

What Came Ye Here to Do ?

Upon becoming a Freemason, this fraternity, this society you have joined asked of you one question – simple, yet profound – ‘What came ye here to do?’ I hope your answer is just as profound.

Because none of us *needs* to be a Freemason....and what I mean by that is....we all *chose* to be a Freemason. We chose this life because something in our nature is responding to a mysterious call. And as such, your Masonic journey is really like a mission. Your mission, should you choose to accept it is to learn, to subdue your passions, and improve yourself in Masonry.

To subdue your passions...which at first blush, seems a bit counterproductive? Didn't we learn as a child to be passionate about what we do? For the initiate in our Masonic order, this is one of the first and most important points of Freemasonry and yet this is often vulnerable to misinterpretation, and consequently, I think it merits a closer look.

First, we must understand why we use the word *passion*. As it relates to our ritual, I believe we are talking about an affection of the mind. Oxford Dictionary refers to this type of passion as “Any kind of feeling by which the mind is powerfully affected or moved; a vehement, commanding, or overpowering emotion.”

That's why we come to this temple of virtue, to subdue our overpowering emotions, because passion, taken to the extreme soon overcomes our reason. And are we not instructed by the virtue of PRUDENCE which teaches us to regulate our lives and actions agreeably to the dictates of reason, and it is that habit by which we wisely judge and prudentially determine all things relative to our present as well as to our future happiness. This virtue should be the peculiar characteristic of every Mason, not only for the government of his conduct while in the Lodge, but also when in the world.”

In other words, when you combine these concepts into one thought, we can say that “to subdue my passions” means through the virtuous teachings of Masonry one learns to bring commanding and overpowering emotions and desires under control. This is quite the contrary to the situation in which a man's passions and emotions have control over his sense of logic and reason – a situation which Masonry seeks to remedy and which is often described through the all too well known cliché of ‘making a good man better’. In other words, it's not within the capability of our ego-driven self to keep passion in check....we must learn to do this.

How?

By improving oneself in Masonry. At first this seems such an obvious statement – for why else would you be here? It's so vast it almost seems like the perfect “catch all” statement. For it is a personal commitment. You joined to improve yourself.

Unfortunately, the Masonic experience for some is reminiscent of the fallacy of what has become a tag line for an entire generation – *Here we are, now entertain us*. But nothing could be further from the truth. Freemasonry exists for YOU to discover her treasures, and no one should expect it to be done for them. You come here to learn, and improve yourself in knowledge about Masonry. And it is through and from this expansion of knowledge that we begin to learn to conduct ourselves with peace and harmony with those around us. First with our brethren, but then with the outer world, and consequently, we become a better, more improved version of our self.

As Masons, we are called to labor and be laborers. From the very first step in our journey we are taught symbolically how to make use of every hour of every day by the 24-inch gauge. We are taught to divide our time equally between our service to the Supreme Architect and our worthy brethren, to our society through our vocation and to the refreshment of ourselves and family.

This is why it is so hard for many of us to sit idle, wasting the hours away accomplishing little but the short lived thrills of passing amusement. It's simply not in our nature as Masons. If you stop and think about it, we are constantly working on a temple – whether it's spiritual or temporal, it's still your personal temple. We build – that is what we do, and no rest for the weary.



You see, this is why our Grand Master's theme this year encapsulates the very essence of what it means to be a Mason. You need to be the force for good that responds to those who ask about Masonry. The things you do and say will enable an honest critic to perceive that Masonry is definitely a force for good in the world. It's not simply a theme but rather a reminder of the declaration you made when you chose to become a Mason. It's what you came here to do...to act like a Mason, and be a force for good.

Masons see brotherhood as a form of wisdom, a sort of bond that holds men together. Masons believe a man should maintain an attitude of good will, and promote unity and harmony in his relations with one another and his community. We call this the 'Brotherhood of Man'. It really means that every Mason makes it his duty to follow the golden rule. This is why Masonry has been called one of the greatest forces for good in the world.

So brethren, I ask you again, what came ye here to do? And with that...let us now set to work. The practices we follow are not odd or meaningless. They are ancient and significant parts of Masonic history. So, let us keep them....but, we must also explain them. This is the reason I seek to discover more 'Nuggets from the Quarry of Freemasonry'.



..... #91 in a series of nuggets from the Quarry of Freemasonry.SM