



Sussex Freemasons - West Group

'The West Wing'
(Bognor, Chichester, Clapham, Littlehampton,
Midhurst, Pulborough, Steyning and Worthing)

'The West Wing' Learning and Development Team.

'The West Wing'



Masons Notebook

February, '26

Issue 18



Sussex Freemasons - West Group

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'The West Wing' Learning and Development Team.

Introduction.

An opportunity to make your own collection of 'Masonic Gems' that will enhance your knowledge of the ritual and its meaning.

Every month you will receive some 'Masonic Gems' that will build into an amazing notebook that will last a lifetime.

The 'Gems' are sourced from a variety of authors that will give you, the learner, a balanced outlook on Masonic ritual and symbolism.

Start your collection and your journey today.

The 'West Wing' Learning and Development Team.



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2026

A YEAR OF MASONIC EDUCATION



A picture paints a thousand words. When this picture came up on my Facebook feed recently it provoked many feelings about Freemasonry. Please don't get me wrong, there is nothing better than going to a Lodge meeting, enjoying a good, well-rehearsed and performed ceremony and afterwards enjoying the company of like minded men socialising at a festive board. It is like a social night out at the theatre. If this is all you require from Freemasonry then that is OK, but Freemasonry does offer more, much more.

For those men who enjoy social history, Freemasonry can take you from the Great Fire of

London through the period of 'Enlightenment and Scientific Revolution' introducing the student to Plato, Issac Newton, Christopher Wren, Benjamin Franklin and Voltaire.

For the philosopher the text can spark your imagination looking into theories such as the 'meaning of life' by looking at the platonic solids, sacred geometry and astrology.

For the pragmatist Freemasonry takes you on a journey of personal growth, citizenship and business management.

I urge you that when you read the ritual, read it to understand not just to recite. You will be amazed at where it will take you.

For more information visit the L&D Page on the West Group Website (www.wgsm.co.uk) If you require the password for the members area please either message or email me, Steve Goulding on stevegoulding@sussexmasons.org.uk



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'The West Wing' Learning and Development Team.

The West Wing' Lodge of Instruction.

Taking a 'Vow of Fidelity'.

Lesson / Tutorial Aim & Objectives

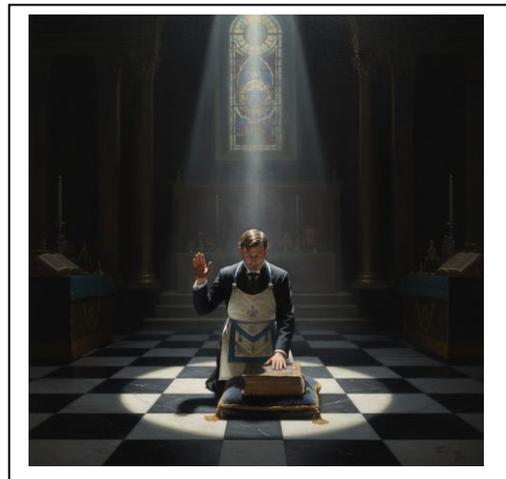
Understand the meaning of "taking a vow of fidelity".

By the end of this lesson/tutorial you will be able to:

- Define 'Fidelity'.
- Differentiate between a promise, an oath, a covenant and a vow.
- Understand the reason for kneeling and placing the hand on the Volume of the Sacred Law.

Standing in a state of darkness at the Worshipful Master's Pedestal the candidate is informed that "vows of fidelity are required" The Worshipful Master then goes onto say, "but let me assure you that that in those vows there is nothing incompatible with your civil, moral, or religious duties". So what is a 'vow of fidelity'?

Vows or promises take several forms but first shall we just look at what the word "fidelity" means.





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A definition by the Cambridge Dictionary, **Fidelity** - "The state of remaining loyal to someone and keeping promises you made to that person" "Loyalty to a person or organisation"

From these definitions of "fidelity" we get an indication of the type of people that Freemasonry attract and what is expected of them from the institution itself. Loyalty to friends and brothers and a person who keeps their promises. Someone who prizes honour above all else.

During my life I have made several promises to organisations, to the establishment and to God.

As a Scout I promised that "I will do my best to do my duty to God and to the Queen, to help other people and to obey the Scout Law.

As a police officer I took an oath to "truly serve the Queen in the office of constable, with fairness, integrity, diligence and impartiality, upholding fundamental human rights and equal respect to all people; and that I will, to the best of my power, cause the peace to be kept and preserved and prevent all offences against people and property; and that while I continue to hold the said office I will to the best of my skill and knowledge discharge all the duties thereof faithfully according to the law."

Giving evidence at court I swore "that the evidence I shall give shall be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help me God."

At my marriage I made a promise to my bride and to God that "I take thee to be my lawfully wedded wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death us do part, according to God's holy ordinance; and thereto I plight thee my troth."



In Freemasonry I made vows to keep the secrets of each of the degrees in craft masonry and that of the other orders that I joined.

All lasting promises of significance.

So what is a 'vow' and what is its relevance as opposed to a promise, a covenant, or an oath.



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James Hough, a Catholic who teaches catechism writing for Quora, explains the difference between a vow and a covenant:

A vow "is a one sided arrangement from a man to God." A covenant is a "two sided arrangement usually between God and man"

A person making a vow commits a serious sin for which they are punishable if that vow is broken. The obligation in the first degree ceremony goes quite vividly into the punishment for breaking such a vow quoting 17th Century law. But more importantly God's punishment by showing a lack of integrity, that of being branded a person of little or no moral worth.

A covenant is usually written and in the case of Moses and the Jewish people's arrangement with God, it is written in stone. **The Ten Commandments.**

When asked the question - what is the difference between a promise, an oath and a vow Len Freedman, also writing in Quora said:

A promise is something you promise someone else."

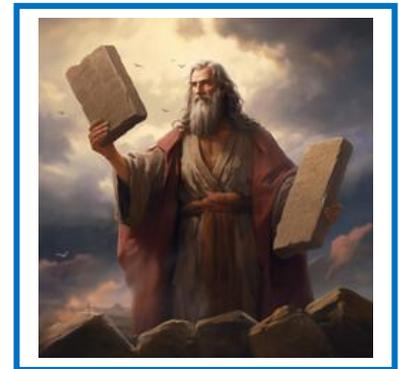
For example "I promise that I will do my best, to do my duty to God and the Queen." The first line of the Scouts Promise that a Scout makes to their Troop. To an honourable Scout the breaking of that promise is a serious matter but there is no punishment attached to it except that which the Scout imposes on themselves. A feeling of guilt.

"An oath is a promise you make invoking God."

For example "I promise to tell the truth, so help me God," in a court of law before giving evidence. Calling on God, to a person of faith the highest authority, to witness the promise on the assumption that if that action was false a punishment far worse than anything physical that man can bring about will happen. That of being branded "a wilfully perjured individual".

"A vow is a promise you make to God."

"I promise to love, honour and cherish" a marriage vow made in church before God and the congregation. You are not only promising your spouse you are also promising God. Again to a person of faith making a promise to the highest





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authority on the assumption that if that promise is broken a punishment far worse than anything man can bring about will happen. A stain on their honour.

The Holy Quran verse 2:225 states

"When you clearly state something and swear by Allah, and in your heart you mean this oath to be solemn, then breaking it will be sinful unless you make atonement for it"

The Holy Bible: Numbers 30:2

"When a man voweth a vow unto the Lord, or sweareth an oath to bind his soul with a bond, he shall not break his word; he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth."

A vow is a serious personal promise whilst an oath relates to a sacred and solemn obligation.

The difference between a vow and an oath according to Jewish religious law is that a vow changes the status of some external thing, a verbalisation of a promise to do something which to that person is serious, whilst an oath initiates internal change, a change in mindset, of attitude, according to a religious doctrine.

If a vow is taken that is sinful it would be breaking God's law. So no one should make a vow or swear an oath frivolously or indiscriminately.

After taking a Masonic obligation the candidate is asked to seal that obligation on the **Volume of the Sacred Law (VSL)** as a seal of fidelity and establishing it as more than a serious promise. In other words turning what is a promise to those assembled in a Freemasons Lodge into a binding vow before God with a punishment which goes far beyond that of which man can give, a spurn on one's honour.

At the end of the day it doesn't matter what label you put on an action that you promise you would or would not do, it is what is in your heart and what is in your mind when that obligation is made. Your 'belief' as an honourable, God fearing person. Your faith, for **Jesus** said:



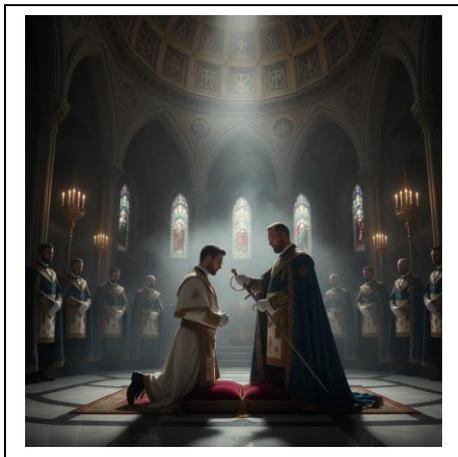
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"I say to you, 'Do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King" (Matthew 5: 34-35).

For **God** is "**omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent**" and will know as you know if any such promise is broken. "Let 'yes' mean 'yes' and let 'no' mean 'no'."
(Matthew 5: 37).

Vows and oaths should be reserved for occasions of great importance and lasting significance

In our Lodges we are asked to put our right hand on the VSL, as we do in a court of law before giving evidence, and to kneel when we take our obligation, our promise before God and in the presence of the membership to keep the secrets of Freemasonry. The hand on the VSL is an indication of your faith and the seriousness with which the obligation that you are about to take means as a person of 'faith'. So what is the significance of kneeling?



Kneeling is a behaviour used by primates to convey deference - submission or passivity - in order to look smaller and to establish a hierarchy within a social structure. Kneeling at the feet of another was common practice in ancient times as a mark of submission, honour and respect. There is a connection between kneeling and worship as in some cultures kings were often regarded as deities.

In the royal courts of Europe it is a sign of **submission, humility and respect**. The most common being when knighted the person being dubbed with that honour is showing respect and humility to the monarch, and therefore to the country, the monarch being the country's most senior representative, who in the UK is also the 'defender of the faith'.



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In Judaism, Islam and Christianity it is the sign of humble submission to God, a higher authority, when in prayer. Psalm 95.6: "Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker." The Hebrew word for worship literally means to 'bow down' something that would be done from the kneeling position.

In Freemasonry candidates kneel before the WM and the VSL because they are on Holy ground which has been so blessed. They are, therefore, kneeling before the most senior representative of the Lodge and before God as a sign of **submission, humility and respect.**

An oath, a vow, a covenant, a promise whenever made and for whatever purpose means nothing if the person making it has no integrity, no honour, no respect and if made in the name of God, no faith. For such words and actions must be truthful and come from the heart of the person making it.

W. Bro. Stephen J. Goulding ProvSGD. SLGCR

'The West Wing' Learning and Development Lead.

Article published in *The Square Magazine* 12/21

Video Link

<https://www.thesquaremagazine.com/mag/article/202112vows-of-fidelity/#>



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Taking a Vow - Key Questions & Answers

How does the Cambridge Dictionary define 'fidelity'?

Fidelity is defined as the state of remaining loyal to someone and keeping promises made to that person or organization.

What is the primary difference between a 'vow' and a 'covenant' according to James Hough?

A vow is a one-sided arrangement from a person to God, whereas a covenant is a two-sided arrangement, usually between God and man.

According to Len Freedman, how does an oath differ from a promise and a vow?

A promise is made to another person with no punishment for breaking it other than guilt; an oath is a promise that invokes God as a witness; and a vow is a promise made directly to God.

What does Jewish religious law say regarding the difference between a vow and an oath?

A vow changes the status of an external thing or is a verbalization of a promise to do something, while an oath initiates an internal change in mindset or attitude according to religious doctrine.

What is the historical and biological significance of kneeling?

Biologically, kneeling is a behaviour used by primates to convey deference, submission, or passivity. Historically, it was a mark of submission, honour, and respect in ancient times and royal court

Why do candidates in Freemasonry kneel during their obligation?

They kneel because they are on ground that has been blessed as holy, showing submission, humility, and respect before the Worshipful Master and God.

What is the final conclusion regarding the validity of any oath, vow, or promise?

The text concludes that these actions mean nothing if the person lacks integrity, honour, respect, and faith, as the words must come from the heart to be meaningful.



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How does the text relate the 'Vow of Fidelity' to 17th Century law?

The obligation in the first-degree ceremony uses 17th Century law to vividly describe the punishment for breaking such a vow.

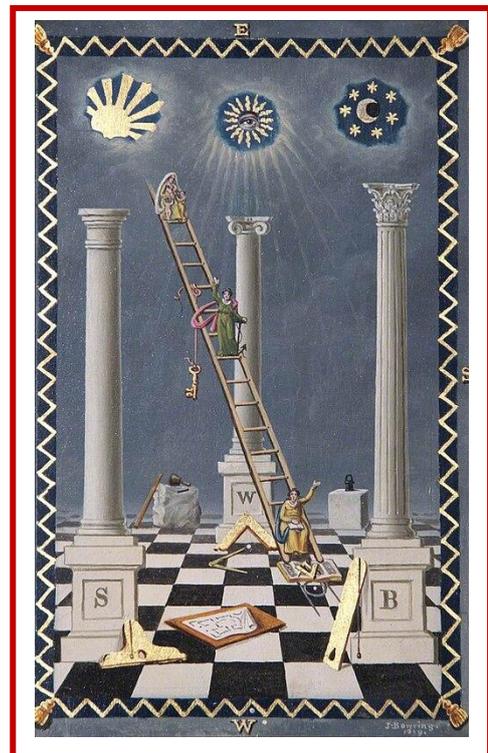
What biblical advice from Matthew 5 is cited regarding oaths?

Jesus advises not to take oaths by heaven, earth, or Jerusalem, but to let one's 'yes' mean 'yes' and 'no' mean 'no'.

Royal Arch Corner

One Journey One Organisation

On the right is the Bowring First Degree Tracing Board. Examine it and identify how many points on the Tracing Board relate to the Royal Arch.



Answers.

1. The Chequered Pavement is common to both.
2. Two parallel lines refer to the mentors Moses and Solomon.
Moses Royal Arch.
Solomon Craft.
3. VSL, Square and Compasses unites Craft and the Royal Arch, the completion of the Third Degree.
4. Jacob's Ladder. Although the ladder itself is not common to both, Jacob changed his name to 'Israel' and 12 of his offspring headed the 12 Tribes a factor in the Royal Arch.
5. The All Seeing Eye relates to enlightenment and the 'essence' of Freemasonry which is the Royal Arch.
6. The seven stars relate to Seven Masons that make a perfect Lodge they are also acknowledging 'astronomy' which has a huge role in the Royal Arch.



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Learning and Development

Workshops and Seminars

2026

Brethren, the purpose of Freemasonry is **"to Instruct"**. (William Preston)

"Instruct Who?" - "Instruct good men how to be Freemasons."

- **Standards and Performance Workshop** for ALL Lodge officers.
Charmandean Centre, Worthing. 7th February, 2026.
- **Mentors Workshop.**
Pulborough, 2nd May, 2026.
- **Royal Arch Seminar** for RA Reps. Mentors and all those brethren interested in joining the Royal Arch.
Charmandean. 28th March, 2026.
- **Chichester Chapter of Improvement .**
For ALL RA Masons.
Chichester. Next meeting 21st February, 2026.

To Enrol on any of the above please contact:

W. Bro. Stephen J. Goulding. ProvSGD, SLGCR.

Email: stevegoulding@sussexmasons.org.uk



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Cornerstone (Miscellaneous bits)

Learning Programs:

'The West Wing' Learning and Development Program.
 Freemasonry is a Lifestyle Choice. Learn more through your Lodge Mentor, the West Group web page or the L & D Team.

Solomon <https://solomon.ugle.org.uk/>

Mentors Notes: <https://www.thesquaremagazine.com/mentorsnotes/>

West Group Web Page: <https://www.wgsm.org.uk>

ONLINE LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT



Start your journey
<https://solomon.ugle.org.uk>

mentor's notes




self paced guided learning

the SQUARE ACADEMY



The West Group
 Web Page
www.wgsm.org.uk



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Learning and Development Web Page.

ALL West Group Masons and particularly Lodge and Personal Mentors please note - Contents of the Learning and Development (L&D) section of the West Group Web Page. (www.wgsm.co.uk). EXPLORE!!

Contents.

Solomon and Mentors Notes Courses on:-

The Entered Apprentice Program.

The Fellowcraft Program.

The Master Mason Program.

The Royal Arch Program.

The West Wing Learning and Development (Video) program.

Royal Arch Representatives Program.

'The West Wing' Masons Notebooks.

Lodge and Personal Mentors Program.

The West Wing Lodge of Instruction Program.

The West Wing Chapter of Improvement Program.

"Ask and will be given. Seek and ye shall find. Knock and the door shall be opened unto you," Mathew 7:7

You have knocked on the door of Freemasonry, open it and see the wonders it possesses.

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Facebook.

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<https://www.facebook.com/share/Tx388jyGJiYKfd4q/?mibextid=K35XfP>

West Sussex Light Blues Club



<https://www.westsussexlbc.org/>

Are you a new Mason in the West Group of Sussex? Click on the QR Code and enjoy your journey into an exciting aspect of Freemasonry.

Membership Benefits

- Monthly Social Events Across The Province
- Curated masonic events, just for club members
- Learn more about the craft in a relaxed setting
- Access to a private Facebook page & WhatsApp group
- Socialise with & meet likeminded Freemasons in your area
- Future planned benefits including a masonic passport, lapel pins, a role within the club and more...



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The Royal Arch Chapter of Improvement in Chichester.

A different approach to teaching the mysteries of the Royal Arch has been adopted in the Chichester Chapter of Improvement. It combines education of both the philosophical meaning and the personal development application of the ritual alongside traditional teaching methods of the Royal Arch ceremonies.

"Tell me I will forget. Show me I will remember.

Involve me I will understand".

Part 1 Royal Arch Course

Saturday, 21st February, 2026 10am – 12 noon

**Chichester Masonic Hall, 7 South Pallant, Chichester,
PO19 1SY**

Prospectus

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| 1. Opening and Closing the Chapter | Saturday, 17 th January, 2026 |
| 2. <u>The Platonic Solids</u> | <u>Saturday, 21st February, 2026</u> |
| 3. The Sojourners Journey | Saturday, 21 st March, 2026 |
| 4. The Vaulted Chamber | Saturday, 25 th April, 2026 |

To Enrol or if you would like a prospectus please contact the Chichester Chapter of Improvement Secretary Ex. Comp. Stephen J. Goulding, SLGCR:

.Email: stevegoulding@sussexmasons.org.uk



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Sussex Royal Arch Masonry launches new BLOG

<https://www.sussexroyalarch.co.uk>



The **BLOG** is a standalone communication platform which operates separately but in conjunction with the Sussex Royal Arch Website. The **BLOG** is **updated daily** and is easily accessible, simply visit <https://www.sussexroyalarch.co.uk>

A One Journey – One Organisation BLOG



Conveying information about

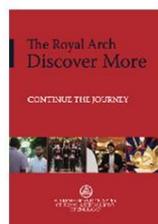
Royal Arch Masonry and how to join.

Future *Exaltation and Installation Ceremonies* taking place local to you.

Royal Arch Events taking place in Sussex Chapters and beyond.

Royal Arch Articles and *Announcement's*.

Membership and Mentoring.



Archway Support

UGLE- Solomon Royal Arch Virtual Learning Platform Guidance



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Actions Not Words.

The 'First 50 Club' awards took place in Chichester attended by our APGM Guy Purser, Community Engagement Lead Phill Sanders and competition winner Phil Pede. For the last few months, the West Group have been participating in a competition to turn £50 into as much money as possible to support the charity 'My University Hospitals Sussex'. In total the competition raised over £16,000 with a superb £1,898 being raised by the West Group.



Ferring Contemporary Lodge has proudly presented a £1,000 donation to Findon Swimming Club to help support the ongoing running costs of the school swimming pool in Findon, ensuring this important local

facility can continue to benefit children and families in the village.

The cheque was presented by Worshipful Master Dafydd Hughes during his year in office. The presentation was attended by members of the Findon Swimming Club committee, Assistant Provincial Grand Master Guy Purser, and several members of Ferring Contemporary Lodge, highlighting the strong partnership between the Lodge and the local community.



'The West Wing' Learning and Development Team.

To all the wonderful competitive Freemasons in this group I am offering a friendly challenge! Some of you may be aware of the traditional Shoreham Raft Race (formerly The Adur Bathhtub Race). It's held every year and it's great fun.



Last year St Andrews Lodge Steyning competed and did very well, however as one of the organisers is a fellow mason and we would like lodges in Sussex to put forward a team so we can compete amongst ourselves in a mini Masonic competition!! We want to achieve 4 objectives!

- 1: Create our own inter Lodge competition!
- 2: Raise awareness to Freemasonry and the great things we do outside of the temple
- 3: Raise a stack of cash for local charities!
- 4: Attract new blood!

Sam is looking for up to 6 lodge teams to enter - the date is August 15th. Last year a few thousand

people watched from Coronation Green and the footbridge. Please DM me (Sam Weber) or call me directly 07907 729291

The Football Lodge of Sussex (No.9982) has a special guest speaker at our The Festive Board for our Thursday February 12th 2026 (6pm) meeting.

🗣️:Bro. Sam Weber talks about rowing 3000km across The Atlantic! Listen to his story of courage, hardship, battle against nature, and final victory.

📄To register for dining (£29), please scan the QR code, click the link below, or text Bro. Stuart Allen: 07943 374224.

🔗 <https://www.bit.ly/4jUJLBN>

We'd love to see you there (and there'll be an initiation, too!)
 This will be a meeting and Festive Board not to be missed!

The Football Lodge of Sussex (No.9982) will have a special guest speaker at The Festive Board at our Thurs Feb 12th 2026 (6pm) meeting.

Bro. Sam Weber talks about rowing 3000km across The Atlantic! Listen to his story of courage, hardship, battle against nature, and final victory.

To register for dining (£29), please scan the QR code or text Bro. Stuart Allen: 07943 374224



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Watch this Space.

Any Brother wishing development in any area of Craft or Royal Arch Masonry that we have not covered please let us know. We will try to put a learning plan together for you.

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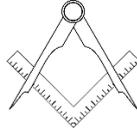
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If you are not willing to
learn no one can help
you.

If you are determined
to learn, no one can stop
you.

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Notes.