

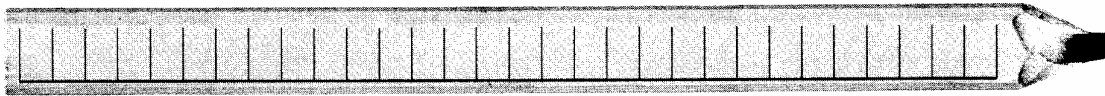
RULE 1 ■ Know Yourself

My Personal "Plumb Line"



Surveying the Site

On the ruler below, mark several of the key events of your life, by date:



Share with your fellow apprentices several of these events and briefly tell how each event changed your life. As you and others share, make a personal note about any insight that comes to you through the sharing.



Checking Your Tool Box

Use your imagination. Imagine that you live in a small, three-bedroom house that your family is beginning to outgrow. It is clear that something must be done to overcome the cramped conditions you and your family are experiencing. Finding an appropriate solution requires that you and the members of your family ask a series of questions. First, "What are our options?" Answer 1: Move into a larger house. Answer 2: Stay where we are and add on or remodel our present house. Answer 3: Do nothing and continue to live with the problem. Choosing one of the first two answers generates a whole new set of questions concerning where to live, what is affordable, what is the best investment, when is the best time to carry out the decision, and how it will impact your social and emotional well-being and that of your family.

Even choosing to ignore the problem raises a set of questions. The difference is that the

questions raised are not by you, but by others concerning your decision to do nothing. How you answer these questions are influenced by the experiences of your

past. Why? Because the experiences you have had in your life shape the way you live today. Your politics, your church involvement, the way you raise your children, the relationship you have with your wife or significant other, and even your vocation are in large measure determined by the influences and experiences that have shaped your life. They have helped to mold and make you into what and who you are today.

Kind of scary, isn't it, to pause and ponder how you got to be this person right here and right now? As you begin this journey to "know yourself" it is vital that you begin with an inventory of your personal history that has led you to live in the bodily house that is you.

- Look again at your personal plumb line. What one national or global event has had the largest impact on your life? Can you identify any effects it has had on the other events you have noted?

Read the Blueprints. The apostle Paul well understood that we need to change with changing experiences. Some in his day thought that Gentiles had to become Jews and be circumcised in order to become Christian. In response, he recited his own personal plumb line, tracing his journey through what he was as a faithful Jew to

what he had become as a faithful Christian. Under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, Paul was able to ask the right kinds of questions about his life. As his story unfolded, one can see that Paul outgrew the Jewish house in which his faith had been pleased to dwell. When he encountered Christ on the road to Damascus, Paul did not change houses; that is, he did not seek to move away from that which had housed his faith. Instead, he remodeled and added on to that which already existed to make room for the increase of knowledge and wisdom that Jesus Christ brought to his already solid foundation of faith. His spiritual house was not destroyed or abandoned, but converted and expanded. He knew his personal history and how it had shaped and molded him. As a result, he could lay claim to the foundation of his past. It provided a home for his new experience of the risen Christ. There, the influence of the Lordship of Jesus Christ could exercise its ability to guide and direct Paul's life.

That is the work of the *Fellowship of Carpenters*. As you travel this road of apprenticeship, you will begin to discover what experiences and influences have helped build you into the man you are today. Such a discovery will lead you to claim that understanding as the foundation upon which to remodel your life. The end result is a man of purpose, a man of principle, a man of God, a man of vision, a man at peace, and a man experiencing the true joy and fulfillment God intended for life.

■ As you begin your apprenticeship it may be important to think about why you are doing this. What do you believe to be the rewards or motivational factors for being "a man of purpose, a man of principle, a man of God," and so forth, as stated above?

Blueprints

If anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.

Philippians 3:4b-6



Conversation with the Master Carpenter

Close your session with prayer. Thank God for the life of each man in the group and for bringing you together in this way.



On-the-Job Experience

1. Find some quiet time between now and the next session to develop your plumb line even further. Draw a symbol such as a smiley face above those events that brought you joy and a sad face above those that brought you suffering or pain. Review the insights you gained in your sharing time. As you feel so led, thank God for each experience. It is part of you now, good or bad, so claim it. Claim it and begin to move beyond its claim and hold on you.
2. Celebrate who you are by simply celebrating the life of another with a card or a call or a visit that thanks that person for being who God has made him or her.