

Purposes of a Meeting of a Lodge of Masons.

Masons meet in Lodges and have done so for centuries. Questions often arise as what the purposes of a Masonic Lodge meeting may serve.

Several of the basic purposes are essential to the operations of Freemasonry as an organization. First, is allows the administrative requirements of the Lodge to be completed such as handling finances, planning for the activities of the Lodge, electing officers, and completing other duties necessary for the functioning of Freemasonry as an organization.

A second purpose is the conferral of the ritual and ceremonies of Freemasonry. Periodically, men seek light through Masonry and seek admission to our Lodges for the purposes of enlightenment. Lodges then meet to perform the rituals set forth by those who came before us and we bring men to light as Entered Apprentices.

Modern Lodges have focused their energies in these two areas assuring that the operations of the organization of Freemasonry are functioning smoothly and that those seeking admission to our roles are added through initiation.

Reading Masonic scholars suggests that a Lodge meeting can and, in some minds, should be much more.

Our Entered Apprentice catechism tells us that we have gathered to 'learn, subdue our passions, and improve ourselves in masonry.' This charges us as brothers and as a Lodge to assure that ongoing training and exploration of Freemasonry is an integral part of our Lodge meetings. As the operative craftsmen, in whose footsteps we are walking, continued to improve their skills in their trades, so should we, as speculative masons, strive to continually improve our skills. A simple recitation of the words of the ritual only shows that we have learned. As the goal of our craft is to improve the man, we need to assure that we not only learn, but understand those lessons contained within our ritual and apply them in our daily lives based on that fuller understanding.

A meeting of Freemasons further provides us an opportunity to separate ourselves from the trials and tribulations of daily life and enter a place where the superficial qualities of mankind are left behind and the truly important qualities of mankind become the focus. As we are told in our Entered Apprentice degree, we are to focus on the Internal qualities of a man, not the external.

Others have suggested that the meeting of a lodge of masons consists of the symbolic building of a temple for the work of the lodge, the work of the lodge, and the sealing of that temple to protect the secrets of Freemasonry from the profane providing for us a secure and sacred space for our Labors.

As we prepare ourselves for a meeting of a Lodge of Freemasons, we should shift or focus away from the 'external' qualities of man such as the demands of society including schedules, work projects, bills, meetings, and the demands of others. We should instead shift our focus to the 'internal' qualities of men 'who best can work and best agree.'

As we enter the Lodge room, we are about to embark on several important duties. First, we meet to begin the process of separating ourselves from the profane world outside the Lodge. We begin this process by purging the room of those who are not qualified or worthy to participate in the sacred ceremonies about to be portrayed.

The ceremonies used to open a Lodge of Masons then proceeds with instructing the brothers of the degree being opened. We remind ourselves of our duties of various officers as we prepare ourselves for the labors of the Lodge of the evening. This recitation of the duty of each officer reminds us that we have a duty of our own to make the best use of the time allotted to us and to avoid May we also be reminded we are participating in the ceremonies that have been performed thousands of times over hundreds of years for the purpose of supporting Brotherhood and the values that are the foundation of freemasonry as all brothers and fellows have done before us.

This ceremony of opening a Lodge of masons transforms the room from a simple space within a building to a sacred space whose sole purpose is to focus our attentions on Light through Freemasonry as we fulfill our responsibility to 'learn, subdue our passions, and improve ourselves in Masonry.

As we take note of the many purposes of the meeting of a Lodge of Masons can and should serve, then we must take note of the comments expressed by Bro. Preston in his Second edition of 1775. He states "Though ceremonies are in themselves of little importance, yet as they serve to engage the attention and to impress the mind with reverence, they must be considered as necessary on solemn occasions. They recall to memory the intent of the association, and banish many of those trifling amusements which too frequently intrude on our less serious moments."

He goes on to state "The ceremony used at the opening of our assemblies answers two purposes; it reminds the Master of the dignity of his character, and the brethren of fidelity to their truth. These are not the only advantages resulting from it; a reverential awe for the Diety is inculcated. Here we are taught to adore the God who made us, and to supplicate his protection our well-meant endeavors.

"The closing of our meetings teaches us to offer up the proper tribute of gratitude to the beneficent Author of life; and here the less important duties of the society are not passed over unobserved. By this ceremony we are taught how to support the

regularity of our assemblies, and the necessary degree of subordination which takes place in the government of our lodges.”

“Such is the nature and utility of this ceremony, that it becomes our duty never to omit it; hence it is arranged as a section in every degree in Masonry, and takes the lead in all our illustrations.”

Our review of the purposes a meeting of a Lodge of Freemasons may serve reminds us that what can be seen as simply a meeting can and should be conducted with the solemnity and respect due such an important occasion. As we construct our temple of virtue during the opening of each meeting, and pursue Light through Freemasonry during our labors, we should do so with a strict observation to not only the letter of the ritual, but also to honor the spirit of the ceremony in our manners and demeanor.

Thus we shall render ourselves worthy of the light available through Freemasonry and impress on those with whom we gather the possibilities that exists when we convene a meeting of Brothers.