

The Tenets of Freemasonry: Mere Words or Good Guidelines?

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Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth, what fine and lofty words indeed! These are the principal tenets of our wonderful institution. They form the foundation on which our Masonic lives are founded.

So let's examine what these words mean.

Brotherly Love is a combination of the philos, which means love (or philia) and adelphos, which means brother. It refers to the type of bond that we may experience with a family member or close friend. It denotes more than just a superficial relationship but rather one of deep compassion, affection and understanding. To have Brotherly Love for someone means that we truly care about and value that individual as we would a member of our own family.

Relief can be defined as a removal or lightening of something oppressive, painful, or distressing. A synonym would be welfare. It refers to [our] genuine care in our Brother's welfare. For to be able to lift a burden from a Brother's shoulders or have one lifted from our own, would indeed a joyous thing and strengthen our bond with each other.

Truth ah what a word! Truth is derived from the old English word "treeowth" which means fidelity and taken closely from the old English word "treeowe" which means faithful. It can be defined as sincerity in action, character, and utterance and the fidelity of a standard. It is a reminder that our words, actions & character should be one of integrity. They should embody the highest standards of morality and the image of our Creator.

Yet, while it is nice to know what they mean, do we really need to use them as a guideline? In other words do we need to follow these very closely in lives, both daily & Masonic? My answer would be an emphatic, YES!! For how would we really be able to care for our Brother's family in the unfortunate event of him being indisposed to do so? Or, how could we care about our Brother's welfare if we didn't even like the man himself? Better yet, if we weren't sincere with one another in our words and actions, how would our Brother know who we really are? KNOW THY SELF; a common inscription found over the door of many ancient and some present ante room doorways, is a reminder that before we cross the threshold of Freemasonry, we must first possess these things in ourselves. Because Freemasonry doesn't endow us with these tenets, it deepens and gives us an appreciation for these qualities that we should already have in practice.

In closing, these words embody the basic and highest levels of humanity: They exude the qualities that our Creator implanted in us for most beneficent purposes, and that is why they form the principle guidelines of our wonderful institution of Freemasonry.

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