



GRAND COMMANDERY KNIGHTS TEMPLAR of TEXAS



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Commander: SK Richard R Jernigan

Email: ricjernigan@gmail.com

Web site: yorkritetexas.org/commandery

Jeff S. Bennett

Texas Page Editor

Email: jeffbturnine@yahoo.com

Greetings Sir Knights,

When your memories exceed your dreams, the end is near. When an organization is more about the accomplishments of the past than its vision for the future, that organization is near its end.

We should not strive to be experts on what we've accomplished over the past 100 years, we should be experts on what we are doing today, where we are going tomorrow. We cannot rest on our laurels if we hope to remain relevant. We cannot pine for past accomplishments and do nothing to secure the future. Certainly, we are proud of our great heritage as it reminds us of our great responsibility to future generations. But to only long for the glorious past of this fraternity and do nothing for the future is to cheat that future out of the benefits we enjoy today.

During uncertain or difficult times, we should always remember a very simple but often overlooked certainty, clarity overcomes chaos. Clarity of mission, clarity of purpose is the surest way to steer yourself through difficult days. Falling back upon the clear-cut mission of your group helps guide you through muddy waters.

Every organization has at its core a mission or a reason for being here. During uncertain times we need to rely upon the core principles and values of this fraternity, bringing them to the forefront of our lives. There was a time when all we had, all our organization had, was an idea, to make good men better. There was nothing else. We had no lodges, no system of government, no rituals, no plans, no projects, nothing, just the vision of what needed to be accomplished. Over time we developed functions, we developed practices and programs designed to achieve that goal, to fulfill the mission of making good men better. We must not confuse the plan with the mission. Plans change, the mission stays the same. Plans are simply the way to go about accomplishing the mission. If a plan fails this does not mean we have a bad vision. It only means we had a bad plan. Learn from it and try again as you strive for success. Fall in love with your mission, only be infatuated with your plans. You don't die on the hill of your plans; you die on the mountain of your vision.

We should examine everything we do in this Fraternity and see if it is contributing to the accomplishment of our mission. If something isn't doing so, we need to stop doing it. Change the plan to accomplish the mission. It's hard to do. Change is not easy. Think about the one person in life you are closest too. For most of us that will be our spouse or significant other. How successful have you been when you try to change her? Not easy. The easiest person to change is ourselves. We don't have to convince anyone. All we need is the discipline to make the change.

We often fall into the trap of doing things the same way, of not wanting to rock the boat. I say rock that boat. So many of us, myself included, like to sit on the sides and say we ought to do something, we ought to have more fun, we ought to make our meetings more interesting, and then we go home, and we do nothing. That accomplishes nothing. Don't just say it, make it happen. Make some changes, make things uncomfortable by trying something new. Change always comes with frictions. Some members will be for change, some against. Change makes us uncomfortable as Masons. But the only way anything moves in our world is a result of friction between two objects. Friction leads to improvement. If the change works, great, if not, try something else. If you believe you are stuck in always doing something the same way, try this. Write down 10 reasons why what you are doing is the wrong way. This will help in bringing about the needed change. If your lodge, chapter, council, commandery needs improvement, let me ask this. What are you doing differently this year than you did last year? What have you changed to make things better? If they worked, share them, tell your story to others. If they did not, still share the story so others can learn from you. Maybe they can make a slight change to your change and be successful. Changes do not have to be big to make a big difference. Sometimes the solution is so simple we miss it. Let me give you an example.

While attending the Bell Leadership Institute in North Carolina I struggled one day while listening to the professor and trying to take notes. He (Dr. Gerald Bell) apparently saw this and came over on a break to ask what was bothering me. I told him I don't think I take very good notes. He sat down and asked a simple question; "why don't you think you take good notes". I told him I thought I wrote down too many words and couldn't keep up. He thought for a second and then said, "stop writing so many words." He then got up and left. Simple, stop doing the thing that isn't working and start doing the thing that does. Genius!

Plans change, vision remains the same. My vision was to pass the course and learn about leadership. My plan was to take good notes so I could accomplish the mission. My plan wasn't working, so I changed my plan and accomplished my vision.

If what your lodge is doing is not helping accomplish the mission, stop doing it. Do something else. Remember this if nothing else, no decision is sacred. Decisions can be changed. Try new things. Don't let your memories of how we have always done things or of past accomplishments exceed your dreams for making this organization better.

You had a mission or vision when you joined Masonry. Examine what you are doing in Masonry. Are you still on the road you set out upon in trying to make yourself a better man? If not, what can you change to return to those principles you sought to improve in yourself? What things are you doing that only distract from the mission? Ask, what would happen if you stopped doing those things and started doing something else? What would you lose? What would you gain if you changed one thing in your masonic life that helped you move back on track to achieving your goal?

Every change is going to have consequences. Every change, even a good one, comes with some loss. You should understand what that loss will be before making the change. You should also understand what you will gain by making the change.

When times are chaotic, those principles, those morals, those core values you find in the teachings of our fraternity are an excellent place to return to. They are simple, they are straightforward, and they can guide you through the worst this world can throw at you. All you need is the courage and the discipline to live those values, to practice each day the lessons you've learned on your journey. Think about this lesson that I call the four D's; Discipline, not Desire Determines your Destiny. You may Desire to be a good man and true, but if you do not have the Discipline to put into your everyday life the guideposts of this moral fraternity then it will remain just that; a Desire that will never become your Destiny.

I am very excited about our future. Every day we should awaken and be joyous for the new day. Because tomorrow our fraternity is better. Every day, somewhere in the world a good man decides to petition our Fraternity. Somewhere in the world tomorrow a good man will take upon himself the obligation of a Master Mason and all of us will be made better for having that good man join our ranks.

This is indeed a glorious time to be a Mason. To be a York Rite Mason, to be a Knight Templar. Each day the truth of our great lessons is made stronger through the actions of good men just like you. Improve the Man; Improve the World.

God bless each of you and God bless the Grand Commandery of Texas

Richard R. Lornigan

Grand Commander 2022 – 2023