

The Marks that distinguish us

The marks that distinguish a Mason from the rest of the world aren't found in a 'check-off' list of do's and don'ts, or in our Methodical Digest, or codified law. Those distinguishing marks of Freemasonry have their basis in the moral law; written on the hearts of men, and that's where the foundation of our order finds its place.

The moral law is more permanent than human nature itself. The teachings of Freemasonry flow out of a set of principles that have their basis in the Volume of The Sacred Law. The principles that are the building blocks of Freemasonry are part of any enduring major religion as well as enduring social philosophies and ethical systems of thought. The dialogues that form the ritual and the teachings of Freemasonry are a search for more light that should guide us on our journey through life.

The Masonic teachings focus on a strong character ethic, on foundational things like integrity, humility, modesty, courage and the Golden Rule in everyday practice. Teaching and practicing Masonry by example rather than by precept is a powerful influence in the force for good.

The character ethic of making "good men better" helps Masons to see the world and humanity, not in terms of our visual sense of sight, but in terms of perceiving, understanding, interpreting and applying the principles that govern the effectiveness of man, based on the moral law which never changes, just as eternity itself. Freemasonry is a principle centered, character based, approach to making good men better that does indeed set us apart from the rest of the world.

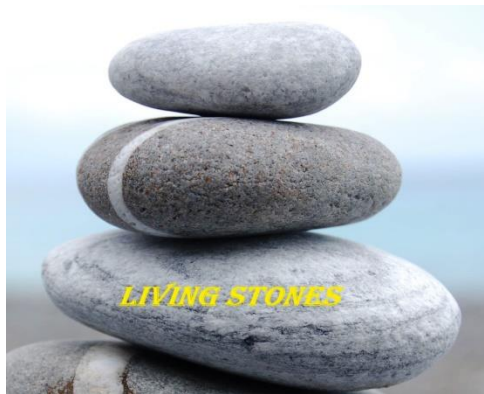
From the time that a candidate enters the lodge room through the Westgate he is taught to elicit the mysteries of Freemasonry through resolute labor and our interpretive symbols. He learns by careful observation of the opening and closing of a lodge as well as in the work of the three degrees, that there is in fact a serious need for reflection and self-awareness in his continuing search for light. He learns that there are sequential stages of learning, growth and development in his journey, if he is to draw any benefit from our gentle craft. The Mason must learn that the beginning of wisdom is listening. Careful listening identifies for the Mason the principles that Freemasonry teaches so he can associate them with the moral law. He understands brotherly love, relief and truth will lead him along the path to the cardinal virtues of the Order. The Mason must always keep these principles in view as a guiding light for his daily life. They become for him the boundary line of his Masonic conduct.

There is within Freemasonry a discipline that distinguishes us from the rest of the world that is not always clearly understood or appreciated. The moment that the new Mason seals his obligation with a kiss upon the Holy Writ his obligation becomes a binding promise to fulfil those duties and responsibilities. That solemn act requires of him a high standard of commitment and fidelity to the teachings and the landmarks of the Order. He understands that they are not negotiable. By fulfilling those promises he sets himself apart from the rest of the world.

It has been said by many Masonic writers that the best way to learn and understand Masonry is to teach it. Certainly, you don't necessarily need to be an officer of the lodge to teach Freemasonry, it can be accomplished in a very quiet manner, by example, by conforming to the principles of the Order and in the practice of every virtue in your daily life.

We often hear the words "Freemasonry is a Progressive Science". So, what does that mean? To some it may mean progression through the officer's line of the lodge. To others, it also means stages of learning and development for the mind, the heart and the soul towards awareness of the universal principles contained in our teachings. I think it's progressive because your most important work is always ahead of you.

In a sense, the community in which we live, work and participate is our campus. We have the opportunity to act according to the principles on which the Order is founded. From within the circle of our influence, the boundary line of our conduct, we as Masons have the duty, the responsibility and the power to distinguish ourselves from the rest of the world. I leave you with something to ponder....What are *you* doing in the community to leave your mark as a Mason?



Living Stones - Masonic Thoughts for Today's Mason
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