T.F.S.
Three, five, and seven
3 5 7

By Stan Shapiro MD, Grand Lodge Education Officer, Grand Lodge of Minnesota

#228

“We represent a fraternity which believes in justice and truth and honorable action in your community…men who are endeavoring to be better citizens… [and] to make a great country greater. This is the only institution in the world where we can meet on the level all sorts of people who want to live rightly.”--- Harry S. Truman, American President and Mason

The Value of Being a Freemason

What are the reasons men have given for joining Masons and the value of being a Freemason?

Most have heard the purpose of Masonry is “making good men better men”. However, how to make men become better men is subjective.

In Freemasonry the values we profess which can help us become better men include:

• Improving ourselves mentally and spiritually.
• Building our ethical values and practicing moral behavior.
• Inspiring and motivating curiosity and education through rituals, symbols, discussions and lectures and using the tools of operative Masons to teach men how to live.
• The belief in a supreme architect of the universe and immortality of the soul.
• Bonding to develop mutual trust and respect.
• Brotherly love and caring about for each other and widows and orphans.
• Offering mutual assistance and help to our community.
• Avoiding conflict and maintaining peace and harmony.
• Promoting religious and racial tolerance and equality without regard to wealth or status.
• Respecting each other’s opinions.
• Binding obligations to be truthful, charitable, and to keep Masonic secrets.
• Being responsible for our choices and actions.
• Increasing our self awareness, self development, self confidence, and esteem.
• Receiving and giving mentoring to and from our brothers.
• Striving for Humility, Unselfishness, Fidelity, Virtue, Patriotism, Honor and Justice.

Most worshipful brother Jack Butler, at the 2009 Midwest Conference of Grand lodges in Omaha, Nebraska (1) listed ten reasons and benefits in becoming a Freemason. The list is as follows:

1. A place where you can confidently trust every person and trust your family with them also.
2. A place where---within moral and civil guidelines---free thought, free speaking and spiritual growth of man can grow into its fullest potential.
3. A place to meet outstanding individuals from all walks of life that a person would not otherwise have the opportunity to know and call brother.
4. A place to be part of an organization which has the principle tenets –Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth.
A place that provides self development opportunities, leadership training and experience, and to improve public speaking skills.

A place you can receive and give support and mentoring.

A place where moral virtues are taught and through these teaching a regular reinforcement of the moral virtues is experienced.

A place to spend time with a group of brothers, who by acting as good men, make one want to become a better man. Not better than others, but better than one would otherwise would have been.

A place to become better equipped to serve church and community.

A place to meet with established members of the community and to become part of the community.

What would you add to the above lists of the values and the reasons to become a Mason?

There are at least two additional benefits. One is the value of men sharing their feelings with each other and another is how being a Mason can help reverse an increasing problem in our society -- the loss of male identity.

When most men are together in social situations, they tend to discuss sex, work, sports, politics, religion, the economy and with the exception of anger usually do not express their deep or personal feelings with each other. Men often bury their deep feelings under machismo armor. This is the result in part by the different way boys and girls are treated as they express their feelings. When a boy is admitted to an emergency room crying, in order to stop him from expressing his feelings, he is frequently told to be brave and/or be a “big boy”. In contrast when a little girl cries she is told “that’s O.K. honey” or “it is alright to cry”. There are many ways in which parents and teachers (at least in previous generations) and TV programs currently support it is acceptable for girls to express feelings but boys are supposed to be tough or stoic and hide many of their feelings. In addition, many men have not learned how to deal with a woman’s feelings (i.e. crying) and often will comfort her without discussing her emotion or will change the subject or leave. When Masonic brothers develop trust, tolerance and brotherly love, they are more likely to openly express their true feelings with each other. We have witnessed our Masonic brothers openly express deep feelings of hurt, pain, sadness, loss, pride, anxiety etc. both in open and closed Lodge. Masonic brothers have cried in front of their brothers. Men in other all male settings are less likely to let their hair down. Psychiatrists and sociologists confirm this does not usually happen until a group of males meet on a regular basis over a long period of time and develop trust in themselves and each other. A Masonic Lodge provides this opportunity which is not present in most social situations.

Because there has been erosion in our society of what is masculine, (2) (3) another value in being a Freemason is the opportunity to develop a stronger and clearer male identity. Margret Mead spoke 40 years ago about how traditionally a woman’s role was to give love and nurturing and the male’s role was to make out at work and sex. She saw roles of men and woman changing and beginning to be less defined. She noted more women were entering the work force and more fathers were involved in child care and nurturing activities. In the United States men in the labor force have gone from 70 percent in 1945 to less than 50 percent today. Women have overtaken men in college and graduate school and young single childless women in some of the largest metropolitan cities earn more than their male peers. In elementary and high school, male academic performance is lagging. Boys earn three-quarters of the D’s and F’s. By college, men are clearly behind. Only 40 percent of bachelor’s degrees go to men, along with 40 percent of master’s degrees. Some businesses now support paid paternity leave. The recent recession has decreased jobs in manufacturing and construction and other former male industries. Women have taken some of those positions. Today woman are wearing clothes that were once considered masculine. They wear business suits and ties which in previous years were only men’s attire. When we mentor our younger Masonic brothers, we have the opportunity to improve their concept of what it is to be male. We can help them regain their masculine identity and pride as men. We also can encourage them to succeed in school, be better fathers and secure and hold sustainable jobs.

In conclusion there are many values in being a Freemason. In addition to making good men better men than they might have been, Masons can develop trust which can result in being open with each other about what they
really think and feel. Because of the erosion of male identity in our present culture, as Freemasons we can improve our self concept and masculine identity.

REFERENCES

1. Butler, Jack, PGM a speech at the Midwest Conference of Grand Lodges in Sioux Falls, South Dakota in 2009 quoted in the Minnesota Mason September-October Vol. 58 No 3 2010 by Tom Hendrickson, DGM.

Words To Live By: “Happiness lies in the joy of achievement and the thrill of creative effort.”— Franklin D. Roosevelt, American President and Freemason

If you have any comments, suggestions, or questions, please send them to shapiro.stanley@gmail.com
The Education Videos by our education committee can be viewed at: http://www.youtube.com/glmned

The latest Masonic Monday Question, and some of the past questions, can be viewed at www.Lodgebuilder.org and at www.mn-masons.org