

Leading with Masonic Values

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Introduction

During my years of service in Masonic organizations, I've witnessed—and heard about—leadership behaviors that seemed to stray far from the values we are taught in our degrees. It made me reflect on how vital the right attitude is to leadership. And what better attitude to embody than one rooted in the core tenets of Masonry: **Brotherly Love, Relief, and Truth.**

This realization took me back to the Entered Apprentice degree, where these principles were first introduced. It inspired this series of reflections—a call to remember our obligations and offer guidance on applying these Masonic values in our journey to become better leaders in our lodges and communities.

Leading with Brotherly Love

Let's begin with the first of the three great tenets—**Brotherly Love.**

The Entered Apprentice degree teaches us “to regard the whole human species as one family... to aid, support, and protect each other.” The ritual continues, declaring that “on this principle, Freemasonry unites men of every country, sect, and opinion, and conciliates true friendship among those who might otherwise have remained at a perpetual distance.”

A Masonic education course once put it this way:

“It means that we place on another man the highest possible valuation—as a friend, a companion, a neighbor, a fellow. Merely to be with him, to work at his side, to have the privilege of his fellowship, is all we ask. We do not seek profit, prestige, or personal gain. Freemasonry assumes brotherly love, offers the space to practice it, and encourages us to make it a law of our existence.”

So how does Brotherly Love relate to leadership?

Psalm 133, which we hear in the Entered Apprentice degree, offers a clue:

“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.”

Unity, harmony, and mutual respect are foundational to a Lodge. That unity begins with a profound belief in the equality of all men—each created by the same divine hand, each wearing the same humble symbol: the white lambskin apron. It is no accident that this apron, the “badge of a Mason,” is considered the most honorable distinction we can receive. It reminds us that the title of *Mason* is the highest we can achieve.

Leadership in Masonry is not about power or status. It’s about responsibility—serving your brothers and enriching their Masonic experience. By accepting a leadership role, you declare, *“I love my brothers, and I will use my time and talents to help them grow and thrive.”*

As Mother Teresa once said:

“Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love.”

To lead with Brotherly Love is to lead as a servant—making decisions that serve others, not yourself. It’s about building relationships rooted in trust and mutual care, and it’s through these relationships that you inspire action, cultivate future leaders, and create lasting harmony.

Masonic leadership grounded in Brotherly Love transforms a Lodge into a sanctuary of understanding, respect, and genuine friendship. When disagreements arise—as they inevitably do—the leader must act as a calming force, resolving conflict with empathy and compassion.

Remember the lesson of the trowel:

“To spread the cement of Brotherly Love and affection; that cement which unites us into one sacred band... among whom no contention should ever exist, but that noble contention, or rather emulation, of who best can work and best agree.”

True Masonic leadership begins with Brotherly Love.

Leading with Respect

There's a beautiful greeting in yoga: hands pressed to the heart, head bowed, and the word **Namaste** spoken. It means, "*I honor the divine within you.*" It's a gesture of deep respect—offered freely, regardless of familiarity or status.

In Masonry, we meet "on the level," recognizing each other as equals in dignity and worth. This is more than ritual—it's a way of life. And it's the essence of leading with respect.

Dr. John Maxwell outlines five key elements of strong relationships, which align beautifully with Masonic teachings:

1. **Respect** – Offer it freely, not because someone earned it, but because they are human. Our ritual tells us, "to regard the whole human species as one family." That means every Brother is deserving of our respect from the outset.
2. **Shared Experiences** – Relationships deepen through time and effort. Our degrees give us a shared foundation, but we must continue building through fellowship and common purpose.
3. **Trust** – We are taught to trust our Brothers without question. Remember your first moments in the lodge when you were told you were in the hands of a "genuine and trusty friend." That same trust must be the bedrock of our leadership.
4. **Reciprocity** – Healthy relationships require give and take. Masonry teaches us to "be ready to give as well as receive good counsel from a Brother." Leadership is not a one-way street.
5. **Mutual Enjoyment** – Relationships thrive when people enjoy each other's company. Brotherly Love calls us to build communities where fellowship is genuine and joyful.

Leading with respect means shedding ego, embracing shared experiences, and always remembering that **we are all Brothers first.**

Leading with Relief

When we think of *Relief*, we often imagine financial charity. And while giving money is important, the heart of Masonic relief is far deeper.

In the Entered Apprentice lecture, we hear:

“To soothe the unhappy, to sympathize in their misfortunes, to compassionate their miseries, and to restore peace to their troubled minds, is the great aim we have in view.”

Relief, in its highest form, is *compassion in action*. It’s leadership that sees beyond problems to people. It’s stepping in with empathy—not to fix, but to walk alongside, to uplift, and to serve.

MW Bro. Harry Howard, Grand Master of Alberta in 1952, captured this beautifully:

“To give money to the poor is a beautiful act—but hardly as important as to give love, unstinted, without hope of gain or reward.”

John Maxwell speaks of a *servant’s heart*—putting others first, being aware of their needs, and accepting those needs as your concern. That’s exactly what Masonic Relief calls for.

Imagine how much conflict could be avoided if we led with this mindset: seeing each Brother’s struggle not as a burden, but as an opportunity to serve.

That is Relief. That is Charity. That is Masonic leadership.

Leading with Truth

Truth is the final of the three great tenets—and the most foundational. It is described as a *divine attribute*, the bedrock of virtue, and the guiding light of Masonry.

“To be good men and true” is our first charge. Our ritual says:

“Hypocrisy and deceit are unknown among us; sincerity and plain dealing distinguish us, and the heart and tongue join in promoting each other’s welfare.”

There is no better leadership trait than integrity, and no finer legacy than being known as sincere, honest, and uplifting.

Truth builds **character**, and character builds **trust**. In Maxwell’s *Law of Solid Ground*, he writes: “Trust is the foundation of leadership.” When you lead with truth, your followers will believe in you—because you’ve given them a reason to.

A Masonic leader grounded in truth is not swayed by ego or politics. He is a guide, a mentor, and a guardian of the Craft’s highest ideals.

Conclusion

The Masonic values of **Brotherly Love, Relief, and Truth** are not just ritualistic sayings—they are blueprints for leadership. When we integrate these principles into our daily lives and Lodge responsibilities, we become more than leaders. We become **servants of the Light**.

These values will make you a better man, a better Mason, and a more effective, respected leader.

So the next time you stand at the head of your Lodge, or speak during a moment of division or doubt—remember your apron. Remember your obligations. And lead with the heart of a Mason.