

Parable of the Carpenter



The Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of Ohio Committee on Education and Information

Preparation:

Read the lesson in advance in its entirety. You can read the following story or paraphrase it as needed.

Instruction:

A master carpenter who'd worked for the same builder for nearly 50 years announced he was retiring. The builder told him how much he appreciated his work and presented him with a \$5,000 bonus. Then he asked if he would build just one more house. He owned a magnificent lot with a spectacular view and wanted to build a dream home there.

The carpenter was bitterly disappointed at the small bonus and extra project, but the building fee would help him buy a small cottage. He agreed to build the dream house.

He'd always prided himself on his uncompromising commitment to quality, but his resentment caused him to cut corners, ignore details, and accept shoddy workmanship from his workers. He even looked the other way when some of them substituted cheaper materials and pocketed the difference.

When the house was finished, the builder shook the carpenter's hand and with a huge smile gave him a thank-you card. The carpenter was disdainful – until he saw inside the card the deed to the house he'd just built.

The carpenter was ashamed to have misjudged his old friend and betrayed his own values, and he was remorseful that the house he would now live in for the rest of his life had been made so carelessly.

Demonstration:

Ask the Brethren the following questions:

1. After so many years of faithful service and a satisfactory career with the builder, why do you suppose the carpenter felt that he was entitled to so much more?
2. Do you think this is a common situation? Do you think this is more common today than 50 years ago?
3. Is there a time that you can think of when you didn't put forth your best effort and the reward in the end was not what you'd hoped for? What did you learn from that experience?
4. The carpenter spent nearly 50 years building not only houses, but his legacy. Do you think this incident might change the way others feel about his character and commitment to his work? How so?
5. How do our Masonic teachings help us to avoid falling into this situation?

Assessment:

Hopefully this discussion will lead the Brethren to realize that our character is the house we live in, and it's built piece by piece by our daily choices. Deceit, irresponsibility, and disrespect are like shoddy workmanship. Whenever we put in less than our best and ignore our potential for excellence, we create a future full of creaky floors, leaky roofs, and crumbling foundations