

Masonic Mythbusters

Nebraska Masonic Education
Seminar
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What is a Myth?

According to Dictionary.com:

- “A popular belief or story that has become associated with a person, institution, or occurrence, especially one considered to illustrate a cultural ideal: *a star whose fame turned her into a myth; the pioneer myth of suburbia.*”
- “A fiction or half-truth, especially one that forms part of an ideology.”

Some “truths about myths:”

- People believe what they want to believe
- Strong and long-lived
- Often an attempt to explain what people don't understand—e.g., ancient mythology
- Take patience and time and education and good will to be dispelled

The Problem with Myths

- They are persistent
- Several versions of the same myth can exist—if one is disproved, another takes its place
- Even when we know a myth is false, the truth is sometimes hard to find

Myth 1—"Freemasonry is a secret society."

● How did this come about?

- Likely because we have esoteric work, costumes and dramatic-sounding oaths
- Possibly because our 18th-century origins and language are foreign to most 21st-century people and are therefore considered "weird"

● **Truth:** We are an openly public organization with clearly marked meeting places. Only a few things are preferred to be private, e.g. obligations and signs. Most of our information is freely available in libraries and bookstores.

Myth # 2: “Masonry is a Religion”

● How did this come about?

- We have regular formal meetings, our own buildings, and are very attached to the Craft
- The concepts of “light” and the central tradition of the MM degree are similar to Christian religious concepts

● **Truth:** Masonry is a fraternity with philosophical and moral lessons that demands that a man worship his own Creator, Whoever that may be. Similarity of images and words does NOT mean similarity of intent and message.

Religion (continued)

- Many groups claim that Masonry is anti-Christian, or Satanic
 - This is a result of selective quotations and manipulation of Masonic writings, particularly those of Albert Pike
- See: *Is it True What they Sat about Freemasonry? The Methods of Anti-Masons* by Art DeHoyos and S. Brent Morris

Myth #3—Masonry doesn't accept (name a cultural or religious group) as members."

● How did this come about?

- Masonry is selective in its membership; selectivity is often misunderstood

● **Truth:** Masonry seeks men of ***all*** religions, as long as they believe in a Supreme Being

● **Example:** In 19th-Century India, lodges had Hindu, Muslim, Christian, other faiths represented in lodges; today, lodges are all over the world, in non-Christian countries as well as countries with many other faiths.

Myth #3 continued

- Prince Hall lodges have men of various cultural and ethnic groups as members; GL of Nebraska lodges contain men of many cultural and ethnic groups.

Myth #4—"Masons are clannish; they only help themselves"

- How did this come about?
 - Possibly because Masons seek each other's company, and because we pledge to help each other
- **Truth:** we are obligated to help all mankind. Masonry is not a networking group, but a fraternity for self-improvement.

Myth #5—"Masonry is sexist."

- How did this come about?
 - Blue Lodge Masonry is for men only.
- **Truth:** Masonry involves the whole family: Eastern Star, Job's Daughters, De Molay, and other organizations—coed, youth-only, women-only.
 - Note—Some other organizations claiming Masonic philosophy have male and female participation—ex.: co-masonry, in Britain

Myth #6—"Masons conspire to control the world."

● How did this come about?

- Many Masons have been successful in business and governmental affairs; such people naturally associate together
- Some people have too much imagination!

● **Truth:** Masons wish only to control their own behavior and conduct with their fellow humans, and become better persons

Myth #7—"Masonic candidates are ridiculed and harassed"

● How did this come about?

- Other organizations, sadly, may have such a tradition (ex: college fraternity hazing)
- The unknown experience is often frightening; peoples' imaginations run away with them

● **Truth:** The candidate is told before and during each degree of the solemnity of the proceedings; he is treated with solicitude respect and guided through each step of each degree

Myth # 8: “Masonry is just for old guys like my dad and granddad.”

● How did this come about?

- Masonry's average member age is increasing; more members in some jurisdictions are passing away than are joining; many “dads and granddads” (who joined between 1940-1960) joined during a boom in Masonic membership. Thus, present appearance seems to dictate apparent purpose.

Myth #8 continued

- Truth: Masonry is for ***all men***, whatever age, who believe in its tenets and wish to make themselves better. We will initiate a good man of 18 years; just as gladly, we will accept a “more seasoned gentleman.”

Myth #9: “So-and-So* was a Mason.”

- Alexander the Great: no (it's just a *movie!*)
- Pythagoras: no
- All of the signers of the Declaration of Independence: no (some were, but not all)
- All of Washington's generals: no (some, but not all)
- How did this come about?
 - In some cases, Masonic ritual and tradition asserts that a character was a Mason in order to associate his eminent characteristics to the values of the Craft

Myth #9 continued

- In other situations, the presence of Masons in an eminent group (e.g. Washington and Lafayette) suggests that others in that group necessarily were or are Masons as well—honor by association).

And the biggest myth of all: “Masonry just isn’t for me.”

● How this came about:

- Modern society has the “myth of busy-ness —”I’m too busy to join”
- Modern families have changed roles; fathers are now child-care providers as well
- People believe misperceptions about Masonry (see previous 9 myths)

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- **Truth:** Masonry is for all kinds of men
- So how do we put this into action?
 - Go public
 - Adapt (ex.: 1-day classes)
 - Tell our friends
 - “Walk the walk and talk the talk”