

Hidden Masonic Lessons

Samuel Cochran

Virginia Research Lodge No. 1777

September 25, 1999

We can create miracles, using the lessons taught in Masonry.

One of the first things we were told early in our Masonic career is Masonry is a system of morality, veiled in allegory, and illustrated by symbols. We were also told Masonry takes good men and makes them better. What do these statements mean? How can we apply them to our lives?

Furthermore, we were told Ancient Craft Masonry consists of three degrees and no more; viz.: the degrees of Entered Apprentice, Fellowcraft, and Master Mason including that of Holy Royal Arch.

At the June 1999 Communication of Virginia Research Lodge, Brother W. Kirk MacNulty was the guest lecturer. As you know he is the author of [Freemasonry: A Journey Through Ritual and Symbolism](#). In that book, Brother MacNulty presents the concept that Masonry is an extension of the Ancient Mysteries. What does this imply? Simply stated, the Ancient Mysteries and Masonry both teach the concept of improving an individual's self-esteem. This is a key issue. In order to obtain maximum benefit from Masonry's many lessons, it is imperative that you realize Masonry for what it is: simply a philosophy of life whose purpose is to increase a person's confidence and self-esteem by utilizing the symbolism of architecture and tools of the builder's trade. When properly applied to a person's life, toleration and love of others develop, creating a true feeling of brotherhood and a oneness with God.

Self-esteem is an elusive idea. It refers to how a person feels about him or herself. Many times, society actually lowers a person's self-esteem rather than building it up. One example is the concept of judging some groups just because they may have different ideas or manner of dress and customs, an "against them" attitude; a "we are better than they are because" attitude. This attitude actually is a form of bias and fosters the idea of bigotry, a low self-esteem action and should be avoided. However Masonry, through her gentle lessons, both obvious and hidden, teaches a way of increasing a person's self-esteem and developing a positive attitude. In this paper, I intend to describe a few of the many hidden lessons provided by the Masonic ritual. By examining these lessons, you will begin to see that building a person's confidence and self-esteem truly are miracles.

One of the first lessons presented to a candidate occurs when he knocks at the West Gate of the lodge previous to his entrance. During the associated lecture a Bible verse (Matthew 7:7; Luke 11:9) is presented explaining this method of three raps for entering a lodge for initiation. But there is a hidden meaning that is not explained to the candidate, but which is left for him to discover. According to Dr. Deepak Chopra in his book, The A to Z Steps to a Richer Life, the letter "G" stands for gratitude, generosity, God, and goal. "Gratitude and generosity are natural attributes of an affluent consciousness. Since the only thing to go after is the best, the principle of the highest first, why not adopt God as the role model? After all, no one is more affluent than God, for God is the field of all possibilities." In order to succeed, "It is important to have a clear goal in your awareness, but it is also important to relinquish your attachment to the goal" and let God handle the details. For example, many of us have experienced trying to remember someone's name, but without success. But later when we were relaxed and no longer concentrating on the goal (i.e., the person's name), the name suddenly flashes across our consciousness. This is the true meaning of "Ask and you shall receive" or "Knock and the door shall be opened to you." We should all set goals, but we should not worry so much about them that nothing happens. We should set goals, concentrate on them, and then leave the outcome up to God. And one of the easiest and most effortless ways of concentrating on our goals

is through one of the many forms of meditation and prayer. This is the hidden lesson of entrance into a lodge - we learn to pray and put our trust in God.

Another hidden lesson is presented during the Entered Apprentice's prayer where the candidate is introduced to the idea of godliness through the application of the divine precepts of Freemasonry. The most important thing the candidate should get from that prayer is that we are all divine beings with God residing within each of us. Later in Masonry the divine precepts of Freemasonry are introduced, but they are not identified as such. These precepts are: [Again quoting Dr. Chopra] truth, integrity, honesty, love, faith, devotion, and beauty. The great Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore says, "When we feel beauty, we know it as truth." Without values, there is confusion and chaos. When values disintegrate everything disintegrates. Health disintegrates, poverty attains dominance over affluence, societies and civilizations crumble. When we pay attention to these values that society has always held sacred, then order emerges out of chaos, and the field of pure potentiality inside us becomes all-powerful, creating anything it desires. In addition, by consciously applying these values to our lives we begin to acquire a measure of calmness and confidence that radiates from us to others creating a state of toleration of others and their ideas. As our self-esteem increases through our confidence developed by repeating the Ritual over and over, our level of toleration increases to the point that we no longer believe in harming others, but consider the entire world to be one brotherhood. This is a miracle, but too often only a few ever get this out of the Ritual.

In the Royal Arch Degree, the phrase; without the hope of fee or reward, plays a significant part. Think about what is being said in that phrase. It contains another hidden lesson. When that phrase is first heard, the candidates and their guide, on their return from the Babylonian Captivity, are pledging themselves to performing a job just for the love of restoring Solomon's Temple to its former glory. They are not asking to be paid in coin of the realm or seeking special honor; just having a part in the Temple restoration is reward enough. What can we learn from this act? Anything given to charity with love, without expecting anything in return will provide the giver with a boost in self-esteem.

And the more this is done, the more a person does God's work here on earth. This lesson is restated in a different format during the Order of the Temple in the form of "to be great, is to be good; and he who would perpetuate his name to posterity must ennoble it by acts of charity and deeds of pure beneficence". This too is a miracle as the more you give without any expectation of something in return, the more you will receive of what you have given. When you give in this way, each time you will be filled with a sense of goodness and love and will move closer to godliness. You don't necessarily have to give money. A kind word, food, a sympathetic ear are all appropriate things to give, depending upon the situation. The important thing is to give freely of yourself without expecting anything in return.

Often in the ritual, reference is made to Light and the search for More Light. While this portion of the ritual often appears to be insignificant, it is really very important. The search for light can represent several different, but related, ideas. First, is the idea of a symbolic resurrection from ignorance to knowledge; however, the candidate is not explicitly told what this new knowledge is and has to find it for himself. Next is the idea of searching for truth, another elusive quality. So far all of the symbolism implies looking for something external that may not appear until after a person dies. But the search for light is like a coin: it has two sides. For a change, turn around and look inside yourself. Light also represents that Divine spark that resides within each of us; and the search for light represents taming the ego to locate that spark and listening to that small, inner voice of God that directs us along the path of spirituality. Listening to the voice of God will develop a calmness that allows us to be tolerant of others, less stressed, more charitable, and at peace with ourselves. Think about this hidden lesson and see how your life will change. Miracles will happen. You will begin to notice beauty all around you. Again, when beauty is experienced, we know it as truth. Remember Beauty in the lodge represents the South, or Hiram Abiff who lost his life in defense of his integrity. Integrity is defined as firm adherence to a code of moral values; incorruptible; the quality or state of being complete. This last definition is one of our goals in Masonry, trying to become better or complete person. Think on this hidden lesson the next time you listen to the

Hidden Masonic Lessons – Samuel Cochran

Junior Warden when opening or closing a lodge. The Junior Warden is directing us to look inward toward God for Truth in order to become a complete person that observes a strict set of moral values: one of these values, as mentioned earlier, is helping others any way we can without the hope of fee or reward. I hope you are beginning to see how all of the lessons in Masonry are related, but are presented in different formats in the various degrees.

The search for light is further illustrated in the Royal Arch Degree when the candidate passes the four colored veils on his way to the inner sanctuary. The four veils represent the various obstacles in one's life that must be overcome as we search for peace, truth and happiness. The Royal Arch Captain and Captain of the Host represent the ego giving way to that small, inner voice we are searching for. The three dais officers represent that blinding light masking the face of God within us as well as the three attributes of Deity: Omnipotent, Omnipresent, Omniscient.

These ideas I am presenting are not new or even considered part of so called New Age thought. In fact two prominent Masons, Theodore Roosevelt and Joseph Fort Newton, expressed these ideas almost 100 years ago.

Before the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania in 1902, Brother Theodore Roosevelt said:

"Masonry teaches and fosters in the man the qualities of self-respect and self-help ... the beautiful and solemn ritual must foster in him a genuine and solemn feeling for the rights of others. Masons help each other in a manner that is free from the curse of patronizing and condescension."

"I think a good many of us would rather be wronged than patronized: would rather suffer injustice than endure condescension. Help given in a spirit of arrogance does not benefit either the giver or receiver. Help given as an irksome duty may possibly do some good to the man giving, but it is not likely to do so for the man who

receives it. Help must be given rationally with a feeling of cordial good will that comes when a man helps another, knowing perfectly well that the time may come when it may be necessary for he, himself, to accept aid."

In a lecture entitled *When is a Man Educated*, Reverend Brother Newton answers:

"When he can look out upon the universe, now lucid and lovely, now dark and terrible, with a sense of his own littleness in the great scheme of things, and yet have faith and courage. When he knows how to make friends and keep them, and above all, when he can keep friends with himself. When he can be happy alone and high-minded amid the drudgeries of life. When he can look into a wayside puddle and see something besides mud, and into the face of the most forlorn mortal and see something divine. When he knows how to live, how to love, how to hope, how to pray, is glad to live ... and has in his heart a bit of a song."

In conclusion I would like to encourage everyone to make a dedicated study of the ritual, looking for the hidden lessons. Apply the lessons to your life coupled with positive affirmations every day such as, I am capable of creating a life of fulfillment and joy; I am a miracle and therefore, capable of creating miracles. Or I am a caring person and intend to help others. Remember the words of Brothers Roosevelt and Newton. Then look within yourself; acknowledge and accept what you find; still your thoughts and honestly listen for the voice of God; do what God tells you; and share what you find with others.

Bibliography

Chopra, Dr. Deepak, [The A to Z Steps to a Richer Life](#)

Dyer, Dr. Wayne W., [The Sky is the Limit, Real Magic, Your Sacred Self](#)

[Holy Bible](#), King James Version (Matthew 7:7; Luke 11:9)

MacNulty, W. Kirk, [Freemasonry: A Journey Through Ritual and Symbolism](#)