

My Thoughts on Freemasonry  
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Freemasonry is a system of moral instruction anciently taught by types, symbols and allegorical figures. I think that this statement is much more profound than it at first seems. It is my interpretation that this statement infers that our journey into Freemasonry is to be a lifelong search for truth and knowledge and that it will not be a simple or easy one. The study of Freemasonry's principles and tenets will, however, pay off with self-satisfaction and peace of mind. If this were not so we would not have had so many great men, throughout history, dedicated to our fraternity nor would it have survived as long as it has.

I would like to preface this article by saying that I truly enjoy the social aspects of the Masonic Fraternity. Through Masonry I have surrounded myself with the highest caliber people I have ever known. My association with these good people makes me strive to be a better person, assists me in my struggle for high moral standards in my everyday life. By involving my wife in the social events and involving her with Masons she has come to realize the type of people I am involved with, she doesn't begrudge the time I give to Masonry. With this being said I now wish to try to express my feelings about the part of Masonry that has changed my life and to which I am so dedicated. This aspect of Masonry is something that is very personal and can only be described by each individual because everyone's journey into Freemasonry is different. For this reason I can only speak for myself, however, I can only hope that each person who reads this will gain something of interest, or understanding from it.

I don't know why a person makes the decision to join this fraternity; I can't even really say what made me decide to join. Since joining I know that I have discovered something that I have looked for all my life. To me Blue Lodge or Craft Masonry is a philosophy, it's a way of life, and it has meaning to me that I absolutely can't find words to explain. As I continue to read and study Masonic literature I am constantly amazed at what I discover. Each discovery leads me to investigate further and reminds me that the search is without end.

Masonry has many Appendant Bodies and each one has a purpose and its own merits and benefits. Every Blue Lodge that I have ever been associated with has exerted great effort to be charitable to both fraternal and community concerns. I am convinced that this can be said of all Masonic Lodges throughout the world. Admiring greatly both the charitable and social aspects of our Fraternity I do not believe either to be the primary purpose of Blue Lodge or Craft Masonry.

Blue Lodge Masonry's primary purpose is simply to take good men and make them better men. This is the purpose of our Ritual Work through the three Degrees. The philosophical aspect or meaning of Freemasonry is for each of us to discover and interpret on our own and is different for each of us. It is my contention that although it is our duty to counsel and advise an erring Brother, in the end we only have the power to be the best Mason that we can be. We can encourage a Brother on his journey, but in the end it is up to him to determine his course, and to determine what Masonry means to him. It is not for us to measure another Brother, as we do not have access to his rule or gage. There are basics to how we perform our Ritual Work and how we conduct ourselves as Masons that we can all agree on, and if adhered to will help to improve each of us. I truly believe these standards will also help us to attract and keep members and improve our Lodge meetings, functions, and relations with each other.

Let's start with the candidate for the Entered Apprentice Degree. From the very start we ask him to accept us pretty much on blind faith. We give him only the most general of information about our Fraternity and tell him that he'll learn more about us in increments as he continues through the Degrees. We ask of him several months of work before he can enjoy our meetings and fellowship on a regular basis. When he comes to the Lodge for his initiation he is told, among other things that he is to wear only the clothing that we furnish. At the same time he realizes that we are going to bring him into a room full of men he doesn't know, and he doesn't know nor can he see what is about to occur. This is asking that he put complete trust in us, when it is only natural to fear the unknown. And then each following Degree is a repeat as far as this aspect of the ceremony is concerned.

From our point of view this trust in us is necessary and indispensable as once he is raised we may have to place in him our trust with our life, liberty, or fortune. However, the candidate will not realize the 'why' for quite some time.

These are some of the reasons it is absolutely essential that we each strive for perfection in our parts when conferring a Degree. And to attend the Degrees as a sidliner if not having a part in them. Most of us realize that we will hardly ever perform the ritual work error free. There are always distractions, or other valid reasons for making mistakes that are beyond our control. Although mistakes are almost inevitable if we strive to perform perfectly we will make fewer mistakes and will impress the candidates with our dedication and knowledge. We should also remember that when we learn and practice that our delivery is as important as our knowledge of the words. We need to deliver each part with emphasis and feeling, along with being well versed in our floor work. Another essential is for the Catechism coach to try to instill a desire in his charges to strive for perfection in their work.

This will get the new Brother started with the right attitude towards his work. Further it is necessary to be a mentor for Masonic education and etiquette. This is all necessary to

impress upon the candidate a knowledge of what and who he is getting involved with, and to create a desire on his part to become active and involved when he becomes a Master Mason.

I think that after a man becomes a Master Mason is where most Lodges fail at educating the newly raised brother. All Lodges should endeavor to enhance and increase their Masonic education program for all Master Masons and to spark their desire to search for further light on there own. Knowledgeable Brothers should offer their assistance wherever needed, and Masters should make a special effort to put new and active Master Masons to work around the Lodge. At the same time the Master has to avoid the tendency to overwork a new Brother, get to know them and assign or make up jobs that will stimulate their interest in Masonry and give them a sense of “being needed”. Later as their confidence and self-satisfaction increases they will volunteer for projects and ask for more responsibility.

Once we have a new member in Lodge it is the responsibility of every Mason to make him feel welcome, and to show him brotherhood and fellowship. It is our responsibility to teach, the new Brother that being a Mason is a privilege and holds a responsibility to truly be a Brother to each other. We each need to work at showing that we can disagree on the business on policies of a Lodge but remain Brothers and show each other the Brotherly Love and affection that we each owe to one another.

We all sometimes fall short of this ideal; but if we each rededicate ourselves to Masonry; remember what attracted us to it; endeavor to improve ourselves both spiritually and intellectually; and simply strive to be the best Mason that we can be, we can not help but attract new members and keep the ones already present active and interested. This will enable Freemasonry to grow and strengthen.

We must remember that when we are on an investigation committee that we put forth a stringent effort to make sure that we only recommend “good men” as the membership will usually follow the committee’s recommendation. We must remember that our primary purpose is to take good men and make them better men. We do not want to want to get to the point where we simply take men and make them good men. We must keep our raw material of high quality if we are to continue to be an example of Morality to the world, as we have been for so long. Although we all desire to see our membership increase, we should also remember that quality over quantity is required for our continued long term survival. In my opinion it boils down to this if we “live our Masonry” both in the Lodge and outside it, we can not help but attract quality people and then keep them for the betterment of our Fraternity and our world.

As I study Masonic History I am more and more convinced that we are facing the same problems as has been experienced in the past. If we continue to hold to our strong ideals

and strong moral principles that we will once again overcome our problems and remain a strong influence over the world we live in. I believe that society swings as a pendulum does and that at sometime in the future it will swing back to a point where there is a strong desire for what Freemasonry has to offer. It is the personal responsibility of each of us to hold to and practice what we believe in so as to be always ready when the pendulum swings in our direction. Although some change is inevitable as society evolves we must guard that we never change our basic principles and beliefs. We must always remain true to the principles of Brotherly Love, Relief, and Truth and remain the worlds Moral leader as we have since the time of antiquity.

If all Masons act and live according to the Principles and Tenets of Freemasonry we can not help but attract new members and keep them interested and active. We must all remember the people that caused us to petition the Lodge and what we have learned and continue to learn as we journey through Freemasonry. I can find nothing wrong with Freemasonry, we have always been a bastion of morality and this will continue as long as we live what Freemasonry teaches us. Freemasonry is the worlds most pure and sincerest form of moral instruction, fraternal affection and free thought. A sister jurisdiction's ritual states: *Masonry is not only the most ancient, but the most moral human institution that has ever existed, as every character, figure, and emblem has a moral tendency and serves to inculcate the practice of virtue in all its genuine professors.*

Let's each endeavor to look into ourselves and find something that needs improvement and work to improve it. And then when we are successful start the process over again. I will volunteer to start the process, I hope that everyone that reads this will volunteer to join me.

Brethren, I have said nothing new, what I have said has been said before, my intent is not to say anything new about Freemasonry, my hope is to create or respark a desire to search for Masonic knowledge. Freemasonry has given so much to me that I feel I have to make an effort to give something back. I can never give back in equal measure what Masonry has given me. However, if along my journey I can help direct a Brother or two on theirs I will feel as if I have made a small contribution to Freemasonry. This is my purpose in Masonry, may each of you find yours.