
PREPARATION TO BECOME A MASON

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You are preparing to become a Freemason.

How are you preparing? You have the ambition to put upon your breast a tiny pin, representing the Square and Compasses; an ambition to be known as a Master Mason; an ambition to join the great Fraternity of which, perhaps, your father was a member; an ambition to be one of that large brotherhood of which you may have heard so much and of which you know so little.

So you asked a friend, whom you knew to be a Freemason, how to proceed. He gave you a petition to fill out and sign. You were asked to declare your belief in God, and probably your friend explained to you that "God" here means the Supreme Architect of the Universe, call Him by what name you will. He may be to you God or Jehovah or Adonai or Buddha or Allah . . . it makes no difference to Freemasons by what Name you call Him, so there is within you the humble acknowledgement that you are a creature of His, and that He reigns over the heavens and the earth.

It is all very simple; the other questions are of a practical and mundane character, and give you no hint of what a degree may be, in what sort of a ceremony of initiation you will participate, what kind of a fraternity Freemasonry is.

And so there was no hint given you in the paper you signed as to what sort of preparation you should make to become a Freemason. Freemasonry jealously guards her reputation, which is of humility and self-effacement as well as of secrecy and good works.

Freemasonry does not advertise herself. While her contacts with the world are numerous and commonplace, she works so silently, so quietly, that the world knows little of her labors. You seldom hear Freemasonry discussed in public, and references to Freemasonry in the literature of all countries are so cunningly concealed, that you, and all others not members of the Craft, have almost nothing to guide you as to what you should do to and for yourself before you take your Entered Apprentice Degree.

But if you seek, you shall find, in Freemasonry as well as elsewhere. if the friend to whom you went for your petition is a well informed Freemason -- and not all good Freemasons are as well

informed, or as articulate about what they know, as you might like -- he will tell you certain things. in case he cannot or will not speak, some of those things are set down here.

You asked a friend to take your petition into his lodge. His lodge is his Masonic home. Around it cluster all those happy memories, all those beautiful thoughts, all those heart-searching experiences, which go with the word "home." You asked him, therefore, to pay you the complement of taking you into one of the sacred places of his life; in the hope that it will be, and the implied promise that if admitted it shall be, to you one of the sacred places of your life.

You asked not a stranger, but a friend, for this. And his first reply was to direct you to express yourself as to your belief in God.

It does not take a very clever man to see that with such a beginning -- the call of friendship, the sacredness of home, and the belief in God -- Freemasonry is not a joke, not a foolish fun organization, not a club of "good fellows"; not an organization to join as one would a Board of Trade, for business purposes. it is obvious to anyone who thinks, that Freemasonry must be dignified, beautiful, impressive, that it must have a real meaning, a real part to play in a man's life.

Therefore, Brother-to-be, make your preparations to become a Freemason as you would prepare for any other great and ennobling experience of life.

When your petition was signed and delivered, the matter was out of your hands. The lodge assigned a committee to ascertain if you are worthy, from their standpoint, to be of the lodge. Your name was voted on, in due time. You were elected. Now you are notified to present yourself at the West Gate for initiation.

When you go, go clean in mind, in body and in heart.

Take from your mind and cast away forever all thought that there is a "lodge goat" awaiting you, or that your friends are going to "have fun with you." There are fun-loving organizations which cast aside solemnity and spend most of their evenings in laughter and play. But in a Master Mason's lodge, never! There is not a word spoken, an action performed, which can hurt your dignity or your feelings; there is no torture, physical or mental, to degrade you or Freemasonry. There is no "horse play" or other unhappiness awaiting you.

What is done with you has a meaning; the part you play is symbolic, and intended to make a "deep and lasting impression on your mind" of truths, the full understanding of which make you a better man. Put all fear from your mind; remember that is among friends you go, and that the first question they asked you was of your belief in a common Father; men do not start thus who begin to play a joke.

Go clean in body, as you would go clean to a christening or a baptism. nor resent this instruction here; there is intended no insinuation that you are not always clean. but go made clean expressly for this ceremony; though you have but just come from the bath for the evening, go once more and bathe with the thought that you are preparing now for a great step, that the water which laves

your body is also, symbolically, cleansing your mind and your heart. Put on your freshest linen, and let its spotlessness be symbolic of that spotlessness your thoughts should have. For if you neglect these things, you will be sorry, afterwards; what Freemasonry does to you is done to you, not your brethren that will be, and Freemasonry will mean more to you as you approach her Altar humbly and purified.

Finally, Brother-to-be, go with a humble and contrite heart. If it is in your power to do so, put from your heart all evil. If you have an enemy, make an effort to forgive him before you enter the portals of the Temple. If you have done a sin, do your best to honestly regret it before you pass through the West Gate. if you have wronged anyone, make up your mind to right the wrong; you will be the happier man later in the evening if you do. And just before you leave your home, go alone in a quiet room, and, all unashamed, get upon your knees before that God in whom you believe, and ask His blessing upon what you are about to do. pray humbly for the wit to understand what you are about to hear. Ask that it may be given to you to be a good Freemason, to be a brother to others who will be brothers to you, a real workman in the quarry, erecting to Him a Temple not made with hands.

So shall you become an Entered Apprentice with the greatest benefit to your brethren, and real joy to yourself.