

What Can One Say About Freemasonry? (Adapted from an article in the Indiana Freemason)

Without a word of warning the question may come: "I understand you're a Freemason. What is Masonry, anyway?"

It may be a close friend. Or a casual acquaintance. Or a wife, mother, sister, or daughter. The motive of the question may be idle curiosity and no more. Or it may reflect an honest and sincere desire for information about the Craft, based on a favorable opinion of it.

Faced with a quick decision the most likely reactions are, first, to stammer and hesitate; then to say too little, or too much, or to "clam up" and change the subject.

Let's consider what a Mason can say in such a situation, in good taste and without violating any personal commitment to his Lodge.

What is Freemasonry? Scholars have suggested many definitions, many not altogether accurate. Just say that Freemasonry is a brotherhood whose great aim is to try to make good men better men; that this is done through symbolic instruction, applying the principles of operative Masonry and architecture to the science and art of character building.

In explaining Freemasonry, be sure to say what it is not. Stress the fact that its primary purpose is not to dispense charity; that it provides no insurance, sick benefits, no death benefits as such. It isn't a board of trade to aid its members commercially. It maintains no lobbies to exert political or religious pressures or to seek favorable legislation or court decisions. It isn't undignified or immature; it tolerates no "horseplay."

Then, what can one say when asked, "What's it like in a Masonic Lodge? What do you do?"

- ✍ First on the list is to make it clear that Freemasonry asks no man to join its ranks. Someone interested in joining must ask to join, or initiate the petition-seeking process.
- ✍ Also, that membership in a Masonic Lodge in Ohio is limited to adult males, without regard to national origin, race, color, or creed, who are of good character and reputation.
- ✍ Then it can be said that Masonic Lodge take great pains to avoid subjects and actions that are controversial, remembering that their grand aim is to unite men, not divide them. For this reason Lodges permit no discussion of partisan politics or sectarian religions.
- ✍ That every Lodge has an altar occupying a central position in the room in which the Brethren meet. It is not an altar on which sacrifices are offered; on it

no means or spiritual strength are provided, nor is salvation assured by it. Rather, it is a place on which rests the Volume of the Sacred Law, which in countries largely Judeo-Christian in composition, will be the Holy Bible.

- ✂ That Freemasonry teaches monotheism; reverence for the Deity is ever present in its ceremonies, and the Brethren are constantly presented lessons of morality.
- ✂ That every meeting of a Masonic Lodge begins and concludes with prayer.
- ✂ That a good Mason is invariably a better member of his church, or synagogue, or mosque; and a regular attendant at divine worship makes a better Mason.
- ✂ That a Freemason is admonished invariably to be loyal to the country in which he resides, true to its government, and obedient to its laws. In the United States, the American flag is given a position of honor in the Lodge room.
- ✂ That Masonic teachings consist of lessons illustrated graphically by the tools of the builder and by legends of the builders' trade, many of which are adapted from the Bible's Old Testament.
- ✂ That there is a certain mystery about its degrees, ceremonies and teachings, though nothing of a light or frivolous nature, and the experience of every Mason in being admitted to the Craft is something priceless that he may share with other Freemasons to the end of his days.
- ✂ That what a man is socially, politically, economically, commercially, or in other walks of life does not count in Masonry. Each man is regarded on the standard of his worth as a man. Hence, the organization provides the opportunity to know men of all ranks and opinions.
- ✂ That the entire structure of Freemasonry is built upon the "Lodge." A Lodge, the basic unit of the fraternity, is a place where Freemasons gather for business, for ceremonies, and for fellowship. -- That such titles as "Worshipful" Master and "Grand" Master refer to the antiquity of a Craft that comes to us from medieval times when "worshipful" meant honorable and highly respected, and when "grand" meant higher in rank, such as a grandfather.
- ✂ That Masonry offers a member the opportunity to visit Lodges in other parts of his own country and in other countries.
- ✂ That Masonic charity is a by-product and not the sole reason for the existence of the Craft -- in other words, the fruit of its teachings.
- ✂ That membership in a Masonic Lodge brings as many duties and responsibilities as it does pleasures and rewards; hence, a Freemason must be prepared to accept those responsibilities.