

How Does Masonic Behavior Influence Those Around Us?

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What is your vision of the role that Freemasonry plays in impacting the world around us?
What role do we have in being a positive influence in society?

We are taught in the Lodge to use the square and compasses to circumscribe our desires so we can keep our emotions within due bounds and to constantly apply the square of virtue to our actions. But do we continue to apply those lessons when we leave the confines of the Temple? Do the words "every human being has a claim upon your kind offices, do good unto all" hold real meaning for us whether we are in the Lodge or outside of it?

Let's consider three groups of people as we examine how Masonic behavior may exert an influence all around us. These groups are: 1) people that are not members of the Craft, 2) our Brethren in the Craft, and 3) ourselves.

The first group (those not members of the Craft) is the one that Freemasonry aims to indirectly influence through the impact of our Masonic behavior.

Society today is filled with examples of slipping moral standards, an avoidance of a sense of responsibility for one's actions, and a tendency to choose the option of self-interest and self-indulgence over an effort made to act for the general good of society.

Freemasonry, on the other hand, is often described as a fraternal organization which is based on the principle of the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man and which, through its teachings and ceremonies, seeks to make good men better and thereby make the world a better place in which to live.

If we stand out, individually and collectively, as a Fraternity that promotes values associated with improving the condition of mankind and the general welfare of our fellow man, then our potential impact is far-reaching in its benefits. It improves the individual, strengthens the community, and creates an environment of concern for our fellow man instead of for ourselves only. It also creates a model of behavior to which the outside world can look up. The remark is often made, when referring to an uninitiated man that is a role model in the community, that "he was a Mason in his heart and by his actions."

Our goal should be to support a social environment which is filled with Masons, including those initiated as well as those uninitiated, and which promotes Masonic behavior anywhere and everywhere.

The second group, our Masonic Brethren, might be easily overlooked when considering those influenced by Masonic behavior. After all, this group has been initiated, passed and raised and has been provided with their own awareness of Masonic behaviors. But we gather in Lodge for a reason, and that is best summed up by the Senior Warden during the opening of the Entered Apprentice's Lodge when he informs the Worshipful Master that he came there to learn to control his emotions and to become a better man and Mason. Our journey up the winding stairs of making a good man better is sometimes travelled alone, but is often assisted by our Brethren. Our ability to improve ourselves is made easier when we have models of strong Masonic behavior around us to use as guideposts on our journey.

The Masonic behavior that we exhibit in the Lodge assists in the understanding of Freemasonry by our Entered Apprentices and Fellowcrafts, as well as our newly raised Master Masons, as they try to understand how to apply the teachings of Freemasonry into their actions and lives. It shines forth when we whisper good counsel into the ear of an erring Brother instead of embarrassing him in Lodge. It helps us understand that there are many applications of the teachings of Freemasonry, and we see more of its facets when we observe the Masonic behavior of others and consider how we might also emulate that behavior.

The final group, which is ourselves, is most surely influenced by Masonic behavior since we feel the positive benefits of living up to our Masonic obligations and duties, and have the satisfaction of being at harmony with our conscience and making progress towards becoming that perfect ashlar that is the cornerstone of the lesson to make a good man better.

We received the guidelines for Masonic behavior from our ancient operative Brethren through the Book of Constitutions. We are tasked with keeping them alive by practicing those rules of behavior both inside and outside of the Lodge room. Our goal should be to exhibit an exemplary pattern of behavior that is emulated by the non-member, practiced by our Brethren, and ingrained in our own consciousness, and which contributes to the improvement of the human condition and the betterment of society.