

Masonic Behavior

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What pattern of conduct should we, as Masons, pursue in order to be positive examples of our Fraternity in the minds of the general public, as well as a standard of behavior for our fellow Brethren within the Craft? How do we know when our actions and reactions to situations and events truly reflect Masonic ideals?

Our conduct as Masons begins to be quickly formed from the point of the very first instruction in Freemasonry. Instruction in the Masonic catechism and experience in the ritual quickly begins shaping our Masonic behavior with virtually all of the guidance that we need. If we live according to the *Tenets* of Freemasonry, practice the *Cardinal Virtues* of the Craft, and properly employ the Symbolic *Furniture of the Lodge*, then we can be sure that we have started to make a good man better and that the Rough Ashlar has lost some of its imperfections. Then each successive step we take and instructive lesson that we receive in Freemasonry serves to refine and perfect the living stone that we are preparing by living the lessons of Freemasonry.

Through our *Tenets*, there is no better example of what Freemasonry provides to the world than when we promote Brotherly Love, support the Relief of others, and encourage Truth. Through the *Cardinal Virtues*, when we are constantly seeking to live Justly, with a Temperate demeanor, a Prudent attitude, and the Fortitude to withstand the light of self-examination and self-improvement, then we are living testaments to the value of Freemasonry. By following the teachings of our Volume of Sacred Law, applying the Square of Virtue to our behavior, and checking our actions against the limits defined by the Compasses, we will have clearly defined a pattern of behavior that can be considered a shining example of Freemasonry's teachings.

It has been said that the essence of practicing ethical behavior is often choosing to do the difficult right over the easy wrong. Similarly, the pattern of behavior expected of us as Master Masons is choosing to measure ourselves and our actions against the speculative Plumb, Level and Square, instead of by the flexible scale of behaviors accepted by current trends and fashions.

This is no mere academic exercise or lofty ideal to hold ourselves up to these Working Tools. It is a constant challenge that we must apply in our daily lives; examining and improving our *interaction with mankind*, being watchful for instances when we step outside the bounds circumscribed by the *compasses*, being aware of times when we do not find ourselves Masonically *perpendicular, horizontal, and parallel*.

For the measure of Masonic behavior is not only exemplified by maintaining our conduct within our due bounds – it is also being aware of those instances when we have failed to live up to our obligations and duties, and when we must seek to heal a wrong and correct our behavior in the future. Taking action to quickly correct an offense done to either a Brother or to a non-Mason is also an example of Masonic behavior, since by this action we can show that our consideration for another person is a greater goal than preserving our pride or ego.

Masonic behavior is living by all of the implements of Freemasonry, and especially the Trowel. Can our behavior be found wanting if we live a balanced life according to the 24-inch Gauge, improve our hearts and consciences with the common Gavel, stand uprightly with Square actions, be on the Level with our fellow man, and spread the cement of brotherly love and affection?

We define our behavior, especially our Masonic behavior, by how we act when no one is watching, when no credit or glory may come our way, when we have to answer to no one but ourselves and the Grand Architect of the Universe.

That may well be the time when we are tested to choose the difficult right over the easy wrong.

It will also be a time that will determine if Freemasonry has truly been a positive influence on our character and our behavior.

The goal of making a good man better is a Winding Stairway that has no "middle chamber." We do not reach the top and end our journey, for there will always be another step of improvement waiting for us. There will always be an adjustment needed to keep ourselves within our due bounds, to improve and correct our actions when necessary, and thereby seek harmony with our Brethren and society in general.

In this way, our Masonic behavior will be an example to society of what Freemasonry represents by meeting our duties to our God, our neighbors and ourselves.