

What is a Mason?

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What is a Mason? Simple answer: a man who belongs to the Fraternity of Freemasonry; the largest and oldest organization for men in the world, outside of religious organizations. But there is much more.

A Mason is a member of a Lodge, or local group of Freemasons. He may also belong to other Masonic organizations, but to be a Mason he must belong and continue to belong to a local Lodge or Blue Lodge (two names for the same thing).

To become a member, he has been through at least one of three stages of initiation. To be a full Master Mason, he must have been through all three.

The Degrees, or stages of membership are Entered Apprentice, Fellowcraft {Fellow of the Craft} and Master Mason. Each Degree is based on ancient traditions and ceremonies which have the purpose of transforming the person into a thinking, autonomous, adult male—in control of himself and aware of his abilities and limitations.

This growth and development is the primary purpose of Freemasonry. Charity is not a purpose. The many charities which care for children with disabilities; fund research into eye disease, diabetes, mental health, and Alzheimer's disease; care for the elderly; support education and much more are an effect of that growth and development. Mutual benefit is not a purpose. It is an effect of men who share a common goal and understanding, and have agreed that a Brother is entitled to any help they can reasonably give.

Essentially, a Mason is a man understands that he is not a “finished product.” He understand that he has a responsibility to continue to grow, to develop, and to become more thoughtful, more compassionate, more in touch with his own spiritual nature and with the world around him. And he chooses to use Freemasonry as a path toward that growth.

The best answer to the question was given by the Rev. Joseph Fort Newton, a Baptist Minister who was one of the best-known and most powerful religious voices of the first part of the 20th Century.

When is a man a Mason?

When he can look out over the rivers, the hills, and the far horizon with a profound sense of his own littleness in the vast scheme of things, and yet have faith, hope, and courage—which is the root of every virtue.

When he knows that down in his heart every man is as noble, as vile, as divine, as diabolic, and as lonely as himself, and seeks to know, to forgive, and to love his

fellowman.

When he knows how to sympathize with men in their sorrows, yea, even in their sins-knowing that each man fights a hard fight against many odds.

When he has learned how to make friends and to keep them, and above all how to keep friends with himself.

When he loves flowers, can hunt birds without a gun, and feels the thrill of an old forgotten joy when he hears the laugh of a little child.

When he can be happy and high-minded amid the meaner drudgeries of life.

When star-crowned trees and the glint of sunlight on flowing waters subdue him like the thought of one much loved and long dead.

When no voice of distress reaches his ears in vain, and no hand seeks his aid without response.

When he finds good in every faith that helps any man to lay hold of divine things and sees majestic meanings in life, whatever the name of that faith may be.

When he can look into a wayside puddle and see something beyond mud, and into the face of the most forlorn fellow mortal and see something beyond sin.

When he knows how to pray, how to love, how to hope.

When he has kept faith with himself, with his fellowman, and with his God; in his hands a sword for evil, in his heart a bit of a song-glad to live, but not afraid to die!

Such a man has found the only real secret of Masonry, and the one which it is trying to give to all the world.