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## What is the Purpose of the Masonic Fraternity Now and In the Future?

Though Freemasonry has a challenge ahead of it to grow our membership and, by necessity, must change some aspects to keep up with the times, the core values and purpose of Freemasonry must be a constant in an ever-changing world. As a result, rather than treating this in a way that assumes our fraternity's purpose is different now than it will be in the future, I submit that the purpose cannot and will not change.

I recently returned to Freemasonry after an 8-year lapse. In 2010 my family and I went through a series of unfortunate events including job loss, kidney failure, and foreclosure. Providing for my family took priority over keeping up on dues. Years went by and I found myself in a new state with a new job and it was time to get back into lodge. Upon returning to the Fraternity in our new state, I realized I was home, even among Brothers I was meeting for the first time. These men treated me like they'd known me my entire life and with that I remembered one of the principle purposes of Freemasonry; Fraternity.

Fraternity is brotherhood, fellowship, and camaraderie. The lodge is a place a man can go to be among good men, some of whom have many years of experience and wisdom to share. They say you can judge a man by the company he keeps. Well, I can think of no better group of men to represent the type of man I am, and want to be, than the members of my lodge.

These days, certain aspects of being a man are under attack and the idea of what it means to be a man is losing its meaning. I have found Freemasonry to be a place where one can learn what it is to be a real man and to be charged with the duty of acting as such outside of the lodge. I'm not referring to physical toughness or any other egocentricity, the measures by which some people today judge a man. I'm referring to the virtues a man learns when he becomes a Mason. In Freemasonry, we learn that real

men are men of temperance, fortitude, prudence, and justice. Which brings me to another purpose of our fraternity; the betterment of man.

It's commonly said that Freemasonry "takes good men and makes them better." I recently heard an alternate interpretation of this that I think sets a better expectation for new Brothers and reminds more experienced Brethren of the work they must put in. The phrase was "Freemasonry gives good men the tools to better themselves." We are not better men by virtue of being members of this fraternity, nor by the passage of its rites. It is by the application of our working tools in our daily lives that we become better men. Working tools that exemplify morals, values, and principals which are losing their importance in society today, such as honesty, hard work, and a trust in God.

We are not alone in this journey, however, as Freemasonry provides young and old men alike the guidance one needs in the proper application of these tools. Mentorship, then, is another important purpose of Freemasonry. This mentorship comes in a variety of ways, be it Masonic education led by experienced Brothers, the example set by them as well as that of the officers of the lodge, or the good council whispered into the attentive ear of a young Brother.

Part of the example set by experienced Brothers and the officers of the lodge is that of a life dedicated to service. Service, therefore, is an essential purpose of Freemasonry that we must not neglect. By service to our communities, our fellow man, or a distressed brother, widow, or orphan, we learn that no man can survive the tempestuous winds of life on his own. It is by lifting each other up that we create a butterfly effect, whereby we improve a man, who improves his family, that also improves the community, and, in some small part, the world. By service, then, Freemasonry leaves its indelible mark on mankind.

While the good deeds we do must be selfless and not for own glorification, it must not be forgotten that by serving our communities Freemasons are letting the community know what kind of

men we are. In this way, people won't be left to their assumptions or fears of the unknown but may also seek out the company of such good men as comprise the Masonic lodge.

It is by all these things that I daresay we Freemasons are making the world a better place, if just a little bit. We must be careful not to allow these purposes to fall by the wayside in attempts to bolster our ranks and cause our lodges to fall into mediocrity or become simply dinner clubs. We must also not be relegated to the category of "service group" such as Lions, Elks, Kiwanis, etc. As noble as these organizations are Freemasonry is and must continue to be something more. If men are simply looking for fellowship and opportunities for service, these organizations will suffice. Freemasonry is for men who are looking for something spiritual, something with meaning, and something that encourages them to improve themselves mentally and spiritually. We are the keepers of a flame that is slowly dying in our world and we must not only ensure it stays lit but do everything we can to attract good men to its light, so the flame can grow stronger.

In summary, the purpose of the Masonic Fraternity, now and in the future, is the same as it has been in years past. It is to bring good men together in the spirit of fellowship, give them the tools to better themselves, mentor them, and imbue in them a desire to serve their fellowman. We should also remember that the Masonic family comprises more than just Masons, however. Our Sisters in Eastern Star, our daughters in Rainbow Girls and Job's Daughters, our sons in DeMolay, or even those family members of Masons who simply support their involvement in our craft and miss them while they're away. They are all part of the Masonic family and if we accomplish nothing else in our toils, let it be to leave the world a better place for them. That is our purpose.