steps of leadership that lead to the East and being High Priest, you should really confer with him and layout the expectations of the Chapter and the needs of its members. Make sure to remind him of the lesson learned in the Past Master's degree about the seriousness of taking leadership in our Fraternity.

Charity - Many men join our Order with the hopes of helping his fellow man through Charity. Every group is held together by a purpose. Each Chapter needs to have their "thing" they exist for. If a chapter is only there to survive or as path to becoming eligible to become a Knights Templar, that chapter will suffer to get the members to participate because there is no activity to join in or get involved with. If a chapter is serious about increasing membership along with participation, the chapter must either find a cause, a charity, a scholarship, or some kind of benefit to Masonry or mankind. When the purpose for being a member is obvious and easy to see, men will be drawn to it and know why they are joining in.

Educate - It is each and every companion's responsibility to expound on the teachings not only of the Blue Lodge degrees, but the Capitular degrees as well. Not all members will be excited about scholarly research or something resembling a poetry club. But each companion should know a level of aptitude to answer the question: "What is a Royal Arch Mason?" Many new Master Masons that I approach about joining the York Rite say " I want to wait until I have worked more in my Blue Lodge before I join the York Rite." I can understand this desire and usually respond by explaining the History of the York Rite, lessons of the degrees, and how much further insight I have gained into my Blue Lodge knowledge through the assistance of the York Rite degrees. Without some education, I would not be able to explain the wonders of the York Rite.

Being an active Companion in Royal Arch Masonry is no accident. It is a group effort that needs dedicated companions to reach out to New Companions.

We are the Chapter.

Several great resources can be found on our Grand Chapter website:

<http://www.texasorkrite.org/education.htm>

Discussion Questions

1. With a partner, role play inviting a new companion to take an active part in a degree team. What BENEFITS will you stress that make it enticing for him to do so? What OBJECTIONS do you anticipate hearing from the new companion, and how can you answer those?
2. What activities in your Royal Arch Chapter are particularly appealing to a companion who is under the age of 30? What activities do you believe you could change or add in order to make these more appealing to this age group?