

WHY I AM A MASON

People have asked me from time to time, what I get from being a Mason. What is it that I learned, or discovered in Lodge, that makes it so interesting or valuable to me? Why do I keep going back to Lodge, paying Dues, or serving as an officer?

Much to my surprise I was, and continue to be, reminded of several principles and virtues that I had already inculcated as my own long before I became a Mason. Most, if not all, Masons it has been my pleasure to meet also accept these Principles and Virtues as valid and true in their lives. What are these Virtues? What are these Principles? Let me cover them, one at a time.

Brotherly Love: This Virtue admonishes us to regard the entire human race as family. We were, after all, created by the same Creator, and the tie that binds us is stronger than we sometimes think. In all that we do, we should consider our family. What is best for them, and for ourselves?

Relief: Whenever we encounter a fellow creature in need, particularly at times when we are in abundance (but even when we are not), we should never fail to do what we are able to relieve their distress. The simple act of a warm handshake can often uplift a downhearted friend and Brother.

Truth: This should always have the highest priority, above personal agendas and disagreements. We must be always ready, not only to seek, find and speak the Truth, but we must be prepared to hear it as well. This is not always easy. In fact, hearing an unwelcome Truth is usually difficult. Still, hear it we must, and accept it as well.

Faith: When we believe in something bigger than ourselves, something greater than we can aspire to becoming, we are humbled. Humility inspires us to do our best. Not because we can equal the Creator, but to imitate Him and make something of Beauty ourselves. Beauty gives both pleasure and brings the following Virtue.

Hope: A better world awaits us. Even in this life, we may look forward to an improved existence. Educating our Children will insure that they will be able to make good decisions when it is their time to do so. Here I speak not of empty Hope, but a Hope based on the secure knowledge that we have all done our best to make the world of tomorrow better than it is today.

Charity: Beyond Relief, we should always work hard to improve the condition of those around us. Where Relief leaves off, Charity begins. Going beyond soothing an affliction or satisfying a need, Charity is the act or acts designed to prevent those needs from ever existing again. Preventing distress, not for the recognition, thanks or acclaim, but because it improves some part of the world, is the highest form of Charity.

Tolerance: By this principle of life and conduct we are reminded that it is seldom necessary to prove someone else wrong for us to be right. We do not have to cause another to fail in order to succeed. In the 80s, there was a term called win-win. Both sides of almost every conflict can find a "middle ground" in which satisfaction may be a shared commodity, if both sides are willing to allow the other to win also.

Temperance: Doing almost anything to excess is harmful. Charity, given to excess, can leave one impoverished. Love, given to excess, may be smothering. The effects of drugs and alcohol, when used to excess, are well known. However, consider the effect of too much Truth. Truth without tact (the knowledge of when NOT to say things) can hurt feelings and even destroy friendships.

Fortitude: Without Fortitude, no one can succeed. Everything gets difficult sometimes; there is always the temptation to give in or give up. When we show Fortitude, we learn to "stick it out" and overcome obstacles to accomplish goals.

Prudence: The mark of a Polite person is knowing when to speak and when not to. What to say and what not to. "To everything, there is a season." This is not only a quotation from Scripture, and a popular song of a previous decade, but good advice as well.

Justice: Everyone deserves to have his fair due, whatever that may be. Like Truth, we must be prepared not only to dispense Justice, but to have it dispensed to us. We must be able to put aside our own wants and needs sometimes, in order to insure that Justice is served.

All these Principles and Virtues are bigger than ourselves, greater than our personal desires. Observing and practicing them, we are making this a better world, not only for ourselves, but for all who inhabit it. This is what I get from Masonry. This is why I read, research, discuss Masonry and why I continue to attend and visit with my Brothers in Lodge: to be reminded of these principles, and learn more about them.

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