

T.F.S.

Three, five, and seven

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#196

“You can't undo anything you've already done; you can face up to it. You can tell the truth.

You can seek forgiveness. And then let God do the rest.” Mahatma Gandhi

“To forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover that the prisoner was you.”- Oscar Wild

Forgiveness

It seems appropriate to write about this issue because it is not always easy to forgive ourselves or others and sometimes a brother will stop attending lodge because being near the brother that hurt him may be too stressful.

At one time or another many of us have been hurt by the words or actions of a Mason brother. The hurt can leave us with lasting indignation, anger, grudges, bitterness, resentment or sometimes a desire for punishment. However, if we cannot forgive, we may be the one who suffers most. Those of us who can let go of grudges and anger find letting go can lead to an inner peace, less stress, lower blood pressure, fewer symptoms of anxiety, depression and pain, and an improved sense of psychological and spiritual well being.

It is easy to hold a grudge when you feel hurt by someone you love, trust or respect. It is also easy to become sad, angry or confused. Dwelling on the hurt leads to a desire for an apology which when not received can cause resentment, hostility and a desire for revenge. These negative feelings crowd out positive feelings and you may get swallowed up in your own sense of injustice or bitterness. You may even lose the desire for the enriching connectedness with others.

Forgiveness is commitment to change. It is difficult. It may be easier if you remember times when you've hurt others and they have forgiven you. It may be especially hard to forgive a brother who doesn't admit wrong or apologize and admit his sorrow. The process of forgiveness involves a decision to let go of the resentment and thoughts of revenge and to move away from your role as a victim. Think about how you reacted and how it has affected your life and well being. Later you can choose to forgive the person who you think offended you and no longer be the prisoner of the offending person or situation. Forgiveness takes away the power the offender has on your life. That can

lead to feelings of understanding, compassion and empathy for the one who you feel hurt you. When you forgive you don't deny the other persons responsibility for having hurt you. Nor does it justify or minimize the wrong or excuse the act. However it can help you to focus on the other more positive things in your life and give you inner peace and may allow you to go on with your life including attending lodge.

Forgiveness can lead to reconciliation. You can grant forgiveness without expecting restorative justice. Ideally the offender offers some form of acknowledgement or apology or may ask for your forgiveness. Without reconciliation it can be awkward to attend lodge. However you can change your thinking, feelings and behavior even when the offender refuses to communicate with you. If you cannot forgive, you can discuss your feelings with your spiritual leader or an unbiased friend or mental health counselor. Remember getting the other person to change his behavior, actions or words isn't the purpose of forgiveness. Forgiveness is more about changing yourself.

As masons we need remember brotherly love includes having an open mind and heart.

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Words to Live By: "friendship is cemented by a mystic bond, and strife's, and envies and jealousies are discarded, while the only contention that exists is that noble emulation of who can best work best and best agree"- Albert G. Mackey

"Masons must be kind and affectionate one to another. Frequenting the same temples, kneeling at the same altars, they should feel that respect and that kindness for each other, which their common relation and common approach to one God should inspire. There needs to be much more of the spirit of the ancient fellow-ship among us; more tenderness for each other's faults, more forgiveness, and more solicitude for each other's improvement and good fortune; somewhat of brotherly feeling, that it be not shame to use the word 'brother.' Albert Pike - Morals and Dogma. Page 122

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www.Lodgebuilder.org and at www.mn-masons.org