

York Rite Masonry “Open Your Book”

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As District Lecturer, I try to come up with topics that might make you think, help you with your Ritual and give you a better perspective on things that might work for you. As it turns out, most of my talks come from my own personal experiences or observations. This one is no different.

So here you are, a new Master Mason in your Blue Lodge and you are elected Junior Deacon. What do you do? And then, you join a Royal Arch Chapter and get appointed as Grand Master of the 2nd Veil. What do you do? And later, you decide to become a Knights Templar in Commandery and are elected as the Junior Warden. What do you do?

So, let's break this down. In your Blue Lodge, you attend practices, you work with your Lodge Instructor on Work, you attend your local Ritual Schools and then you seek out a Brother who can help you learn your part. In your Royal Arch Chapter, you follow a similar path by attending practices, attend Ritual Schools, and then seek out a good Companion who can help you with your part. But wait, Royal Arch has a Ritual Book you can buy! And then you are in Commandery and you attend practices, attend local Ritual Schools, seek out a fellow Sir Knight who can help you with your part and then you buy their book. All straight forward and easy, right? If you are like me, all of this can be very complicated and often times difficult. In your Blue Lodge, Brothers are willing to help as are your Companions and Sir Knights in your Chapter and Commandery. Your first step is to seek Light, or in this case instruction. All you need to do is ask. Have you heard that before? But unlike your Blue Lodge, both Royal Arch and Commandery allow you to purchase and hopefully use a Ritual Book. So, let's go back to when you are first elected or appointed to a chair. The question was, what do you do? Do you learn your chair as well as you can? Do you consider that you might be asked to move up a chair or two? Do you also learn other chairs? Hopefully, you have a goal of eventually advancing to the East and leading your respective York Rite Body. To do this, and to do it well, you need to know all of the parts of every chair in each York Rite Body. You need to be prepared for that evening when your Lodge, Chapter or Commandery has vacancies in the chairs. As they used to say in Boys Scouts, “Be Prepared”. Are you preparing yourself to fill other chairs as you move towards the East? I would make the following suggestions:

- 1) Attend practices as much as possible;
- 2) Don't be satisfied with only learning the chair you occupy;
- 3) Get with more informed Brethren and ask questions;
- 4) Always be looking ahead several chairs and learn those parts;
- 5) Be willing to challenge yourself by moving up when needed;
- 6) **You bought the book, OPEN IT! STUDY IT!**
- 7) And finally, be proud of your Ritual work. Keep in mind that it is our obligation to do the best we can. Strive for perfection in your Ritual work and know that none of us are perfect. As humans, we do make mistakes.

Companions, whether it is in your Blue Lodge, Royal Arch Chapter or Commandery, there is a lot of ritual to learn. Unless you have a photographic memory, an extremely high IQ or are one of those folks that find this easy, you have to work hard to become proficient in your Ritual work. And by becoming proficient in your Ritual, you will help maintain the Sanctity of our Work and be better prepared to advance through the Chairs and to help others.