

What Does Freemasonry Mean To You?

In a recent article in "Reflections" M.W. Bro. Raymond S.J. Daniels wrote an article entitled "What Freemasonry Means to Me – a Personal Note". In that article much of what he spoke about had a reference to having a questioning manner. He quotes a number of different people including M.W. Bro. William Mercer Wilson, Samuel Johnson, Albert Einstein and Pythagoras, all of who spoke about wisdom, learning, curiosity and questioning. They covered a wide range of time from 6th century BC to the 1900's. He also quoted a poem by Bro. Rudyard Kipling called "WHY?" and it goes like this

"I keep six honest serving men
They taught me all I knew;
Their names are What and Why and When
And How and Where and Who"

I believe that Freemasonry exemplifies that questioning attitude, and as stated in the final charge of the Installation it should;

"Open the sources of knowledge and widen the sphere of human happiness."

We all come to Freemasonry with different ideas of what it means and what we expect to get out of it. In reality it always comes down to that old saying; what you get out of anything is what you are prepared to put into it. By "what you put into it" I do not mean money or even time, both of which most of us do, but it means more than just that. To truly understand

Freemasonry, if one can every truly understand everything about it, takes much more. It takes time for certain, but it also takes effort and an ongoing study of its principles and especially an ongoing questioning attitude.

Freemasonry is, as M.W. Bro. Daniels said, “a life-long journey of discovery.

We all know the saying, that Masonry takes a good man and makes him better. However, I have stated more than once that we cannot do that. No one can “**make**” a man better. What we can do is to show him the way, instruct him about our principles, offer him assistance and guide him towards the path and then we can but hope that he will make the decision to take the path to becoming a better man. To take that path though, he must seek within himself an answer to the questions quoted by Rudyard Kipling. What, why, when, how, where and who being but just the first word in a long list of questions;

What does Freemasonry mean to me?

Why did I join?

When will I understand what it means?

How can I become a better man?

Where can I find the answers?

Who will I become when I do?

I am sure all of you can come up with six different questions but the answers to any of them cannot be given by me or by anyone else. You must find these answers within yourself. Others and I can point you to where to look for some answers but in truth they must be found by looking inward.

M.W. Bro. Daniels talks about a five-part curriculum;

- 1 Self-examination
- 2 Self-discovery
- 3 Self-analysis
- 4 Self-realization
- 5 Self-fulfillment

In my opinion what that means is to try to understand yourself, learn as much about Freemasonry as you can, try to understand its meanings, contemplate the ideals. If you follow the principles and moral values on which Freemasonry is based you should reach an understanding of yourself and hopefully have some fulfillment within yourself. We often say about Masonry that it is a philosophical society. It was Pythagoras who coined the term “philosopher” which means “a lover of wisdom” or “a seeker of truth”. That is what you need to become, a seeker of wisdom and of knowledge. Are these not the same thing? No, knowledge is a collection of facts; wisdom is an understanding of how you use these facts.

Example; I know my wife is wrong, how I tell her takes wisdom!

Once you understand some of that knowledge and wisdom it is time for you to look inside at yourself, contemplate the meanings, and how they apply to you. Practice the principles of honesty, integrity and moral values and then you can reach out to become a better man. I read this quote;

“I don’t believe you have to be better than everybody else; I simply believe **you have to be better than you ever thought you could be.**”

During my time as Education Chairman I had promoted how we bring grand Lodge officers into Lodge and how we address the Master. I had discussions about it not always being done correctly and was told that I made mistakes as well and that I shouldn't expect perfection. I said I didn't expect perfection, I expected individuals to have perfection as their goal. If one does not **set a high standard** how can one reach a high standard? What I expect and what **you** should expect of yourself is to be the BEST that YOU can be.

That same principle applies to "What Freemasonry Means to You". It can mean something as simple as a night out with the guys, a social event with friends, both of which are nice things to do. However, is that the best it can mean to you? I hope not because, if that is all it means to you then we, Freemasonry, have failed to pass on to you the true meaning and failed to guide you towards that greater understanding that is required to become a better man. We, and by we I mean all members of this lodge and every lodge, have failed to help you to be the best that you can be. We cannot make you a better man but we can, and must, guide you to make Freemasonry much more than a night out with friends.

My Brethren I believe that only, **the man himself**, can make himself better but we need to help him in that. The lodge is like a learning centre for life. It provides opportunities through the practice of our Rites and Ceremonies, the study of our principles, tenets and values and the interaction between Brethren, to help a Brother to have a better understanding of himself and to aid him to become a better man. Don't just deliver the three degrees and then abandon him to sitting anywhere in lodge, instead of to the left of the WM. In my opinion the three degrees should be the starting point of his

journey. We have planted the seed, it is now time for us, and him, to cultivate and fertilize it.

I recently read something on Freemasonry and I would like to leave you with some of the thoughts;

“As to the secrets of Freemasonry, it is actually found in the unconscious of each person. It is discovered by each individual for himself, **mason or not**. As he comes to know himself and finds the road that takes him to his city, the real secret of Freemasonry is FINDING OUT WHO YOU ARE.”