

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Masonic Perspectives Questions Vol. IV

Name: **Edwin Graves Taylor**
Years in Masonry: **3**
Lodge Name and Number: **St. Andrews Lodge No. 18
(KY)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

Some men to whom I looked up were Masons, and I wanted to join a group about which they were passionate and that seemed to benefit them.

2. How would you assess the current state of Freemasonry?

Somewhere between poor and mediocre.

3. In what ways has Freemasonry been useful to you in your quest for personal improvement?

The application of the working tools and the lessons in my life.

4. What aspects of Freemasonry appeal to you most? Why?

Having Brothers that genuinely care about me and hold me accountable.

5. Generally, the minimum time between the Entered Apprentice Degree and the Fellow Craft Degree, and then between the Fellow Craft Degree and the Master Mason Degree, is one lunar month, or 28 days. Do you think that a man can be adequately prepared to advance to the next Degree within the minimum period of time? Why, or why not?

Absolutely not. The lessons in the Degrees are far more detailed than you can fully understand and comprehend in one month.

6. Do you think that a structured Masonic education program that begins prior to the Entered Apprentice Degree and continues after the conferral of the Master Mason Degree would be beneficial? Why, or why not?

110%, yes! I talk with Brothers that have been in the Fraternity far longer than I, and are more proficient in Freemasonry, and they still do not understand/comprehend all that is contained within the Degrees. We can have a conversation, and both come out more knowledgeable than before. You can never stop learning.

7. Do you think that one-day classes, or other programs by which men are rapidly advanced through the Degrees, are beneficial to Freemasonry? Why, or why not?

No, these are not beneficial. I believe that studies have shown that one-day Masons have roughly the same retention rate as “conventional” Masons. And, we still have a problem keeping “conventional” Masons. So I do not see any benefits to have one-day, or fast tracked, Degrees.

8. What influence, if any, do you think that Masonic education has on the retention of members within Freemasonry?

If you do not benefit from being involved in something, you shy away from that group. I believe that all humans have a desire to learn. If Lodges do not offer this, then what else is keeping men engaged?

9. Do you view Freemasonry as being a primarily charitable organization? Why, or why not?

NO!!!! Being charitable is not our purpose. The intent of Freemasonry is defined in the Entered Apprentice Degree. It is to make men wiser, better and consequently happier. That is the purpose of Freemasonry.

10. What would you say to men who are interested in becoming a Freemason?

Freemasonry is not for everyone. This is not a group that will benefit you by just being a member. You have to want to be a Freemason, and you have to work hard at it. If you do not have a desire and drive to improve yourself, then you are not going to get anything out of it. Freemasonry does not automatically entitle you to the benefits. It provides the tools for you to build a better life for yourself. If you're not willing to use those tools, and put in the work, then this is not for you.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Masonic Perspectives Questions Vol. IV

Name: **Mike Bryant**
Years in Masonry: **14**
Lodge Name and Number: **Breathitt Lodge No. 649
(KY);
Booneville Lodge No. 939
(KY);
Henry Bannister Grand
Lodge of Research (KY)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

I was intrigued by the history and rituals.

2. How would you assess the current state of Freemasonry?

I am concerned that Freemasonry is losing membership, but further concerned by some of the proposed solutions and path that many want to take to recruit. I hold to the more traditional view of no active recruitment. Another proposed fix to recruit more members often comes in the form of something like, “do more community activities so people will see us.” This, to me, sets a dangerous precedent since Freemasonry is not about the community as much as the Brotherhood and self-improvement.

On a positive note, I see a resurgent interest in the symbols and history of Masonry, and the push for self-improvement. That is very promising.

3. In what ways has Freemasonry been useful to you in your quest for personal improvement?

It has really helped me to be much more introspective, and learn to live by what I say. The ashlar is the symbol that appeals to me most in that I have learned to chip off extraneous parts as I journey.

4. What aspects of Freemasonry appeal to you most? Why?

History, symbolism, Brotherhood, and, honestly, secrecy.

5. Generally, the minimum time between the Entered Apprentice Degree and the Fellow Craft Degree, and then between the Fellow Craft Degree and the Master Mason Degree, is one lunar month, or 28 days. Do you think that a man can be adequately prepared to advance to the next Degree within the minimum period of time? Why, or why not?

Generally, yes. Considering where a man is first made a Mason, combined with the fact that we (ostensibly) take good men and make them better, the 28 days in between degrees should be sufficient time to learn the details.

6. Do you think that a structured Masonic education program that begins prior to the Entered Apprentice Degree and continues after the conferral of the Master Mason Degree would be beneficial? Why, or why not?

Most certainly, yes. We focus on the catechisms and leave the rest. What is left is even more important in many ways. Over time, a Mason that attends regularly will gather the information, but a structured program will certainly help them sooner and better.

7. Do you think that one-day classes, or other programs by which men are rapidly advanced through the Degrees, are beneficial to Freemasonry? Why, or why not?

No. It is not our job to improve Masonry. This would only be beneficial in increasing the number of men that hold dues cards, not the number of Freemasons. However, I do believe that the “Mason at Sight” prerogative of the Grand Lodge should be honored, so long as it follows the format described by Mackey in his Landmarks.

8. What influence, if any, do you think that Masonic education has on the retention of members within Freemasonry?

Education is perhaps the single most important issue when it comes to retention. Too many Masons know little about the Fraternity and lose interest.

9. Do you view Freemasonry as being a primarily charitable organization? Why, or why not?

In a sense, yes. But to our Brethren. Our symbols and our documents speak primarily to self-improvement and charity to Brothers, widows and orphans. We are not to be a charitable organization for the world at large.

10. What would you say to men who are interested in becoming a Freemason?

I first ask them about belief in God, and their age if it is not obvious that they are old enough. I tell them that we do not recruit, that I will not invite them, but if they are interested in joining, they are welcome to ask me for a petition. I generally also give a short description of Masonry, saying things such as we strive for self-improvement, have lots of symbolism, and only look for good and upstanding, moral men.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Masonic Perspectives Questions Vol. IV

Name: **Keith W. Gunkel**
Years in Masonry: **10**
Lodge Name and Number: **Orion Lodge No. 222 (KY)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

My uncle, on my mother's side, was a big influence in my life. He was a Mason and a Shriner.

2. How would you assess the current state of Freemasonry?

Evolving, and in a state of needed change for the betterment of the Fraternity.

3. In what ways has Freemasonry been useful to you in your quest for personal improvement?

It has helped me practice patience, and to not let my emotions control me, but to stop and focus on the individual and the circumstances.

4. What aspects of Freemasonry appeal to you most? Why?

Brotherhood, ritual and education.