



The Overy Papers

Number 45 - Making good men Better

Fraternal Greetings Brethren,

Making Good Men Better is the essence of Freemasonry, but having said that, what does it really mean?

I cannot remember anyone telling me how we do this, even though I feel it is not only a good idea but a goal for each of us. We should teach the up and coming new members a goal to aim for.

But first we must explain to him how we are to do this. This is where education comes in and he must be taught this very important lesson in his development during his move to the position of a Master Mason.

It is this instruction that sets us apart from the usual group of Men's clubs and groups and makes us a true fraternity.

These four words of "Making Good Men Better" are our aim and should be carried out as a goal under the usual bond of fellowship.

I tried to discover how we do this and after many discussions I hope I have discovered the answer. What I did discover was that it was there all the time, but it had never been explained to me and I feel that in my 38 years of Freemasonry I have missed out a lot. So please accept this as my discovery with the guidance of quite a few people such as a paper by Langley Lodge but primary with the help of VWBro. Norman McEvoy.

So for those who are in the same boat as me here is what I found out.

It is during our rituals and ceremonies that the message, that teaches certain moral lessons and that elevates the individual to a position higher than himself.

Well does that mean that all we old Freemasons are perfect men? No of course not, no man is perfect but we should look upon the lodge as a moral workshop in which the new member is represented by the Rough Ashlar. The Rough Ashlar is an allegory to the uninitiated Freemason prior to his discovering enlightenment.

Then it is polished into a Perfect Ashlar that is an allegory to a Freemason who, through Masonic education, works to achieve an upstanding life and diligently strives to obtain enlightenment. So eventually we become a better man than we were.

This should start when someone asks to become a member of our Craft. Here we will have a person who, to most people in the lodge he will be an unknown. Maybe he will have a friend to speak for him but generally it is a time to evaluate if this person is a "Good Man" or not.

This is very important because if he seeks membership for reasons that are not acceptable, then he is not the person we want in the fraternity.

In British Columbia and Yukon we have the "Six Steps to Initiation" to help us and to let the new candidate decide if this is what he wants to join or not. It helps him understand what his obligations' to the Craft will be and gives the lodge an opportunity to discover if he is the sort of person we want to have as a member.

Remember the guide, Quality not Quantity.

Once that has been decided and he is accepted the new candidate should understand what is required of him as a member and the committee who interviewed him will report to the lodge before a ballot is held on his joining.

Once he is accepted his instruction in the craft will start at his initiation and the lodge will use the first degree as his introductory lesson. This degree will explain what freemasonry is all about and concentrates on the lodge system, how it is structured and how it operates. He will then take an obligation to cover this degree and the imposed secrets he is told.

On completion of this degree, if he is like 99% of us, most of this instruction will go over his head. Now is the time when the lodge must give him a mentor to start his education. He will explain what was said and make sure he understands what it was all about. It is a very important time for the candidate as he will need to be put at ease. He will need to be introduced to other members and learn the social and business of the lodge. His mentor should be fully aware of this and make sure he is comfortable, both in and out of lodge. The tracing Board lecture should be fully explained. Don't forget he is our future and could be could be the Master of the lodge one day.

His next action in open Lodge will be when he has to prove that he knows what the degree was all about. This should also show that this important part of the mentor's job was successful. On completion, he will have to prove up in open Lodge by answering question to show he knows what the degree was all about.

The next degree will be his passing to be a Fellowcraft and this will be his main instruction for obtaining his Masonic knowledge. This degree will give advice in the form of a Fellowcraft Lecture on what it means to be a Freemason and uses "A peculiar system of Morality, veiled in allegory & illustrated by symbols".

During this lecture he will pass higher through the temple of King Solomon as he gains this knowledge.

As in the last degree most of this instruction will go over his head, and it is the again the duty for his mentor to guide him once more. In this degree the educational instruction from his mentor is very important. It teaches him the basics of Masonic knowledge and the meanings of the Craft. He must give the candidate even more time than the last degree and he should introduce him to other lodges and the beauty of common friendship.

As before his next action in open Lodge will be when he has to answer questions to prove that he knows what this Second Degree was all about.

With that behind him he will approach his passing to the sublime degree of a Master Mason. In this degree he is instructed into the final expectancy of life and gives the story of one person who paid the supreme sacrifice rather than disgrace his code as a Mason.

On completion, once again he will have to prove up in open Lodge by answering question to show he knows what the degree was all about.

These lessons of life that are spoken of are things maybe you have already heard of or learned in any normal moral society but under different names. What makes them unique to Freemasonry is that they are presented in a specific format and context.

It is these rituals and ceremonies that you take as you pass to become a Master Mason that will convey and teach you certain moral lessons and will elevate you individually to a position higher than yourself.

By actually thinking about the ritual, you can improve yourself. But it's not a magic wand and ultimately, you will have to answer to no man but yourself. Masonry and its lessons are a deeply personal matter, to each Mason. And you should apply what you learn to the bettering of the world around you.

As Master Mason you will have learned the Five Points of Fellowship, and these lessons should be foremost in your minds because this is how we, as Masons, "Make Good Men Better."

The three universal principles of Freemasonry that you have been taught, brotherly love, relief, and truth should actively exemplify this by reminding us of our duty towards our neighbours and communities, and to always be mindful and supportive of those less fortunate, both Mason and non-Masons alike.

The Masonic experience isn't just a matter of dressing up, performing ancient rituals, or having a great meal with your friends but it is about going through a life-changing experience.

We are taught to have a benevolent goodwill toward humanity and to be lenient in our judgment of others. Masonry is about respecting the past, understanding our present, and planning for the future.

As one Mason reflected to an initiate, "at the end of this ceremony you will look the same and talk the same, but you *will* be different!"

Thank you and whatever I say may we continue in peace and harmony.

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