

A Mayonnaise Jar and Some Coffee



The Worshipful Master tasked me with presenting some educational programs this year that would, perhaps, have you look at Masonry in a different light. Using a compass to find your way in the fraternity, questions like... 'What does Masonry mean to you?' 'What makes us different from the rest of the world?' ...or talking about allusions to our ritual. Tonight I want to get a bit more philosophical. So, when things in your life seem almost too much to handle, when 24 hours in a day are not enough, remember my story about two everyday items....a mayonnaise jar...and some coffee.

It's been well over a half century ago, but I recall vividly the first week of college life. Well, actually, my course of study was for a degree in electrical engineering, but back then they made you take some 'fun' courses too, like Philosophy 101. I can picture in my mind the professor standing at the front of the classroom with several items on the table before him. When the bell rang and class began, without a word, he picked up a very large, empty mayonnaise jar and proceeded to fill it with golf balls. He then asked the students if the jar was full. We all agreed that it was.

So the professor then picked up a box of small pebbles and poured them into the jar. He shook the jar lightly, and the pebbles rolled into the open areas between the golf balls. He then asked us again if the jar was full. Yes, we agreed it was.

The professor next picked up a box of sand and poured it into the jar. Of course, the sand filled up every empty space. He asked once more if the jar was full. We all replied with a unanimous and emphatic "yes!"

The professor then produced two cups of coffee from under the table and poured the entire contents into the jar, effectively filling the empty space between the pebbles of sand. We all laughed.

"Now," said the professor, as the laughter subsided, "I want you to recognize that this jar represents your life. The golf balls are the really important things - your family, your children, your health, your friends, and your favorite passions – things that if everything else was lost and only these remained, your life would still be full. For us tonight, I'm hoping 'Masonry' is in your list of really important things.

The pebbles are the other things that matter....like your job, your house, and your car. The sand is everything else - the 'small stuff'. If you put the sand into the jar first, he continued, there is no room for the pebbles or the golf balls.

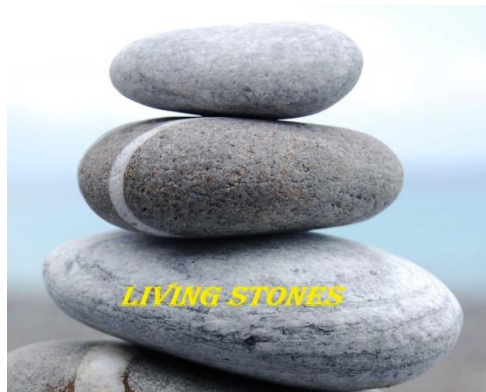
The same goes for life. If you spend all your time and energy on the small stuff, you will never have room for the things that are important...your real passions in life.

Pay attention to the things that are critical to your happiness. Take time to play with your children or grandchildren! Take time to get that medical checkup you've been putting off. Take your partner out to dinner...someplace nice! Maybe even play another nine holes of golf. Take time and do something for your Lodge. There's always time to clean the house or fix the leaky faucet, or work on the 'honey-do' list.

Take care of the golf balls first, the things that 'really matter'. You must set your priorities. All the rest is...just sand.

When the professor finished, one of the students in my class raised her hand and inquired what the coffee represented. 'I'm glad you asked', he said. 'It just goes to show that no matter how full your life may seem, there's always room for a cup of coffee with a friend.'

I leave you with something to ponder.....is Freemasonry one of the 'golf balls' in your life?....something that you feel is really important?...a favorite passion? Will Freemasonry help fill up your Mayonnaise jar?



Living Stones - Masonic Thoughts for Today's Mason
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