

WILLIAM O. WARE LODGE OF RESEARCH

SETTING A TRAP FOR MASONS WHY BECOME A MASON

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There is a prevailing impression that Freemasonry is a shadow organization with nefarious purposes. Is that true? Let's set a trap for them and find out.

A core Masonic principle is to embrace a higher power, although this principle does not specify a particular religion. Modern terms such as affirmation, visualization, mind treatment, or imagination seem to indicate a special individual knowledge of what it means to actually be in contact with universal focus or understanding. One might call that a "spiritual affiliation." How can that be, and yet we say that Masons do not have any religious affiliation? We, as humans, have a unique mental ability which some call, "The Spirit in Man." These are the things that separate us from animal instinct – the ability to plan, reason, choose direction of thought, and change paradigms of belief.

What do we mean by, "setting a trap?" In Rocco Errico's book, *Setting a Trap for God*, the author uses the titular phrase not in the sense of trying to capture and imprison God, but in the Aramaic linguistic sense of preparing the mind to sense His presence. To set a trap for Masonic understanding, and the process of becoming a Freemason, requires a childlike open mind and the frequent need to ask the question, "Why?"

When we petition a Lodge to become a Mason, one of the first questions we are asked is, "Why do you want to become a Mason?"

One contributor to the notion that the Masonic Order is an evil organization is the idea that Masonic admission is just an open door to a cosmic vending machine – cranking out relationships or numbers of members, which may give one personal contact to get "more" out of life. Certainly, there may be side benefits to membership in Freemasonry, but that is to miss the real meaning of *becoming* a Mason.

"Setting a trap" for knowledge, and subduing our passions, presents a profound "why" we become Masons. Then, sharing that knowledge is imperative. One point in the book discusses the Aramaic word, "slotha," which carries meanings such as, "to focus," or "to adjust," or "to tune in." We might say, in our language of today, "to select the proper channel," or "to tune into a desired program." In this way, we "set a trap" for Masonic knowledge.

We call on the "G" at the beginning of each meeting. We adjust and prepare our minds to receive the intended presentation of information and fellowship of the true Masonic program. This stirs the Spirit in man to connect with the Great Geometrician, or Architect, of the Universe and everything in Creation. His love, intelligence and acceptance are everywhere and exist through everything. This is a profound "why" of becoming a Mason.

Slotha, then, answers the first "Why." By opening our minds, we can trap the love, outgoing concern, joy, truth, peace, energy and compassion we need to travel on the path of Freemasonry. It is taking a good man, and making him a better man. It is an attitude of heart and mind that prepares us to face the world around us.

A second “Why:” Why do we not specify any particular religion? After all, doesn’t the “G” stand for God? A side note, nonetheless, is that we all have a mental picture of God. For each person, this picture is probably a little different. Some picture Him as a kind, but stately, old man. Some picture Him as a being that reigns with a strict set of rules. The term “God” simply means a Deity. The Aramaic term is Alaha. The Hebrew term is Elohim or Alohim. The name for Deity does not start with “G.” Certainly, there are many other terms for the Great Architect. The purpose of accepting those of many beliefs is the inclusive practice of accepting men who recognize the presence that permeates and acts through the universe. It continues the evolution of our awareness of its power, and the maturation of our individuality. If we humble ourselves and open our spirit to the ultimate source of all power, we set the trap in our mind to receive the living, sustaining presence that abides in all good men.

A third “Why:” Why all the order and pomp while opening and closing the Lodge? The order of the eternal universe is living and dynamic. There is order in all of it, from the entire universe to the smallest part of an atom. All is in order. What we do in Lodge is intuitive, not just intellectual. We don’t just learn to move or pass. We are not just repeating memorized words. If we do just that, the trap isn’t set. We just know the ritualistic answers, and not the meaning of the whole process. There is a difference between knowledge and understanding. If the order of learning an action is omitted, we don’t leave with the trap set. We don’t stay, “tuned in.”

Why do we need such an extended time to move to the second and third Degrees? Simply put, it would be like saying we understand sufficiently because we stayed in a Holiday Inn Express last night.

As progress continues in our Lodge, education has always been part of our learning process, but is evolving and is ever more inclusive. This is only a simplistic answer to why such long classes. It takes time to gain understanding rather than just knowledge. As an old saying goes, “stupid is forever, ignorance can be fixed.” We aren’t necessarily stupid, but we are all in need of understanding. Thus, we are ignorant for a season. Time and true commitment are necessary.

Why do we stress change? Let’s answer that question with a question: What will all the effort gain each of us? By fellowshiping with like-minded men, iron sharpens iron. We meet in an atmosphere in which our minds can better comprehend the world we face daily. We must fully realize that we can constantly work with the inner supreme intelligence to guide us in solving problems we face in life.

We all have fears that create blockages, preventing us from trapping what Masonic life and learning gives or shares with respect to the inner guidance that we need. It takes courage, thankfulness, and freedom to face ourselves squarely. In do so, we are trapping the essence of becoming a Freemason. It is an ongoing process.

When we attune our mind to the “Whys,” we can trap what it means to become a Mason. We set a trap for learning and applying the teachings in our everyday lives. We are equipped to live a more fruitful and abundant life. Contrary to the secretive reputation of the Masonic Order, there really aren’t any secrets. There is nothing complicated or difficult in the path that we walk in becoming Masons. When we follow the teachings, we share all the secrets, through our actions, with all with whom we come in contact. Being a Freemason is within us. It is within our minds, our spirits and our actions. Even though we are all, at times, weak, the Masonic path is within our reach. We must act and lay hold of it. Thus, just paying dues and never showing up only makes one a Mason in name only.

Last Why: Why would one want to be a Mason in name only? Quality outweighs quantity, greatly. We all have substantial quality gifts, though they are individual and different. We have readily available a “trap” set to capture becoming a Freemason. Unity with like-minded men makes our thoughts creative. It enables our Brothers to let their energies flow; and it turns our “get” attitude to a “give” attitude (it is better to give than

to receive). The “trap” is sprung, and the reality and gift of Masonic thought is received. Individual gifts are shared, which strengthens the group.

None of us walk perfect through the West Gate. Blessed are those who *become* perfect, not *are* perfect. Ours is a journey of being merciful, pure of heart, and a peacemaker.

It is not just the Deity that is everywhere. It is a powerful sharing of a spiritual chance in all of us, as men, that also is everywhere. It represents the depth of our inner being – that on which we focus and that on which we concentrate. Either we feed the good or feed the evil.

In conclusion, why are we set apart? There are those who have a false concept of Masonic belief. We are not responsible for that. We accept a path as followers of the Great Architect. We are set apart from abusive deeds and unjust transactions. A Mason will represent himself as good and wholesome. By our actions, we enlighten those around us as to just what being a Mason means.

It is in the fundamental nature of a Mason to keep asking, “Why.” I wholeheartedly encourage all to continue asking this question. You’ll “trap” a lot in the intellectual sphere of Masonic understanding.