

Why I am a Mason

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I have contemplated this question since my initiation. I have encountered many different answers and discovered, or rather uncovered, more questions, that I have to ask myself before I can answer the initial question. The point of not writing this article has even crossed my mind. Think about the question asked. Can anyone answer it definitively? I know I can't. So varied are the sources of the question that formulating one pat answer will never work. The answer has to do with the vastness of the subject, the relationships between the person making the inquiry and the situation from which it was asked. My knowledge of Masonry is acceptable, yet I feel that the talents of some more "expert" Brothers, should be utilized in creating "the answer". Having said that, and with respect to my present age, rank and situation, maybe I do have something to offer for the good of the Craft.

A subject of the magnitude that is Masonry, can, and unfortunately does, too often elicit responses far too complicated and, do I say "boring", than the questioner can or wants to understand. If asked, keep your response short, but meaningful. Be sincere in answering and leave the person with a positive understanding of your response. Perhaps a child would ask. My response would be far simpler than it would to an adult. Keeping the answer simple, is not as easy as you would think. When we formulate any answer, we have to enlighten the inquisitor and answer with a response that they can understand. Use a response that will slightly challenge their mental intellect. It should also leave them wanting more information.

My father said to me once, "Son, try to answer a question with a question." This makes absolutely no sense to me now, and I don't know if it ever did. The conversation would be pointless. Sorry Dad. The way I perceive his statement should have been to answer the question with enough ambiguity as to lead the recipient to form more questions of his own. After some reflection, the conversation will cause him or her to digest your answer and form ideas of their own. Masonry is very much the same. One answer, undoubtedly, leads to another question. My answer to the child would possibly be, "I am a Mason because I enjoy the friendship and sense of well-being that comes from being a member of a Lodge". The two questions that could be further asked from this answer are, "What are your friends like?" And "What is the feeling of well-being?". To answer a teenager, I have to access the cause of the question and the immediate situation. I would possibly answer this way.

"Why are you a Mason?"

"I am a Mason for many reasons. The foremost of these, and I will only give you two, is that I believe I am a good person and wish to fill my life with good things. Secondly, the Lodge offers me opportunities that cannot be offered elsewhere." This response should answer the question with some clarity but also invoke thoughts and more questions in the teenager's mind. To a young man, the answer has to become more involved. My response would, in this case, be a question. "Why do you ask?". This ought to bring a response much like "I am interested" My response, although not the same each time, would have to be related to trust and fellowship. I remember this time in my life, which seems far too long ago, the feeling of apprehension as to my friendships and acquaintances. Did I know what their beliefs were, or what they stood for? My response to his question would be "I am a Mason because I feel assured that the men that I associate with in Lodge, have the same mutual beliefs that I have and that I can trust in their friendships. I also feel that Masonry allows me to express my thoughts and feelings toward certain subjects in an open non-confrontational arena. I will get honest responses and advice from my friends and that my musings along with their responses will be kept in confidence." I then would ask the young man "How do you relate to your friends"?

To a young woman, I would form my response in a somewhat similar fashion as in the previous answer. However, being that my form of Masonry is a "male only" thing I would additionally respond this way: "I have many people that I deal with every day both male and female. But I am a Mason because men, like women, have questions of their own that they do not feel comfortable discussing in mixed company. I feel that if I can listen to and understand the experiences of the Masons that I know and respect that I can ascertain the correct path in which to direct my actions".

To a man or woman aged thirty and upwards my answer would be "I am a Mason because I have seen in my life thus far, injustice, intolerance, poverty, pride, sloth, and richness. I have seen the poorest of the poor and the richest of the rich, classes excluding classes, racism, religious persecution and a whole host of what I feel are wrongs imposed on others in this world. Masonry offers me a sanctuary from these wrongs and allows me, and my Brothers an opportunity to try to correct some of the misgivings of our fellow creatures".

My compilation of these responses benefit of a careful study of our charges and lectures. When the ideas put forth in these lectures are practiced, the lessons learned will most assuredly lead you, as a Mason, to a life full of confidence. Life as a Mason can be very challenging, as much now, as it has been in the past but it will grant you the respect of everyone who meets you. You will be trusted as a mentor to many and appreciated as a teacher to those whom you have given your wisdom. I have heard the final charge that we use in our jurisdiction countless times. Each time I hear that piece of work I learn something new. I, in the fullest of my wishes, hope that I can attain the perfection of the Mason mentioned in that charge and "Live respected and die regretted". Masonry's charges and lectures will give you the insight to answer the proposed question in a manner which should satisfy both you and the person asking it, even if it is you who asks!

I joined Masonry because my father and grandfathers were Masons. I knew very little about it. I had the intuition that it was a good organization. My father died before I could ask him anything about Masonry. His life was led as an honest man, willing, on countless

occasions to unselfishly give a helping hand to those who needed it. He was a firm father who practiced what he taught my brothers and I, with respect to, the proper conduct of our actions in life. I had the opportunity to know some of his friends that are now or have been my Brothers. I do cherish the relationships with all those men, most in memory but some in the flesh. My reasons for joining Masonry, initially, have not changed. Nor will my reasons change. The admiration of the men that I knew who belonged to the Craft was the reason that drew me to the institution, which has become, my lifelong passion.

My reason for "Why I am a Mason", have changed dramatically. Those reasons will most definitely change again and again. Masonry is not a static institution. Masonry has, and will evolve and grow with the man as he matures. The lectures and charges need to be revisited. Often. For they contain relevant information to many particular situations which will prove useful at all times in our lives. Pay attention to the subtle nuances hidden in the text and between the lines. In my time as a Mason I have had many different experiences, with the prospect of many more to come. Relating and drawing from my experiences, as a Mason and as a civilian, I hope that I can portray a good picture of a Mason through my explanations. I would much rather people observe me as a man and a Mason through my actions and words and come to their own positive conclusion of why I am a Mason.