

# The Three “Rs” of Masonry

Presented at William O. Ware Lodge of Research by Edwin L. Vardiman  
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I’m sure that all of us are very familiar with the Three Rs of Education. These, of course, are “Reading, ‘Riting and ‘Rithmetic.” If we believe the old song, these were taught to the tune of a hickory stick. The three Rs were the foundation of education back in the “Good Old Days.” By the way, I’ve never been really sure just when the “Good Old Days” occurred. When I was growing up back in the 30’s and 40’s, I understood the “Good Old Days” as being back in the horse and buggy time about the turn of the century. However, as I see and hear the current news media and the trendsetters of the day, I understand that the “Good Old Days” was the decade of the 1950s. This is now the decade when I understand that the people were all prosperous and happy, the United States foreign policy was consistent and successful and rock and roll music had not overrun the land! No matter when we consider the “Good Old Days” to have occurred, I suppose we all agree that the Three Rs of Education have shown their value down through the years. Even now, the Commonwealth is undergoing reform of its education techniques in an effort to “get back to basics.”

Now let us see if we can find a similar set of Rs which will distill the value and principles of our beloved fraternity. I’m sure that many possibilities come to your mind. In fact, since I’ve been preparing this talk, I’ve had several suggestions as to the Three Rs. One set consisted of Ritual, Regalia and Relaxation. Another, suggested by an illustrious Brother, was the set of Refreshments, Rotund and Remorse. While all of these Rs may have some application to each one of us, I believe we can find some Rs which will illustrate some of the basic values in Masonry if we dig a little deeper.

One of the dangers of making a talk based on a series of words or letters is that you can get carried away and go on and on. I’ll try not to do that as I recall a story of a man who had graduated from Yale University, and who lost no chance to tell everyone how proud he was to have attended this very prestigious Ivy League school. This fellow was giving a talk to his Lodge one night and he worked in Yale University by basing his topic on the letters of Y A L E. He talked on Y as youth and its opportunities, the A as ambition and its importance, the L as learning or education and the E as energy and drive. He got carried away and droned on and on. Finally, he finished and as two of

the Brothers were leaving the hall, one turned to the other and asked what he thought of the program. Came the reply, "I'm just glad our Brother didn't attend the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

As I have indicated, there are many Rs which could be discussed as being indicators of the very essence of Masonry. You may well think of others which fit just as well or better, but for the sake of discussion I suggest to you the first R will be Reason. We are taught has Masons to be men of reason and rationality. We are told to circumscribe our actions and to keep our passions within due bounds. Thus, we must not be ruled by our emotions, but rather we must be men of intellect who think for ourselves. We should judge others by what they do and not by what they say. We should use our minds that GOD has given us to improve ourselves by learning more of the great truths that are contained in the teachings of Masonry. I commend the Lodge of Research for its efforts in that endeavor.

By using our minds and learning more as the opportunities for increased knowledge present themselves, we are led to the second R, which is Renewal. If we are sincere in our efforts to search out the truths in Masonry, we will find that our lives are renewed in many respects. Brethren, if we are sincere in our efforts to follow the great truths, we will find that we have reach that goal for which this fraternity strives, and this to take good men and make them better. If we are sincere and persevere, we will find our religious faith strengthened, our family relationships more secure, and our personal outlook and philosophy greatly improved. Please consider for a moment those obligations which each of us has taken upon ourselves, the promises we made at the altar regarding our dealings with Lodge Brethren as well as the profane. If we are striving to live us to these obligations and make them a part of our daily lives, we will find a renewal of purpose and a joy of living that some pay literally thousands of dollars to psychologists to try to obtain. However, most never successfully achieve what is available to us within the teachings and fellowship of this fraternity.

The third, and last R is the verb Radiate. I firmly believe, Brethren, that if we use our Reason to search out the teachings of Masonry, and that if we apply them to our lives so that we find a Renewal of purpose and happiness, that we cannot help but Radiate all those good feelings from within. If we let our happiness within ourselves, and our dedication to the principles of Masonry become an integral part of our lives, these characteristics will so radiate out to others that they must be impressed with what is available in this great fellowship. It has been proven over the years that one of the most important means we have of attracting new members is for a man to impressed

by the reputation and integrity of the members of the Masonic Lodge. Yet, too many members do not let others know of their love for, or sometimes of their membership in, the Lodge. If they were to let their pride in Masonry radiate in their lives, what a difference it could make not only in the membership list, but also in the lives and personalities of those who might otherwise never have an exposure to the value of the teachings of this fraternity.

So, there you have my “Three Rs.” You may very well have others in mind, and I invite you to share them. However, if none occur to you tonight, please think on the possibility of other words which may sum up some important impact which Masonry has had in your life. I challenge you to not stop with just the Rs, either. Masonry is too deep and widely founded ever to be covered by only one letter of the alphabet.