

OBLIGATION

By Lillian & Ellis Latimer

We have each been given the great honor of being considered worthy to be instructed in the secrets of the Order of the Eastern Star, or we would not be here tonight. Each of us has knelt at the altar in our own chapter and repeated the words of the obligation for the first time. Hopefully, each of us, at the joyous occasion of initiating a new member, has silently repeated this same obligation as the new members were also saying it for the first time. Hopefully, each of us knows this obligation by heart, or is familiar enough with it to be able to follow along.

But, have we actually thought about what this obligation means by it's separate paragraphs? Have we ever analyzed it ~~in~~ⁱⁿ our own thoughts and put some real lasting meaning to each group of words and what they might mean to us as individuals - and as a chapter?

Let's begin....."In the presence.....witnesses....." While kneeling at our sacred altar, we acknowledge the fact that we ARE in the presence of the Almighty, and that our solemn promises are being witnessed by Him and by all those who are present in the room.

"I solemnly.....of the Order of the Eastern Star;" This promises that all the secrets and lessons that we are privileged to learn about will remain with us in the secret parts of our beings as long as we live, and that they will never be divulged to any person who has not proven themselves to be entitled to this knowledge.

"That I will.....who are not members of the Order;" Means exactly what it says...That you do not divulge any transaction - no matter what it is - of any Chapter when persons who do not share your same secrets and privileges are in your company or within your hearing. Loose talk about our transactions does not gain respect from non-members.

"That I will obey....." Each member must acknowledge that the Constitution and Laws of Grand Chapter have been made for the good of all members within it's jurisdiction - not for the benefit of a few. "And the By-Laws....a member" Each subordinate chapter makes it's own By-Laws framed under the Constitution and Laws of their Grand Chapter. These are made to fit the needs and wants of their own members, and are also framed for the benefit of all concerned.

"That I will give....." This is really the heart and soul of our Order, in other words, it is what Eastern Star is all about. It means that above all, we must be charitable, one towards another - giving advice when asked for, sympathy when sorrow visits one of our sisters or brothers, and aid when the need arises to those who need our help and support. We must remember the Golden Rule - "Whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do you even so to them".

"That I will not speak" This is probably the most mis-used part of our obligation. We need to look deeply into our own souls for the key to this paragraph. Did we speak evil or make hurting remarks about a sister or brother today, this week, this month, last year, or since becoming a member of Eastern Star. How few of us can ever make this statement truthfully. Did we actually commit no act of injustice or unkindness toward them, thoughtlessly or intentionally? Many of the harmful things that are done to our members and to our chapters are acts of thoughtlessness and carelessness on our parts.

"That I will cherish....." There is an old Indian adage that says 'We should not judge our fellow man until we have walked for one mile in his moccasins'. It is most important that we should never judge our fellow members on hearsay and gossip. Truth, honor and justice should always be uppermost in our thoughts when defense of our sisters and brothers is called for.

"That I will consider....." None of us who love Eastern Star and it's teaching ever look forward to the time when our membership in the Order may cease. If, of our own volition, we choose to withdraw our membership from Eastern Star, our obligation remains a vital and binding part of our lives. Once having become a member of Eastern Star and taken the obligation, we can not - for any reason - betray any of it's vows. We might refer to the 6th Landmark for confirmation of this fact. 'That the obligation of our Order, voluntarily assumed, is perpetual, from the force of which there is no release.'

"To this.....from the order". Our promise to this sacred obligation was given by our own volition in choosing to become a member, at the sacred altar which is the center of our chapter - and upon the Holy Bible which is the heart of our chapter. If any one of us would betray our obligation, we would only deserve to be suspended or expelled from the Order.

The next time we hear the Obligation repeated in our chapters, let us each think seriously about what these words, sentences and paragraphs mean to us. Put some heart into their meaning - they are not just words to be done only from memory, they are words that put the life into our Order.