

Taking Charge of Our Masonic Lives

Good evening to you all. This year I would like to focus on some of the basic things that we have probably heard many times, but maybe you would benefit by a closer inspection of the wording and meaning behind them. I've titled my lecture 'taking charge' because the first of these many things I'm going to review is the Charge that we hear at the closing of every Master Masons lodge. It's just a short paragraph that we probably all know the words to, but let us reflect a little more deeply in what those words mean.

Brethren, we are now about to quit this sacred retreat of friendship and virtue to mix again with the world. Amidst its concerns and employments forget not the duties which you have heard so frequently inculcated and so forcibly recommended in this lodge. These first two lines remind us that we are now about to leave a safe place where we have been among brothers able to speak freely. It reminds us as we mix with world to consider the concerns and employments of the world and not to forget our Masonic duties that we've heard in our various lessons.

Remember that around this sacred altar you have solemnly bound yourselves to befriend and relieve every brother who shall need your assistance. You have promised in the most friendly manner to remind him of his error and aid a reformation. My Brethren, take these words to heart. This charge brings back those obligations we made at the altar. They are not just words; they don't say befriend only the brothers that agree with your way of thinking or beliefs, or only the brothers that we see on a regular basis...they say *every* brother. While you have solemnly bound yourself to befriend every brother who shall need your assistance, this does not mean you have to say yes to everything that is asked of you, but also consider if you are able to provide the needed assistance without significant inconvenience or impact to yourself, are you saying no for the right reasons?

As in most families, sometimes brothers are not friends and do not always get along, but our words of speaking no evil as we knelt in this lodge apply in and out of this room. We are only human and at one point or another we have all spoken less than positively about a fellow Mason, even if only in frustration or difference of opinion. But again brethren, reflect on what the 'most friendly manner' is. Because we are human and not perfect ashlar, words can hurt and ultimately lead to increasing the rough corners of our Brother instead of helping smooth those corners. Let us not use those tools that have been given for the wrong purposes. Even when frustrated, let us be positive within our fraternity in how we communicate.

These generous principles are to extend further; every human being has a claim upon your kind offices. Do good unto all – recommend it more especially to the household of the faithful. These lines cannot be clearer, and echo how we should aid a reformation. We are to be kind unto all. Just as masonry allows for multiple interpretations of what a Supreme Being is or how the Great Architect of the Universe is portrayed, we should have the same openness to mankind. Too many others are looking for reasons to segregate, judge, denounce, denigrate, exclude or seek conflict. We as Masons should strive to do better and set an example.

I know I have mentioned this in prior lectures, but the more we exhibit good behaviors in and out of the lodge room, the more we adhere to this charge and do good unto all. I am not aware of any belief system within our fraternity that actively promotes negative actions to fellow members of humanity. If we all follow our belief systems supported by our Masonic Virtues and Values including Friendship, Morality and Brotherly love, we cannot err in our path to being better men.

Finally, Brethren, be ye all of one mind; live in peace and may the God of peace and love delight to dwell with and bless you. While no community or group of individuals is all of one mind, I think the message is clear here, if we follow the obligations we have made and virtues we have had exemplified and inculcated into our beings, we should have that common purpose to make ourselves, other human beings and our world a better place. If we are fortunate to have that presence of the Deity within us and blessing our lives, we are fortunate indeed.

Think on this and really hear the words as you listen to the Charge by the Master as we close lodge. I hope you will hear them differently now.



'The Winding Staircase - A path to improving yourself in Masonry'

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