

How Do You Explain Freemasonry?

By RWBro Wayne Anderson

When my petition to become a Mason was accepted, I was so excited that I told pretty much anyone and everyone I knew that I was going to be a Mason. That was the first time I heard that dreaded question: "So what is Freemasonry?" Not even being initiated yet, that was almost impossible for me to answer. The only things I could tell people were the things I heard when I asked Masons or what I read about Freemasonry, and that wasn't a whole lot. To this day, the most asked question I have heard is "What is Freemasonry?" and I still cringe when someone asks me. At least I did until recently.

Someone saw my tie chain and ring and asked me if I was a Freemason. When I proudly answered in the affirmative, they asked what we did at our "Super Secret" Lodge meetings and I kinda chuckled and said that we do a little bit of this and a little bit of that, and that's when I had another one of those out-of-the-blue "Ah-Ha" moments. Now that I have a little more knowledge on the subject, I said: "We're multifaceted; we do a little bit of everything." And that's when it hit me. Freemasonry is like a diamond. When you first find a diamond in the rough, it just looks like a piece of worn glass, it's kinda pretty, but not that remarkable. But once you begin to polish it, it starts looking better. Then you start to cut the facets and that's when it really begins to look beautiful. Once it's done, it is arguably one of the most beautiful gems in the world.

Now, think about this for a second. When a man first becomes a Mason, he is like a diamond in the rough. He may be a good man, but he has the potential to be great, all he needs is a little polishing. After his initiation, he begins learning his work during his degrees. That's the polishing process. Once he is raised, he can begin thinking about what kind of "cut" he wants to be. He can delve into as many or as few facets of Masonry as he wants. He can either be a simple "Table Cut" diamond, or he can immerse himself in Masonry and have as many facets as "The Radiant Cut" diamond.

So what are all of the facets of Masonry? Well, once a new Mason is raised to the Sublime Degree of a Master Mason, he can immerse himself in the *philosophic aspect* of Masonry. He can start seeking the answers to questions like "Why are we here?" or "Who am I?" or even "Which came first, the chicken or the egg?" That would be the first facet in his particular diamond of Freemasonry.

Then there's the *ritual aspect* of Masonry. Our new Brother is encouraged to go to all of the practices that his Lodge sponsors and sees all of the work everyone puts in to ensure that every candidate gets the absolute best impression of Masonry from their first experience as a Mason, and he thinks to himself; "Wow, that's what I want to do. I want to make sure that I can make the same lasting impression on every new Mason that I can, just like my Brothers made on me as I was proceeding through my degrees." So he continues to go to the practices, takes part in the degrees, joins a Degree Team and becomes very comfortable doing Ritual. That's the second facet in his diamond.

Next, he might think, "I wish I had better *leadership skills*." So he begins the process of working his way through the chairs and eventually becomes the Master of his Lodge. We're up to 3 facets so far. At this point, he decides that he is comfortable where he is for now and just wants to sit back and relax for a bit. So in essence, he has formed his Freemasonry into a table top cut diamond. It's pretty much the most basic cut of diamond out there, but it still reflects the Light for others to see and maybe even makes them think, "Boy, I wish I had a diamond..." (Or for the point of our discussion, "Boy I wish I was a Mason...")

So that's it for our Brother, right? Nope, not even by a long shot. He wrote a few Masonic papers, and he's upheld the honour and traditions of his Lodge as the Master. He has had his rest and now he wants to get busy again. So what else is there for him to do in Masonry? He's done it all, right? Well, to be honest, he hasn't even scratched the surface of Masonry. He hasn't even thought about the *philanthropy aspect* yet so he starts getting involved with the pancake breakfasts, helps raise money for the scholarship fund, helps out with a number of program and projects and now, he feels satisfied.

He attends a few degrees that his Lodge is putting on and the current Master tells the Lodge that a newly initiated Brother will need an mentor, and our Brother thinks, "I remember how my mentor has become a friend, and a trusted advisor to

me, maybe that would be something I would like to do!" So he talks to the Master of his Lodge and volunteers to be the *new Brother's mentor*. In doing so, he not only helps the new Brother begin his Masonic journey, but he then becomes someone that his new Brother can look to for advice and friendship.

After he helps mold and shape his young Brother and starts him on his own Masonic path, he wants to get back to his roots in Masonry and starts attending as many degrees as he can find, volunteering to fill in whenever needed. When he asks if he can be in the degree at one Lodge, he is told that this particular degree team is one that is dedicated to traveling to different Lodges that don't have the manpower to put on their own degrees. He is impressed with this idea and how well the degree team puts on the degree, so he starts making inquiries about them. He learns that they travel and put on degrees at many different lodges and he gets involved in that.

While he's *traveling to other Lodges and putting on degrees*, he is listening to the sickness and distress announcements at one of the Lodges, and hears that there is a Brother that is wheelchair bound and can't get out of his home. He talks to the Lodge's secretary and gets that Brother's address and visits his home, offering to help his Brother in whatever way he can. This stirs something in his heart, and he makes it his mission to *seek out any distressed Brothers* and visiting with them either at their homes or at hospitals or nursing homes. And our Brother still hasn't even started to scratch the surface of Masonry. He realizes the reason Masonry has appealed to so many men for so many centuries, is because there are so many different things you can do through Masonry.

OK, back to the original topic, how do you explain Freemasonry to a non-member? In my humble opinion, Freemasonry is an institution that gives you the tools to become the best man that you can be, with almost as many facets as you can think of. Each of those facets gives you the ability to open doors to aspects of life that you wouldn't be able to open on your own. They give you an opportunity to better yourself just by being around your Brothers both in Lodge and around the world and learning from them.

Picture that diamond for a second. Think about all of the different facets and how they catch and reflect the Light. All of the aspects of Freemasonry are like the facets of a diamond. It's up to YOU to decide what kind of Mason you want to be, weather you want to be a basic table cut diamond or want to aspire to become the sparkling radiant cut diamond, all it takes is desire and dedication. The choice is up to you.

BE PROUD OF WHO YOU ARE

BE PROUD OF WHAT YOU DO AND

BE PROUD TO BE A MASON.