



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT FREEMASONRY

In an effort to provide an overview of what Freemasonry stands for and why we are proud to be recognized as members of the Craft, the following are some frequently asked questions and appropriate answers:

Question: What is Freemasonry?

Answer: Freemasonry is an organization which, throughout its many years of existence, has maintained a consistent set of principles that are in parallel with and complement those of all major religions of the world, while at the same time promoting the simple but important objectives of helping mankind to live happy lives.

Question: Is Freemasonry a religion, or some substitute for religion?

Answer: Freemasonry is not a religion. Freemasonry does seek as members only men who believe in the existence of a Supreme Being, but in no way does it promote one form of religious conviction over another. Freemasonry recognizes each individual's right to his own beliefs and prohibits discussion of a religious nature in Lodge. As such, it is not a substitute for religion. Each member seeks the way to pursue his religious convictions in the manner best suited to him.

Question: If Freemasonry is not a religion, or religiously focused, why does the Bible play such central part of the lodge activities?

Answer: The Bible, which Masons refer to as the Volume of the Sacred Law. Since it may be accompanied by the Holy Writings of another religion should the candidate be a follower of a religion not based on the Bible, it is used by new members to declare their faith in a Supreme Being and is always open during Lodge meetings. Masons are taught to regard the Volume of the Sacred Law with reverence and to acknowledge it as the inspired revelation of the mind and will of God. They are urged to read their Book of Faith and to regulate their lives and actions by its teachings. Furthermore, the Ritual has a religious aura and Biblical events and personalities, especially from the Old Testament, are part of that Ritual. Quotations from the Bible are used for a specific and sometimes illustrative purpose.

Question: Is Freemasonry a Secret Society?

Answer: No. If membership in Freemasonry required secrecy, members would not wear or display insignia indicating their association with the fraternity. This is not to say that Freemasonry does not have secrets, but those secrets are almost exclusively related to Ritual and modes of recognition, and permit strangers who share membership in the fraternity to sit together in a Lodge anywhere in the world and enjoy each other's fellowship.



Question: How long has Freemasonry existed?

Answer: As with anything with its roots in antiquity, a definitive answer to the specific origins of Freemasonry is not possible. Several hypotheses have been advanced. The one considered most viable is that it began with the stone masons who erected the great Gothic stone cathedrals of Britain, beginning some 650 years ago, and to the guilds they created. These operative masons were engaged for years on end constructing the mighty castles, abbeys and monasteries away from the major cities and towns. They formed themselves into lodges, in imitation of the town guilds, to provide some form of self government while away from other forms of control. Modern Freemasonry was founded in England when four Lodges joined together to form the first Grand Lodge in 1717.

Question: Why are Masons called "Masons"?

Answer: Today's Ancient Free and Accepted Masons take their name from the builders of the great Gothic cathedrals that were erected many centuries ago in England and Europe. Because they were highly skilled, ancient operative masons were permitted freedoms during an era when most citizens were bonded to the land as serfs. The experience of being able to enjoy the privileges of a rare middle class in that era caused masons to realize that they had duties, obligations and responsibilities to each other and to their society. To preserve those ideals for the benefit of future ages to come, these original Masons adopted their working tools as symbols to teach the importance of just, upright and moral living and to impress upon the mind realizations that can lead to higher achievement and nobler deeds in life. These symbols are still used in Lodges today, and the lessons they teach are practised by Masons throughout the world.

Question: If Freemasonry is primarily a fraternal association, why does it have such scary oaths?

Answer: The roots of Freemasonry go back to medieval times, long before Freemasonry dropped its secrecy and revealed itself to the world in 1717. Much of our Ritual has been taken from the Ancient Charges and Constitutions of those medieval Guilds. The oaths are a throw back to that time and are considered traditional only. There is no recorded case of any of them having been enacted. To understand the harshness of them however, one must consider the circumstances of the time, recognizing that Masonic membership was not publicly displayed and that any behaviour different from the norm was suspect, both by the State and the Church. It was a time when punishment for acting different from the norm was most cruel. Being hanged, drawn and quartered for treason, and burned at the stake for heresy were forms of punishment for opposition to the Church. Oaths sworn by Masons of that period to retain their hidden identity were in line with the punishment that could be meted out to them, if their exposure meant arrest.

Question: How much time would it take to be a good Mason?

Answer: Each Lodge has one regular meeting every month, often with the exception of the summer months. Other meetings may be called from time to time for special purposes. Masons



are also encouraged to visit other Lodges, so a Mason can be as active as he wishes. However, Freemasonry recognizes that each member has obligations to his family, his work, his religious beliefs, his community and himself. These must take priority, and Freemasonry does not interfere with his ability to meet these obligations.

Question: How does one become a Mason?

Answer: Because tradition requires every Mason to come free of any coercion, Freemasonry does not solicit for members. An interested man must ask. If he meets the age and moral requirements, he need only submit an application signed by two members of the Lodge as sponsors.