

HOW DO WE TAKE GOOD MEN AND MAKE THEM BETTER?

1. **We believe that there is such a thing as honor, and that a man has a responsibility to act with honor in everything he does.** Masons teach that principle. We believe that a life not founded on honor is hollow and empty - that a man who acts without honor is less than a man and he who cannot act with honor cannot become, or, for that matter, cannot remain a member of this Craft. We teach – and we agree – that we stand, an UPRIGHT Man and Mason and are given it strictly ever to act as such BEFORE GOD and man. What better legacy can we request than we live respected and die regretted?
2. **We believe in God.** No atheist can be a Mason. Masons do not care what a person's individual faith is - that is a relationship between him and his God (by whatever name he calls Him)- but we do require that a man believe in a Supreme Being and accept the immortality of the soul. We ask this question during the investigation of any Candidate to the rites of Masonry. We ask again during the First Degree. And we reinforce that requirement each time we open a Lodge or present a Degree. We open our meetings with a request of our Deity that all we do might be in accordance with His will, not ours, and, when we part, we ask again of Him that He keep us under HIS protecting care until we reconvene.
3. **We are willing to allow others the same right to their own beliefs that we insist on ourselves.** Masonry insists on toleration - on the right of each person to think for himself in religious, social and political matters. And, to protect – perhaps even enforce – this principle, we allow no sectarian discussion within the Lodge, always remembering that we are a band of Brothers among whom no contention should ever exist, save the noble contention, or rather emulation, of who can best work and can best agree – within the Lodge as well as outside our walls!
4. **We believe that we have a responsibility to leave the world a better place than we found it.** Masonry teaches that each man has a duty not only to himself but to others. We must do what we can to make the world a better place. Whether that means cleaning up the environment, working on civic projects, or helping children to walk or read or see - the world should be a better place because we have passed through it. If you think about it, this is a logical extension of the Golden Rule – to do unto others as you would have done unto you – not only for today but into the generations to come.
5. **We believe that it is not only more blessed to give than to receive, it's also more fun.** Masons are involved with the problems and needs of others because we know it gives each of us a good feeling - unlike any other - to help. Much of our help is given anonymously. We're not after gratitude; we're more than rewarded by that feeling which comes from knowing we have helped another person overcome some adversity so that their life can go on. But, let's step beyond that for just a moment. Think about one of our tenets – Charity. Right from the very beginning of a man's journey through the quarries, we introduce him to the idea of charity through the lesson of the penny. We teach him that

when a Brother is without and in need, it is his DUTY to contribute to his relief as liberally as his circumstances allow. In that spirit, we, as Masons, support a whole bunch of Masonic Charities. There's the Brotherhood Fund, The Masonic Home, The Masonic Research Centre, and for us who have traveled beyond the Blue Lodge, there's the Shriners' Hospitals, the Templar Eye Foundation, the 32 Degree Learning Center, and on and on. We, as Masons, give millions of Dollars annually to support our own charities. And we are taught through example to reach beyond the Temple walls to contribute liberally to "outside" charities as well. Look at the work we do at the Ronald McDonald house... Now, if you will, think back to our Third Degree and the symbolism of placing ourselves in the 'proper position' and the FPOF! Mth t Er to whspr wz encl, Hnd to Bk to sppt a flng Br. It is our duty to give – and give as liberally as possible. We can take it one step further, too, if we think about those FPOF. All five of them teach a further Charity, the act of giving in the more ancient and accepted form of Forgiveness. On foot, on our knees, by putting our arm around a brother, in the act of a hug, or with a loving whisper, we are taught to give from the heart with the bonds of brotherly love.

6. **We are willing to give help to our Brothers when they need it – *in fact, we vow to do just that, and to accept their help when we need it, though for some of us, that can be a tough lesson in humility - and when they pass, we continue to offer this help and support to their widows and orphans.*** Masonry is mutual help. Not just financial help (although that's there too) but help in the sense of being there when needed, giving support, lending a sympathetic ear. We've already discussed this a few moments ago, but think about this – we whisper wise counsel in the ear of an erring brother not necessarily waiting for his request. We stretch forth a hand to support a falling brother, not waiting for him to hit the ground. When, in life's journey, we meet a brother in need, we don't walk away. Nor do we wait for him to ask or beg for help. We stretch out a hand and give it, even to just a penny. Does this lesson apply only to our relationships with our fellow Masons? NO! It teaches us to become charitable, responsible, caring and giving men in all our pathways of life!
7. **We feel that there's something more to life than just financial success.** Masons know that self-development is more precious than money in the bank or social position or political power. Those things often accompany self-development, but they are no substitute for it. There's a reason we're called Masons...we work at building our lives and character, just as a stonemason works at building a cathedral, one stone at a time, carefully spreading the mortar that builds the stones into one common mass.
8. **We believe that a person should strive to be a good citizen and that we have a moral duty to be true to the country in which we live.** Masons believe that a country is strong so long as freedom, equality, and the opportunity for human development is afforded to all. A Mason is true to his government and its ideals. He supports its laws and authority when both are just and equitably applied. We uphold and maintain the principles of good government, and oppose every influence that would divide it in a degrading manner. And, when it is time for a

change, we work diligently within the laws of the land to help bring this change about.

9. **We agree that man should show compassion for others; that goodness of heart is among the most important of human values.** We believe in a certain reverence for living things, tenderness toward people who suffer, a loving kindness for our fellow man, and a desire to do right for the simple reason that it is right. Masonry teaches that although all men are fallible and capable of much wrong, when they discover goodness of heart, they have found the true essence of virtue. Masonry helps men see their potential for deep goodness and virtue and teaches them to practice understanding and forgiveness.

10. **We believe that men should strive to live a brotherly life.** Masons see brotherhood as a form of wisdom, a sort of bond that holds men together - a private friendship that tells us we owe it to each other to be just in our dealings and to refuse to speak evil of each other. Masons believe a man should maintain an attitude of good will, and promote unity and harmony in his relations with one another, his family, and his community. Masons call this way of life believing in the Brotherhood of Man. It really means that every Mason makes it his duty to follow the golden rule. This is why Masonry has been called one of the greatest forces for good in the world.

11. **How do we take good men and make them better?** We patiently teach all of our members to live by these principles that they may be a better example to the rest of the world – that they may become the type of person that others will emulate. How do we take good men and make them better? We teach them the ideals and then lead by example because for us, Masonry is a Self-Improvement Program.

Brother Dave Upham
ERAC Lodge #163, F&AM
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