



“The Forgotten Tool”

Lodge Presentation:

*The following short article is written with the intention to be read within an open Lodge, or in fellowship, to all the members in attendance. This article is appropriate to be presented to **all Masons. Entered Apprentice** and **Fellowcraft** Masons should be invited to attend the meeting where this is presented. Following this article is a list of discussion questions which should be presented immediately following the presentation of the article.*

The Forgotten Tool

As Masons, we are to build the Earthly Temple of our life. To that end, as we pass through the degrees our Brothers provide us with working clothes and a toolbox filled with tools. We are taught the proper use of these tools and their meaning. As we progress on our Masonic journey we become more and more proficient with each tool until by practice we master each one.

To square our actions and keep our passions within due bounds becomes second nature. We spread the bounds of Brotherly love and friendship without a second thought. Yet there is one tool we as Masons have difficulty with. It is a tool given to you as an Entered Apprentice. So, it is one we figure is important enough to give a man right away and simple enough to use that our newest member can use it.

As an Entered Apprentice, you were given both the common gavel and the 24-inch gauge. We have all watched our Brothers and ourselves chip away at our imperfections and watch as slowly we change from a rough to a more perfect ashlar. Yet the 24-inch gauge seems to lay at the bottom of the tool box. This instrument teaches us to lay out our day that we may take 8 hours to work, eight hours to worship our creator and helping our fellowman, and eight hours to rest and refresh ourselves.

We do a good job spending at least 8 hours at our work. The average American spend about 8.8 hours at his job. A little high but not bad. Unless you count commute time, home time answering emails, time planning for meetings or laying out tomorrows schedule or work, etc., the average American spends closer to 12 hour a day at his vocation. A full 50% above the time allotted by our teachings for a Brother to be a well-rounded individual.

We certainly work hard at serving our fellow man. Our activities in Freemasonry often takes up much of this time. Most Brothers seem to be the sort to find a period or two throughout the day to spend with their creator. We seem to do OK with one, don't we? Most Masons are a part of their community's life it is hard to find a Brother who is only a Mason. Church committees, Scouting, sportsmen's groups, school activities, other civic organizations, appendant bodies all seem to want a chunk of our time. But isn't this good? Isn't being a Mason about helping others? The Average American woman spend just over 2 hours a day with her children, the



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average American male about 56 minutes. The average American family eats less than 5 meals each week with their family. As Masons, we say that family should come first but we tend to forget that family is our fellowman.

Eight hours to rest and refresh yourself. Should be easy. The medical world is showing that we do not get enough sleep. 7-9 hours nightly is recommended but we average just over 6 and a half hours nightly. We on average eat one in five meals in our cars. We eat at our desks on average twice a week. The average American spends 36 minutes a day in relaxation. With relaxation, a lazy scroll through emails or reading through something for work does not count. Science is proving that if we take an hour or more each day to relax, that is just let our minds wander, and relive ourselves of the daily pressures we become nicer people, more friendly, more productive, healthier, and more intelligent.

As Masons, we do a great job trying to become a bit better every day. We truly do chip away at the vices and superfluities of life. We are very good at using that common gavel. It is easy to recall conversations with Brothers who have literally stated that they were trying harder to apply the plumb, level or compasses to their life. Yet, at the bottom of our tool box lies the 24-inch gauge. The forgotten tool.

Any operative Mason will tell you that no two stones are identical. One stone may level nicely but have difficulty squaring up at the corners. The next stone may need a very different treatment. In Freemasonry, starting with the 24-inch gauge and common gavel we are given our tools but we are never expected to perfect our use of them. Somedays it is easier to keep our passions within due bounds than others. The 24-inch gauge is not meant to enforce a rigid unyielding regimented life but to remind each of us that we need to take care of ourselves, our work, each other, and our spirit each and every day. It is when we deviate too much to one side or the other that a problem occurs. Too much work or too much play both lead to problems. As Masons, we are not just given tools we are also taught the four Cardinal Virtues, the liberal arts and sciences, and so much more. When we use our tools alongside this knowledge a well-rounded man emerges. The rough Ashlar becomes smoother.

In a world where time has become the new currency the forgotten tool may be the most important.

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Grand Lodge Free and Accepted Masons of Wisconsin



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Discussion Questions

The following discussion questions are written to be presented immediately following the presentation of the topic above. There is no right or wrong answers to these questions, they are designed to promote thought and engage all the members that are present in conversation. Take care that the presentation of the topic and the discussion questions does not exceed 30 minutes. The presenter can present any part of the questions below, or any additional questions, he feels is appropriate.

- Which tool is at the bottom of your tool box?
- How can you work to equalize the three sections of the gauge?
- Which section of the 24-inch gage is the most important?
- Is there a non-Masonic tool that you could place a Masonic type lesson on in your life?
Which power tool?
- Is the Entered Apprentice degree the right place to present this tool? Why or why not?
- Fathers often pass their tools down to their sons. Which tools would you specifically like to see your children/grandchildren inherit?
- Which working tool is your favorite and why?