

NV Grand Lodge Short Lecture Series

THE POWERS & FUNCTIONS OF THE WORSHIPFUL MASTER

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It is important for new masons and a great reminder to experienced masons to understand the "powers and functions of the Worshipful Master. While many of you may understand this, some of our newer brethren may find this information valuable. The Worshipful Master is the principal officer of the Lodge, but as some may not have a clear understanding some of the language of Masonry, the term "Worshipful" may sound strange; however, as you progress in the Craft, you will learn that it is singularly accurate. "Worshipful" means that the Master is entitled to the reverence and respect of every member of the Lodge. Master means he is in strict truth, the Master, not, as in so many other societies, just a presiding officer, but a controlling executive with many sovereign rights and prerogatives. A broad description of his powers and duties are as follows:

1. To congregate his Lodge upon any emergency.
2. To summon its members.
3. To see that the duties of the officers are faithfully performed.
4. To discharge all the executive functions of the Lodge.
5. To remove any appointed officer for sufficient cause.

It is only when we begin to examine his office in detail that we discover the full scope of his powers and functions. It is a prerogative of the Worshipful Master to convene his Lodge either for stated meetings, at times provided for in the by-laws, or for special communications, which are called by him for special business. When the Lodge is convened, he is to set it to work and give its members proper instruction for their labors. It is not necessary for him to request or persuade the Lodge members to perform their duties; he may order them, and they are under strict obligation to obey.

It is his prerogative to preside at the meetings of his Lodge. The only exception is when the **Grand Master**, or a representative appointed by him, takes the gavel of authority; during that time, the right of the Master is superseded. The Master may not resign his office or his right to preside, nor may such power be taken from him so long as he holds office, except by the Grand Master.

If one of the officers of the Lodge is absent, or if the office is temporarily vacant, the Master may appoint some other competent Brother to fill the office. If the Master is absent, the Senior Warden takes his place, and if both the Master and Senior Warden are absent the Junior Warden presides. If all three are absent the Lodge cannot be opened except by the Grand Master.

It is the duty of the Master to keep order in his Lodge. At the time of his installation, the gavel is placed in his hands to signify that he is given the power necessary to discharge that duty, for the gavel is an emblem of that authority. The Master has the right to initiate, control, and terminate discussions.

It is the duty of the Master to supervise all ritualistic work. This is one of his greatest responsibilities. He should himself be able to take any part; he should be able to instruct and train others; and he should supervise the work to see that it is properly carried out.

A lodge can neither be convened, opened, or transact business unless its Charter is present. When the Master is installed, the Charter is given into his keeping, and he is responsible for its custody and for transmitting it to his successor. The Master determines what business shall come before the Lodge, in what order, and the way it will be conducted. This is more important than it may appear because only certain kinds of business may legally be brought before the Lodge.

The members may not always be familiar with Masonic law and may not know whether a given matter is Masonic business or not. It is for the Master to decide, and this power is the Lodge's protection against possible violation of Masonic law. Many matters of business or social functions may arise which do not fall into the scope of any elected or appointed Lodge officers' duties; hence committees are necessary to carry on such work. Not the least of his responsibilities is his power to appoint all committees.

Brethren in sickness or distress are the Master's particular charge. If he cannot visit them, it is his duty to appoint others to do so and in general, to see that the Lodge properly discharges its duties to those members who may have met with misfortune.

His authority to see that the duties of the Secretary are punctually and properly discharged includes as perhaps its most important responsibility his seeing that the Lodge minutes are kept in order and up to date, that nothing is included in them that should not be, and nothing omitted that belongs in them. When a Lodge votes to disperse funds, it orders a warrant drawn upon the Treasurer; such warrant must first be signed by the Master, who is thus charged with the duty to supervise the finances, to see that they are in sound condition and that no irregularities creep into the books.

The Master is the representative of his Lodge in Grand Lodge. A Lodge elects its Master, Wardens, Secretary, Treasurer, and Trustees. All other officers are appointed by the Master. To use such powers and prerogatives, to discharge such duties and functions, it is necessary that the Worshipful Master possess the corresponding qualifications. He must be a Mason of experience, well versed in the art, competent to lead and direct, worthy of the respect of his Lodge, in character fit to represent and exemplify the Masonic life, impartial in treatment of his members, keenly perceptive and trustworthy in counsel, and inspired by such zeal and vision that he may be a leader as well as an executive.

The Master is indeed Master of his Lodge, its chief executive, its head, vested with great authority, entrusted with great powers, but there is nothing arbitrary, nothing willful in his use of those powers and authority because they are defined and regulated by laws and ancient customs. His duties are equal to his powers, and he must be a true Mason indeed to discharge them with credit to himself and honor to his Lodge. It is for these reasons that his title is Worshipful, for if anyone is worthy of honor, of deference, or respect, he is a man who, with no thought of reward for himself, is willing to carry the load of such authority and undertake the labor necessitated by such duties.

Reference

Grand Lodge Free & Accepted Masons of Nevada. (2015). *A Lodge System of Masonic Instruction*. Retrieved https://nv.grandview.systems/resource_attachments/19?download=0