

# Do Right!

by **Sir Knight Matthew Quesenberry**

Some years ago while working in a customer service department, I was in the process of assisting an elderly lady. She suddenly smiled sweetly, pointed to my past master's ring, and said, "I know what that ring means, and I know you're a good man." Now that remark was so off subject and so unexpected that all I could manage by way of a response was a weak smile and a self-conscious thank you. I wish I had asked what experience had afforded her such a positive opinion of our craft, but she was gone before I could organize my thoughts. I can assure you however, that I redoubled my efforts to assist her with her problem.

As I reflected on her comment throughout the afternoon, I came to the sad conclusion that I was not, in fact, a particularly "good" man. I was far too prone to having outbursts of temper or frustration, to entertaining unkind thoughts of others, and to speaking without first weighing my words, only to be astonished by how mean or foolish I could sound.

So was the lady wrong about our craft? What is it about Freemasonry that could have inspired her belief about it? Why do we expend so much of our time and energy for it? For fancy medals and grandiose titles? We would indeed be pathetic wretches if we had to boost our self-esteem with such vanities! To attend endless, dry business meetings only to hear the minutes of the previous dry business meeting and maybe partake of some coffee and stale cookies afterward? Only if you want to watch your membership evaporate! To support our various charities? While Masonic charity is legendary, we are all bombarded through the daily mail by pleas from scores of other commendable charities. Are we, as some have charged, a subversive order plotting global domination? Anyone who has witnessed our efforts to pay our utilities and per capita and sometimes even to organize a degree or committee would laugh that idea to scorn!

What then is Freemasonry? What is its essence? Numerous answers have been given to that question. Perhaps the most inane is the one that claims Freemasonry is different things to different people. What rubbish! Either a thing means something or it does not. Either it stands for something or it stands for nothing. Oceans of ink and forests of paper have been wasted in defining Freemasonry. I say wasted because anyone who was paying attention during their first visit into a lodge was told what the craft is by the master. "Freemasonry is a beautiful system of morals, veiled in allegory, and illustrated by symbols." It is a system of morals and principles taught by allegory or story. This concise definition applies to all the degrees of all the bodies of Masonry perfectly.

So far, so good. We represent a system of morals. But what morals? Whose morals? For the answer to that question, let us turn once again to the ritual, for nowhere is it answered better than in the Past Master degree of the chapter. "Freemasonry takes men by the hand and, leading them to its altar, points to the open Bible, and urges each to faithfully direct his steps through life by the light he shall find therein. If from our sacred altar the atheist

or irreligious man should ever wrest this book and thus remove, or even obscure, the great light in Freemasonry, that light which has been for centuries the rule and guide of Freemasons, then could we no longer claim the proud title and rank of Master Mason; but so long as that sacred light shines upon our altar, so long as it illumines and brightens the pathway of the Craftsman by the golden rays of truth, so long will Freemasonry live and shed its beneficent influence among men. Guard then, my brother, this sacred book as you guard your life. Defend it as you would defend the flag of your country, live according to its sublime precepts, govern yourself that you may be able to govern others, learn first that you may be able to teach, and remember that moderation and decorum mark the acts of the upright man." There you have it, Companions and Sir Knights! The morals and principles we as Masons are to live by are those of the "Great Light," the Holy Bible, the "rule and guide of our faith and practice."

Without demeaning any other religious system, history and logic will both show that Freemasonry could not have originated or developed in any other environment but a Christian one. No other belief system would have been conducive to the concept of a universal brotherhood. To the Muslim, all infidels are to be converted, subjugated, or eliminated. The Hindus have a strict caste system in which certain groups are to be scrupulously avoided. Even the Jews have a long history of isolationism or outright xenophobia (admittedly, not without reason). Only a Christian influence could have fostered the idea of a "brotherhood of man under the fatherhood of God." Now before those who are infected with an overdeveloped sense of political correctness begin baying for my blood as an intolerant bigot, let me ask you the same question I asked my Jewish coworker, "What Christian virtue as described in scripture (and not as may have been practiced by flawed individuals) would an orthodox Jew or, indeed, any other responsible person find offensive? To speak the truth? To honor one's word? To give charity to the needy? To care for the widow, the orphan, and the weak? To champion justice? To contend with the wicked? To be humble? To be faithful and loving husbands and fathers? To do right even when it is inconvenient, expensive, or unpopular? To give the worship of Jehovah (Yahweh) primacy of place in our lives?" My Companions and Sir Knights, we do not EVER need to apologize to ANYONE for our advocacy of Christian virtues and principles!

Now comes the hard part. Having determined that the morals and precepts of Freemasonry are those of the Holy Bible, we are obliged to incorporate those ethics into our daily lives. In the words of Albert Camus, "A man without ethics is a wild beast loosed upon the world." My Companions and Sir Knights, there are far too many wild beasts out there today! Sadly, some are members in churches and some are members in lodges. Any experienced educator will tell you that if you mix good students with bad students, the good students will never pull up the bad students; rather, the bad students will always pull down the good students. My brethren, until we take the necessary steps to put our own houses in order, we can never hope to change for the better the culture in which we live.

In our postmodern world of materialism, self-interest, and moral relativism, it is no easy thing to live according to Biblical precepts. Sometimes, it even seems impossible, but that shouldn't deter us from making every effort to do so! It needs to be our daily

discipline as we build our moral and Masonic edifices. Did you fail today at some point? Then resolve to try harder tomorrow. Tomorrow you may fail at some other point. Each time you fail, get up and head in the direction of Biblical truth. Like any ability, it will become stronger and easier with practice and discipline. Bear in mind that nothing of any real value is accomplished without effort.

At times we feel weary, discouraged, and even defeated by the circumstances of life and the false values of the world, but be of good cheer. We can turn for support to our Brothers, Companions, and Sir Knights in the various Masonic bodies! This should be the primary purpose of our fraternal assemblies - not to get bogged down in dry business meetings, but to encourage and inspire and assist our members to assimilate the principles of the Bible into daily life. This can be done through the ritual, through Masonic education, through instruction by more experienced members, through individual mentoring, and through private admonishment.

The tenets of our profession are "brotherly love, relief, and truth." Only someone who loves you like a brother will take you aside to tell you that your breath is bad, your fly is open, or your behavior is unscriptural or un-Masonic. That is true brotherly love, relief, and truth in action. A mere acquaintance wouldn't do that for you, because they don't care for you like that. This is not just something we ought to do; this is something we must do! We have all sworn on the Holy Bible numerous times to be true to our fellows and to help them. What assistance could we possibly render that would be more important than to help each other grow as men and as Masons than to encourage and aid each other in the building of our moral and spiritual temples? Our Lodges, Chapters, Councils, and Commanderies should each be doing their part to achieve that end. It should be their primary purpose! If the Masonic bodies you attend are fulfilling that role, then do everything in your power to support them. If they are not, then demand it of them, and if you are an officer, take the responsibility yourself to see that the teaching of Biblical virtues are implemented. Our honor and our oaths demand it!

The adoption of Biblical virtues into the daily practice of our lives will require more courage than ever before. Never in living memory has our culture been so hostile to Christian morality. The materialist and the secular humanist will ridicule such values by telling you that God does not exist, that He is merely a construct to satisfy the psychological needs of some. Stand fast, my brethren, for the great light in Freemasonry tells us, "The Fool hath said in his heart, 'There is no God!'" (Psalm 14:1). The New Ager will tell you about the "earth mother" or the "god within you," the oldest of all lies. Never make the mistake of worshipping the creature or the creation rather than the Creator! The moral relativist will tell you that Christian virtues may be valid for you but not for him and that, in any event, they are outdated. The great light however, states, "For I am the Lord, I change not." (Malachi 3:6).

Jehovah is not subject to trends and fashions. He stands outside of time and is indifferent to it; therefore, His law is valid for all people in all times. What scripture says is right, is always right; what it says is wrong, is always wrong. There is nothing relative about it! It doesn't matter what society condones. It doesn't matter what everyone else is doing . . . DO RIGHT! Though it costs you time or money - do right. Though it earns you enmity

or ridicule - do right. Though it causes those you formerly named as friends to desert you - do right. When there is no chance of recognition, commendation, or reward - do right. When no one but you and God will ever know - do right.

My friends, this is the purpose of Masonic teaching from the Blue Lodge through the capitular, cryptic, and chivalric degrees. Do right using the Holy Bible, that great Light in Masonry as our rule and guide. Brethren, the degree to which we have assimilated these precepts is the degree to which we have matured as Masons and as men.

Mark Twain wrote, "Always do right. This will gratify some people and astonish the rest." It will astonish them, but it will also intrigue them. Up to this point, I have dealt with the difficulties of living by Christian virtues. We have looked at the discipline and persistence that is required and the discouragements and outright hostility of an unbelieving world along with the courage and determination needed to overcome it. Now we will examine the benefits of a Biblically correct lifestyle.

While it is true that some will revile us, others will indeed be astonished and fascinated by a pattern of behavior that defies societal norms. Though they would not readily admit it, many people today are desperately seeking something real to hold onto, because they recognize the bankruptcy of our post-modern culture. Young people are especially eager for something genuine with which to connect. This affords us a tremendous opportunity. You have heard it said that people would rather see a sermon than hear one. By living according to Christian precepts, we not only strengthen our society, but we may inspire others to emulate us and even flock to the Craft. But beware. There is a tremendous double standard at play in this situation. Those who do not profess virtue are not faulted when they fail to exhibit it, but those who claim to live by Biblical standards must never allow themselves to slip. Remember your talk talks and your walk talks, but your walk talks louder than your talk talks.

Our actions, both good and ill, are like the ripples caused by a stone cast into a pond, radiating outward and touching others in ways we could never imagine. Who among us has not bemoaned the moral and cultural decline of our country? What if just one man decided to faithfully live out his life in obedience to Christian morality? What if a hundred men in the same community made that decision? Do you think they would be noticed? What if it was known that they all belonged to the same organization? Do you think that others might want to join? Companions and Sir Knights, here is the only way in which we can retake our society. It will never happen from the top down. It can only occur from the grassroots up; it must begin with us. The beneficial effect on our communities, neighborhoods, and society as a whole would be profound.

Here too, is the answer to the eternal concern over membership. For too long, we have sought to increase our roles by making it easier, cheaper, and more convenient for new initiates to join. Instead, we should raise the bar, so that we can stand in sharp contrast to the culture around us. Let us set such high standards that they can only be approached by constant effort, study, and the reinforcement and assistance of dedicated brethren. That will attract men of the quality we seek and need. It will not only bring in new members, but, more importantly, will increase our influence and recognition in society at large.

A final benefit of the adoption of Biblical morality is an individual one. Numerous passages of scripture allude to the blessings we will receive and the happiness we will enjoy if we study and pursue the principles contained in the great light of Masonry. For example, Joshua 1:8 states, "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success." Would anyone here like to be prosperous? It's not as easy as it once was, but here is your answer. Does anyone remember what Joshua accomplished? He led a bunch of homeless nomads to a land where they became a great nation. Do you think he knew something about how to be successful? James, the brother of Jesus, says about the same thing in the New Testament. Are you worried about how you are going to make ends meet? In the "Sermon on the Mount," Jesus addressed that very subject declaring, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." Not a bad deal. The study of Biblical truth, as recommended to the Freemason, will instill in us a sense of peace and confidence that will enable us to weather any storm and conduct ourselves in a manner befitting a member of the Craft.

Returning to the elderly lady in my story, I can only conclude that she was right in her assessment. This ring should identify a good man! If I fail to measure up, it is only because I have not always used the great light as my rule and guide. That lady knew that a Mason is a good man. How many women her daughter's age know much about us? How many her granddaughter's age have ever heard of us? Brethren, that is our fault, but we can correct that situation if we direct our steps by the great light, the Holy Bible. We can become the men that the Craft charges us to be if we govern ourselves according to Christian morality. The prophet Micah writes, "What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Micah 6:8) When we do that - when we obey the lesson of every degree we have ever received by making Biblical morality our own, then we will be known as men, "to whom the burdened heart may pour out its sorrow, to whom distress may prefer its suit, whose hand is guided by justice, and whose heart is expanded by benevolence." In short, Companions and Sir Knights - DO RIGHT.

Sir Knight Matthew Quesenberry, Past Commander of Palestine Commandry No. 17, presented this article at the South Central York Rite Conference in Kansas City, Missouri this past year. The Companions and Knights there though you might enjoy it also. Sir Knight Quesenberry resides at 9513 East 68th Street, Raytown, MO 64133 and can be contacted by e-mail at [jsteiner4@kc.rr.com](mailto:jsteiner4@kc.rr.com)

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