

# What Is Freemasonry?

Freemasonry is the world's oldest and largest fraternal organization. It is believed to have originated with the craft guilds of medieval Europe and latterly, to have expanded to admit those who did not actually belong to the trade. The literal stone masons are referred to as operatives while those who did not actually work in stone were called speculative masons.

While Freemasonry is the largest and best know fraternal organization the world has ever seen, it is without a doubt the least understood. It is hoped that this article and web site will help to make people have a better understanding of the organization.

Masonic ritual says the following of Freemasonry; "Freemasonry is a beautiful system of morality, veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols." While this statement is certainly true it is not the entire answer to the question, What is Freemasonry? This being said let us examine the portions of the statement.

## Freemasonry is a beautiful system of morality.

Freemasonry while based on religious principles is not a religion and all members are nonetheless admonished never to make it such. It is open to all men who profess a belief in a Supreme Being and who believe that that Supreme Being rewards virtue and punishes vice. In this sense men of good morals can join together in non-sectarian and non-denominational fellowship adhering to the moral tendencies common to all faiths.

## Veiled in allegory:

The dictionary defines allegory as:

"A story or narrative, as a fable, in which a moral truth or principle is presented by means of fictional characters, events, etc."

**Funk and Wagnalls  
Standard Desk  
Dictionary**

This is certainly true where Freemasonry is concerned for within the first three degrees (Craft Masonry) the candidate is told the story of the building of Solomon's Temple and more especially the Masonic legend of Hiram Abif one of the three principal architects at its building.

As each degree progresses moral lessons of instruction are unveiled as they relate to the legend.



## Illustrated by Symbols:

To the Freemason all tools employed by the operative stone mason carry a moral tendency. Symbolism has been, throughout all of recorded time, an important method of communicating ideas of all sorts. The square and compasses, the best known of these symbols are perhaps the most important of the symbols communicated to the Freemason.

The Masonic order, in addition to the aforementioned definition contained in the ritual, is said to be a Brotherhood of men under the Fatherhood of God. Once again, while



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Freemasonry is not a religion, it is founded on religious principles and no man can be made a Freemason if he is an atheist. Whether Christian, Moslem or Jew the Freemason believes in the God who created the universe and all prayers are offered to Him.

Freemasonry has three particular principles of importance, which the Entered Apprentice (first-degree mason) is taught. These Masonic principles are Brotherly love, Relief and Truth.

## **Brotherly Love:**

Every true Freemason shows tolerance and respect for the opinions of others and behaves with kindness, patience and understanding towards his fellow creatures. In fact Freemasons are not permitted to discuss in open lodge topics that may cause differences of opinion, such as religion and politics.

## **Relief:**

The Freemasons is taught to practice charity and to care for their own families and Brethren but also for the community as a whole. This charity can take the form of both charitable giving and by voluntary efforts and works as individuals within the community.

## **Truth:**

The Freemasons strives for truth continually. This requires high moral standards and a desire to achieve them in their own lives inside and outside the confines of the lodge room.

With further respect to charity Freemasonry has always been concerned with the care of orphans, the sick and the aged. Additionally it has given millions of dollars in financial aid to various charities. The principle difference between Masonic charity and others is that you will seldom see Freemasons in the newspaper holding a large check. It is rather Freemasonry's belief that charity should be given silently.

In society out side the lodge Freemasons are

commanded to respect the laws of their land and to be patriotic to the country in which they live. Freemasonry contains nothing that would put him in conflict with his private, public and religious obligations but rather these Masonic principles, learned in lodge, should support him in the undertaking of his duties outside the lodge.

Perhaps the most misunderstood aspect of the Freemason's lodge has to do with secrecy. It is commonly said, in answer to this accusation, that Freemasonry is not a secret society but rather a society with secrets. While this is true, some Masons remain unaware of what is to be kept secret and as a result never discuss their association with Freemasonry for fear of revealing these secrets. What is never to be revealed to the general public are the signs and modes of recognition that would permit one to enter a Freemason's Lodge. Freemasons are free to acknowledge their membership in the society and its constitutions and rules are available to the public. There is nothing secret about any of its aims and principles and the existence of this web site is a testament to that fact. Like many other societies Freemasonry regards some of its internal affairs as private matters for its members not even to be discussed with other lodges or their members. To this end the inner transactions and business of a Masonic lodge are no different of the closed-door meetings of any corporation or organization.

Another often-misunderstood aspect of Freemasonry is that Masons are expected to be loyal to the lodge above all else. This train of thought is no doubt due to the misquoting of the obligations taken by a Mason during each of the degrees. In reality a Mason is encouraged to do his duty first to God (by whatever name He is known) through his faith and religious practice and then, without detriment to his family and those dependent on him, to his neighbor through charity and service. While none of these ideas is exclusively the providence of Freemasonry it should be universally acceptable to all moral citizens. Freemasons are expected to follow them if they are to be members of the craft.



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