

What can you tell a non-Mason about Freemasonry?

The Fraternity of Free and Accepted Masons is the oldest, largest and most widely known fraternal organization in the world. Volumes have been written about it. Yet, to many, Freemasonry remains a mystery.

History – Some historians trace Freemasonry to the 10th Century, B.C., during the building of King Solomon’s Temple. Records reveal that Freemasonry was introduced into England in 926 A.D.

Many other historians believe that Freemasonry is directly descended from the association of operative masons, the cathedral builders of the Middle Ages, who traveled through Europe employing the secrets and skills of their crafts.

In the 17th Century, when cathedral building was on the decline, many guilds of stone-masons, known as “Operative Masons” or “Free Masons,” started to accept as members those who were not members of the masons’ craft, calling them “speculative Masons” or “Accepted Masons.”

It was from these groups, comprised mostly of “Adopted or Accepted Masons,” that Symbolic Masonry or Freemasonry, as we know it today, had its beginning.

A more recent theory suggests that Freemasonry grew out of the survivors of the destruction of the Order of the Temple in 1314 by King Philip The Fair of France. Many Templars fled France and hid in England, Scotland and Ireland. To maintain their Order, they developed another organization, giving it a legendary ancient history to contribute to its cover from the authorities who wished it destroyed. John Robinson’s book, BORN IN BLOOD, is an excellent text describing this theory in detail.

Grand Lodges – In 1717, four Lodges of Freemasons meeting in London, England, formed the first Grand Lodge.

The first Grand Lodge chartered Symbolic Lodges and Provincial Grand Lodges in many countries, including the United States.

Today, there are more than 160 Grand Lodges in free countries of the world with a membership of more than 3.6 million. In the United States there are 51 Grand Lodges. There are approximately 1.2 Freemasons in the 51 Jurisdictions of the United States.

Symbolic Lodge – The basic unit of all Grand Lodges is the Symbolic Lodge, or “Blue Lodge,” as it is commonly known.

It is the Symbolic Lodge that issues petitions for initiation and membership, acts on petitions and confers the three Symbolic Degrees, known as the Entered Apprentice, Fellow Craft and Master Mason Degrees.

There are more than 430 Symbolic Lodges in the Jurisdiction of Pennsylvania with a membership of approximately 130,000.

Membership – Membership is limited to adult males who can meet the recognized qualifications and standards of character and reputation.

A man becomes a Freemason through his own volition. No one is asked to join its ranks. When a man seeks admission to a Symbolic Lodge, it is of his own free will and accord. The choice is his.

The petitioner must be recommended by two Master Masons, one of which must be a Member of the Lodge to which he desires to apply and pass a unanimous ballot. The petitioner must be 18 years of age, mentally competent, of good moral character and believe in the existence of a Supreme Being.

Masonic Secrecy – Contrary to what many believe, Freemasonry is not a secret society. It does not hide its existence or its membership.

There has been no attempt to conceal the purpose, aims and principles of Freemasonry. It is an organization formed and existing on the broad basis of Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth. Its constitutions are published for the world to behold. Its rules and regulations are open for inspection.

Freemasonry and Religion – Freemasonry is not a religion even though it is religious in character.

It does not pretend to take the place of religion nor serve as a substitute for the religious beliefs of its members.

Freemasonry accepts men, found to be worthy, regardless of religious convictions. An essential requirement is a belief in the existence of a Supreme Being.

It teaches monotheism. It teaches the Golden Rule. It seeks to make good men better through its firm belief in the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man.

What Freemasonry Is Not – Freemasonry is not an insurance or beneficial society. It is not organized for profit. However, the charity and services rendered are beyond measure.

Tenets of Freemasonry – The Tenets of Freemasonry are ethical principles that are acceptable to all good men. It teaches tolerance toward all mankind.

It is known throughout the world.

Freemasonry proudly proclaims that it consists of men bound together by bonds of Brotherly Love and Affection.

It dictates to no man as to his beliefs, either religious or secular. It seeks no advantage for its members through business or politics.

Freemasonry is not a forum for discussion on partisan affairs.

A Way of Life – Freemasonry is kindness in the home, honesty in business, courtesy in society, fairness in work, pity and concern for the unfortunate, resistance toward evil, help for the weak, forgiveness for the penitent, love for one another, and above all reverence and love for God.

Freemasonry is many things, but, most of all:

**FREEMASONRY IS A WAY OF LIFE**