

Masonry, A Well Spent Life

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The Order of DeMolay is open to young men between the ages of 13 and 21. That is eight years to learn the ritual, chair a committee, hold office, master public speaking, develop your leadership skills, and enjoy the fun and fellowship our organization offers. As a DeMolay adult advisor, it occurred to me that most boys are not exposed to DeMolay until High School, when their wider circle of friendship presents the opportunity to join. Most DeMolays enter college or military service right after High School. We are now talking three to four years to be elected to office in a Chapter, and for a lucky few to serve in a state office, even State Master Councilor. Those very few who serve as International Master Councilor or International Congress Secretary most certainly started at 13 and held an office right away. It is a very brief period of time to achieve your goals.

Masonry, on the other hand, is available as early as eighteen, and has no majority. You are a Freemason for your entire life. With luck, you can be in your seventies or even eighties and still be active in the Lodge. Those who join at thirty or even forty can still enjoy three or four decades of service. That is ten times as long as in DeMolay. In dealing with the immediate concerns of running a Lodge, we overlook just how long the gift of Masonry is. So, what shall we do to fill that time?

I would hope every Mason intends to be an active one. What is the point, after all, of investing all that time if you don't take advantage of it? Let's say you hit the ground running, attending Lodge School and being active in the Degrees. You serve as Marshal,

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Chaplain, or Steward. Soon you are elected Junior Deacon, and within the span of five to seven years, you have served as Worshipful Master. You have done everything possible in the Blue Lodge, right? Wrong. Now that you have held every chair, you still want to contribute. You become a coach and teach the catechisms. You spend time mentoring and sharing the knowledge you have gained. You complete the Correspondence Courses and deepen your knowledge of the craft. The opportunity may come to serve as Treasurer or Secretary, perhaps you are chosen Lodge Instructor of Work, or Lodge Educational Officer. Within ten years, you are a fixture within your Lodge, one of those wise old Past Masters who so intimidated you when you first joined.

So, what else is there for an eager Craftsman? You joined the Royal Arch as Senior Deacon, because only getting part of the story from a Provisional Lodge wasn't good enough. Now, you are a Companion and have learned the legends of the Royal Arch. You are active in your Chapter and serve as High Priest. You perfect your role as Right Worshipful Master and confer the Past Master's Degree on new Senior Deacons in your District. You find fellowship in the Chapter and devote ten years of your life here as well, rounding out your Masonic knowledge.

Let's assume you are a Christian, and want to go further in the York Rite. You join the Commandery and are Knighted. Again, you invest more than a few years and advance through that line. In some states, you do the same in the Council Degrees. You have experienced all that York Rite Masonry offers.

But what of the "College of Masonry"? You have heard of the mysterious 33rd Degree Masons who rule the world. You submit a petition for the Scottish Rite and enjoy the fire hose of 29 Degrees over a very long weekend. You find that the Scottish Rite is for Masons who read: The Mirror from your Valley, the Scottish Rite Journal from the

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Supreme Council, and books upon books by Albert Pike and others. You dare to explore Morals and Dogma, and even learn something from Pike's tightly written prose. You tackle the Master Craftsman series, and long for the simple days of the Blue Lodge Correspondence Course. You begin to understand why we call it the "College of Masonry". Undaunted, you learn a part for one, then two or three Degrees. You develop deeper friendships with your Degree Teams you spend so much time with. You find you actually begin to understand the lessons of each Degree, having rehearsed it so many times. You are appointed an officer and one day preside over one the bodies of your Valley. After ten or more years, you have learned much and been recognized and rewarded for your involvement in the Scottish Rite.

You find yourself drawn to our most well-known and colorful appendant body, the Shrine. The Shriners Hospitals are the crown jewel of Masonic charity. More than that, you enjoy being active in a Unit, you spend time together, travel together, compete together. You are elected to lead your Unit, and find the leadership and organizational skills you developed in the Blue Lodge still come into play. You devote a few more years of your life to this endeavor.

Active membership and participation in these various bodies have served you well. The career I have laid out is available to any Mason who invests his time, talents, and energy. But there are other aspects of our craft I have not touched on: Research bodies in each organization; exclusive, invitation-only opportunities you find extended to you once you have distinguished yourself; District, Grand, and Supreme offices bestowed on a select few of you. Holding these offices does not make you better or wiser than those who have not held them, you were simply in the right place at the right time to be given the opportunity of further service.

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So if you add up all the years I have listed, you will find the total closer to fifty than thirty. But, at no point did I say each journey is independent of the others. A well-traveled Mason manages his time wisely, he may focus on one more than the others, especially while in a position of leadership. But if you invest your time wisely, and are sensible enough to buy a life membership in each at the earliest opportunity, you can be active in all and not sacrifice every single hour of your leisure time. View your Masonic career as a marathon, not a sprint. And as a final admonition to you, my Brethren, never forget where it all began. Never be so involved in any of our wondrous appendant bodies that you overlook the one body that makes it all possible. Support your Blue Lodge, do not be away for so long that no one can remember who you are. When you reach the third step of life, having planned your Masonic journey well, you will enjoy many happy reflections consequent on a well-spent life, and die in the hope of a glorious immortality.