

TAKING THE FOURTH STEP IN MASONRY

REFLECTIONS ON THE THREE DEGREES IN FREEMASONRY Proficiency Material for One-Day Programs



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THE ENTERED APPRENTICE DEGREE

You have just completed your first step in Masonry that we hope will be the beginning of a long and enjoyable journey that will enrich your personal life and initiate numerous lifetime friendships.

Degree work and education in Freemasonry draws heavily on symbolism to teach moral lessons. It has long been known that lessons learned through symbols and allegories give deeper and more long-lasting impressions. Although we do not know the precise origins of Masonry, it was believed to be largely influenced by the stonemason guilds of Europe during the Middle Ages that used tools of their trade to impart lessons of morality to their apprentices. The moral applications of many of the stonemason's tools will be explained to you during the 3 craft degrees.

The following is a short review of the Entered Apprentice Degree and a discussion of some of the symbolism that was presented to you. Masonic ritual is rich with symbolism and all of it is not apparent in this, your first exposure to it. As you become active in your Lodges and participate in degree work, more and more symbolism as well as different interpretations of the symbolic lessons will come to light.

The first degree, the Entered Apprentice, largely represents the years of youth, and therefore, the beginning of your Masonic education. In the stonemason or operative era of masonry, new masons were apprenticed to a master mason for a period of 7 years. Likewise, we as speculative, or non-operative Masons of modern times symbolically spend 7 years learning Masonic teachings before being passed to the degree of Fellowcraft.

Prior to your entrance to the Lodge, you were "duly and truly prepared" by being dressed in a garment provided by the Lodge to emphasize that Masonry is concerned with a man's internal qualities, rather than his material wealth or honors. The removal of a shoe is a symbol from biblical times of humility. The removal of any metal items such as watches, rings, or coins symbolizes that you have not brought anything of an offensive or defensive nature such as a weapon, into the Lodge room.

Upon your entrance into a Lodge of Entered Apprentices, you were blindfolded, which was to symbolize darkness and your lack of Masonic knowledge. Later, you were symbolically "brought to light" by removal of the blindfold. The rope, or cable tow as it is called, represents the restraints that had been placed on you by the Brothers. This, too, was removed when you were brought to light after the obligation.

Upon being brought to light, the first thing you saw was the Holy Bible upon which you took your Entered Apprentice obligation. The Bible is always open when Lodge is open. Except in a few instances, such as in the movement of candidates about the Lodge room, no one is to walk between the open Bible and the Worshipful Master. The Bible is an

extremely important part of the Lodge room arrangement and gives strength and inspiration to the Worshipful Master as well as to all of the Brothers. In Lodges where candidates and members are not Christian or Jewish, other sacred books are found on the altar. On the Bible you also saw a square and compasses placed in the Entered Apprentice position, which is with the points of the compasses under the square. The Bible, Square and Compasses are referred to as the 3 Great Lights in Masonry. They were made visible to you by the light of 3 candles, which are termed the 3 lesser lights. They represent the sun, moon, and Master of the Lodge.

You noticed that the Lodge room is in the shape of a rectangle, or oblong-square, as we call it. The East, (or symbolic East of some Lodges) is where the presiding officer, called the Worshipful Master is seated. The Lodge orientation and most aspects of the Craft Degrees center around actual events or legends pertaining to the construction of King Solomon's Temple.

The obligation you took is most important. It confirms your ties to your fellow Masonic Brothers and assures them that you will not reveal our modes of recognition and the particulars of our symbolic instruction to the uninitiated. The penalties included in this obligation and of all other Masonic degrees are symbolic. However, they do point to the seriousness that Freemasons hold the few secrets that we do have. Revealing Masonic secrets will likely result in expulsion and the scorn of the fraternity.

The lambskin, or white leather apron, was your first and most important gift from your Lodge. It is the "badge of a Mason" and is worn in imitation of the leather aprons worn by operative stonemasons to protect them from rough stones in their work. While you may wear this apron at Lodge meetings if you wish, your Lodge will provide you with other aprons for use during meetings and other occasions. Most Masons store their presented lambskin apron until it is retrieved by the family for the funeral following the death of the Brother.

You were asked by the Worshipful Master for something made of metal – a coin or other object. This request undoubtedly puzzled you or may have even embarrassed you for a moment. This lesson, called "The Rite of Destitution" was to teach you that should you ever meet a friend or a Brother Mason in like destitute circumstances, you should assist him if at all possible. This refers to one of the 3 tenets of our order: relief; the other 2 being brotherly love and truth.

You were next placed in the NE corner of the Lodge, which is the position of the cornerstone, marking the beginning point in construction of buildings. This was to symbolize that you were beginning the construction of your spiritual building. You were also given the working tools of the Entered Apprentice, which is the 24-inch gauge which teaches us to

properly divide our time, and the gavel which teaches us to shape our character, much as rough stones are shaped by the stonemason.

Demonstrate and explain:

1. modes of recognition, DG, sign, Grip and Word.
2. attitude of prayer, "so mote it be"
3. saluting the flag
4. procedure for addressing the W. Master
5. procedure for responding to the W. Master
6. procedure for entering or exiting a Lodge of E.A.

THE FELLOWCRAFT DEGREE

The Masonic degrees have long been thought of as stepping-stones to a full and complete Masonic way of life. While there is a great deal of symbolism depicted in the first three degrees much of the ritual has a deeper meaning. What is important to we Masons is how we reflect on the lessons learned in the Masonic degrees. It is not the purpose of this discussion to review all the steps, stops, even the emblems and symbolism appearing during the Fellowcraft degree. Let us explore some of its deeper and less evident aspects.

The Entered Apprentice degree, generally, symbolizes a period of infancy and youth in a man's life. It is the beginning and a period of learning fundamentals.

The Fellowcraft degree is emblematic of manhood. It is that period of life in a Mason's life where his education continues with renewed research in Masonic topics and further Masonic instruction. Thus, the Fellowcraft degree may be outlined in a Masonic road map that adds further teachings in which to develop a manner of thought leading to a Masonic way of living.

In The Beginning

Early in the Fellowcraft degree emphasis was on the plumb line and the question was raised, "Amos, What Seest Thou?" This biblical passage suggests how a Mason should judge his own work and how he should judge the work of others. The plumb line represents a certain standard or boundary by which a man can direct his efforts throughout the rigors of manhood.

We observe the brazen pillars that were named by Hiram Abiff. They teach the lessons of strength and establishment. These words may have a similar connotation. The pillar of strength might also reflect power while the pillar of establishment might well reflect choice or wisdom. Power, in this

case, means that a man entering into manhood takes control of leadership in his life.

The terrestrial and celestial globes remind us of universality. They teach that the principles of our Order are not founded on mere earthly conditions and transient truths but rest upon divine and limitless foundations, co-existent with the cosmos and its Creator.

The Winding Stairs

According to I Kings: “and they went up with winding stairs into the Middle Chamber.” A journey to the Middle Chamber is an allegory, a symbol of the journey of life and the reward for a faithful living. As you make a regular advance by a flight of winding stairs signifies that as a Fellowcraft you are now preparing for your life work. You are now ready to climb from the depths of your earthly nature to the heights of a moral and spiritual life. The stairway is used to try man’s soul because you can see only to the next turning and perhaps only one step in advance. It also suggests that one must have a plan of action for ones way of life.

The various sections of steps are also a representation of life, far more than the acts of eating, sleeping, drinking and working. They represent the development of a mental and spiritual life that embodies learning and studying as well as enlarging horizons and perspectives of the world about us. Our ascent by 15 steps is traditional in America, however we find no reference in the Scriptures of it having three, five and seven steps. Freemasons created this division.

Three, Five and Seven Steps

Briefly, the three steps are sometimes referred to as youth, manhood and age. They also refer to the Deity as well as to the three principal officers of the Lodge, the Worshipful Master, Senior and Junior Wardens.

The five steps have more deeply rooted connotations: five being a sacred and mystic number. It relates to the five orders of architecture and the five human senses. Five Brothers are required to open and govern a Lodge of Fellowcraft. The fifth of seven sciences has been termed geometry. For ages Freemasons have held the number seven in highest esteem because they remember that God created heaven and earth and rested on the seventh day – the Sabbath –the holy day. Our education continues with an extensive discussion of the seven liberal arts and sciences.

The study of architecture relates to our history in that the Freemason builders of olden times were builders of temples and cathedrals for worship. A Mason is frequently referred to as a builder and is associated with

choosing his own spiritual building. Thus, the Fellowcraft degree is a glorification of Education, the gaining of knowledge. As the steps take one higher and higher it symbolizes advancement in learning and Masonic education.

The Middle Chamber

When we began our journey little did we know the Middle Chamber would have great and extraordinary significance to the Mason. It has been reported that the Middle Chamber housed the secrets of life and a place of the Unseen Presence or Divine Presence. In this Chamber a Fellowcraft receives instruction relative to the wages and jewels of his profession. The letter "G" reminds the Mason that God is the very warp and woof of Freemasonry and that He is the essence of all life.

One author suggests that "God is always Geometrizing". Thus, it is not unusual that the Fellowcraft degree couples the science of Geometry with the Great Architect of the Universe. In this Divine Presence a Fellowcraft also learns that in King Solomon's day wages were from the Corn of nourishment, the Wine of refreshment and the Oil of joy. In this Chamber we allude to the Jewels of a Fellowcraft, which are the attentive ear, the instructive tongue and the faithful breast. We learn and educate ourselves so we can use an instructive tongue to tell others who have a propensity for listening and who can assimilate and store such knowledge. Thus, we have a wide avenue for improving ourselves in Masonry.

Faith

This discussion has not included much about Faith. Faith cannot be easily defined. Freemasons do, however, recognize the power of faith. As one author stated, "It generates energy. It is the dynamics of elevated characters and noble spirits, the source of all that bears the impress of greatness."

Summary

As we have traveled the road map of the Fellowcraft degree you were accorded inspiring lessons and profound attributes to allow us to travel a bit farther in Masonry. In the Entered Apprentice degree were taught to improve your status in Masonry by learning and educating yourself. In the Fellowcraft degree from the time you passed the brazen pillars to your arrival in the Middle Chamber you were challenged to continue learning and gathering Masonic knowledge through the study of architecture and the liberal arts and sciences. Finally, the Unseen Presence of the Great

Architect of the Universe placed upon your heart the willingness to have faith in all that you do.

Demonstrate and explain:

1. modes of recognition, DG, sign.
2. Pass, Pass Grip (token), and Word
3. procedure for addressing the W. Master
4. procedure for responding to the W. Master
5. procedure for entering or exiting a Lodge of F.C.

References:

- “Introduction to Freemasonry II, Fellowcraft”. 2002. Carl H. Claudy. The Temple Publishers.
- “The Golden Book”. Grand Lodge of South Dakota
- “Introduction to Freemasonry” The Grand Lodge of Kansas
- “What is the First Benefit of Freemasonry?” 2001. Kwame Acquah. *In: The Voice of Freemasonry*. The Grand Lodge of the District of Columbia.
- “The Course of Instruction”. Grand Lodge of South Dakota

THE MASTER MASON DEGREE

Upon being raised to the sublime degree of a Master Mason it now becomes more incumbent on a man to observe an even greater discipline in his life. The third degree is concerned with the older adult aspects of life and even the thought of eventual death. We become more aware of our mortality and the inevitable end, as we know it here. However, Masons believe in the existence of a soul and a life after death. We do not define it, but we do believe in it.

The tenets of beliefs of this degree are Friendship, Morality and Brotherly Love. The first and third are rather easily understood and definable. Morality for the Master Mason is perhaps the most important. Our conscience is now tested more than ever. Our obligations are now more binding and defined. How we treat all humans, especially Brother Masons is of the utmost importance. Our actions will be duly recorded. We are duty-bound to help the widows and orphans and guard against violence towards others, even more so the Master Masons with whom we come in contact. As an added note, the Masonic fraternity is perhaps the World’s largest peace organization.

Of great significance in this degree is the lesson of integrity. This lesson focuses on our ability to keep a promise and to execute a stated position we have assured others we will follow.

Charity is an integral part of morality and shows our commitment to the degree to which we have been raised. Charity is Masonry in action. Our actions define who and what we are. The communities in which we live will judge us by the moral actions we show.

Consider the tenants of this degree: Friendship, Morality and Brotherly Love and study them carefully. All the little subtleties of each build the character of a Master Mason. Consider the building of King Solomon's Temple. The intricate planning of the Grand Masters and the care those doing the work had to use. You, as a Mason, are symbolically building a temple and your Trestleboard must have good planning if your temple is to be strong and enduring.

Keep in mind the important meaning of each of the five steps in Masonry. These lessons depict a way of life for the practicing Mason. Study them frequently for they provide an excellent road map for your Masonic future.

Summary

No one will fully grasp or understand the meaning of this degree until they have studied and then studied again. Talking to older Master Masons will be of great help. Regular attendance at Lodge meetings will definitely increase your understanding, Participation, whether it be as an officer or volunteering for Lodge functions, serves to further your Masonic knowledge.

Demonstrate and explain

1. modes of recognition, DG, sign, pass Grip, Word.
2. Five Points of Fellowship, Str. Grip, Subst. Word.
3. Gr. H. Sign Dist.
7. procedure for addressing the W. Master
8. procedure for responding to the W. Master
9. procedure for entering or exiting a Lodge of M.M.

Notes: