

## **The Importance of how the Investigating Committee Investigates**

Provided by Worshipful Brother Richard H. Jones  
Condensed from an article found at the "Masonic Lodge of Education" website  
( <http://www.masonic-lodge-of-education.com/masonic-investigative-committee.html> )

The Masonic Investigating Committee has one duty to perform and that is to find whether the candidate is worthy and well-qualified to become a member of the oldest and largest fraternity in the world, that of Freemasonry.

The Lodge Brothers who are appointed by the Worshipful Master to serve as members of the Investigating Committee should consider such appointment to be a high honor because it is a visible expression of the implicit trust and confidence in not only their ability, but also their concern for the welfare of the Lodge, its Brethren and Freemasonry. Much like the Tiler, the Lodge's Investigating Committee must make sure that no man unfit for the teachings and blessings of Freemasonry is allowed to pass through the West Gate for initiation.

Our duty in this respect is clearly and unmistakably pointed out to us in the Master Mason's charge: "To preserve the reputation of the Fraternity unsullied must be your constant care." Besides being an admonition to us in the daily conduct of our lives, it also includes the acceptance of petitioners.

As a member of the Investigating Committee, you are answerable to no one except your conscience. Your Lodge and Freemasonry are dependent upon your best efforts and keen judgment. You are screening a person who has the ability to make the structure of Freemasonry within your Lodge either stronger or weaker by his very presence. It is, therefore, your solemn

duty to perform the following checklist upon yourself before you begin to investigate a candidate.

- **Unbiased Opinion:** Each member of the Masonic Investigating Committee must be unbiased by improper solicitations and uninfluenced by any possible mercenary motives by the Candidate, other Brothers or well meaning friends or relatives of the prospect. Remember: You are simply searching for more light.
- **Friendly, Curious, Helpful, Professional Manner:** After introductions, the Masonic Investigation begins by asking questions of the candidate as well as of his chosen references and any other contacts who have knowledge of his character and reputation. Be prepared to ask lots of questions in a friendly, curious, helpful and professional manner. Because the candidate may know very little about Masonry, at this very moment, you and your Masonic Investigating Committee team represent the whole of Freemasonry to the prospective candidate.
- **Stay on Topic:** Because you represent the whole of the craft of Freemasonry to the Petitioner, do not digress (go off topic) and begin to tell a long story about yourself, your uncle, your initiation, your Past Master experiences, etc. This is very unprofessional and, while the Petitioner may listen politely and smile or laugh appropriately, it is not of benefit to the Petitioner.
- **Your Attire:** Dress plays a part in the impression the Lodge and the Fraternity will make on the petitioner and his family. Dress appropriately, but don't over dress or under dress for the interview. Just as you will judge the impression the petitioner makes on you; know that he, too, being human, will be judging you (and Freemasonry).

Although there we could set forth a long list of “do's” and “don'ts” that contribute toward making a good first impression, you are an adult, and simply need to make it obvious to the petitioner and his family that you and your Masonic Investigating Committee are friendly and courteous. This also will convey to the petitioner and his family that the Lodge members are proud of their fraternity and are particular about who gains admission to its society.

The committee must seek the truth about the depth of the character of all whom they investigate. Just as importantly, they must consider the financial circumstances of the petitioner, the organizations he is already involved in, the kind of company he keeps, the reputation he has in the community, in his work place, and with the general public he comes in contact with every day.

The best interests of Masonry demand that an exhaustive investigation be made of the character and standing of each and every applicant. It is, therefore, imperative that your investigation of the petitioner be thorough.

The LAST STEP in the process of investigating a prospective candidate should be the personal interview with the petitioner in his home...with his family present.

When you request your appointment to visit with the petitioner, make sure you make it clear that you need some uninterrupted time without the possibility of a conflict.

Take mental note of the following:

1. Does the petitioner welcome you unhesitatingly into his home?

2. Does his wife greet the Masonic Investigating Committee warmly and make a genuine attempt to make you feel at home or is she merely tolerating your presence? Any one who is expected to spend many hours and a sum of money with a fraternal organization must have the support, with little or no reservation, of his wife and family.

Always have three members of the Masonic Investigating Committee present for the interview with the petitioner.

The chairman of the Masonic Investigating Committee should assume the leadership role in the interview and should ask the major portion of the questions. He should control the time spent on the interview and should not overstay the committee's welcome. He should be aware of any signs of restlessness on the part of any of the participants and, should the interview become lengthy, he should take steps to bring it to a smooth and natural conclusion. The petitioner and his wife should be asked if they have any final questions or observations they would like to make before the committee departs in order to consider their recommendations on the petition.

The second man on the committee should join in answering any questions the petitioner or his wife might have, watch the petitioner for his reactions to questions, and basically act as a resource person.

The third man on the committee should spend the majority of his efforts observing the reactions of the petitioner's wife and any other members of the family that may be present. This man should pay particular attention to the wife and take special care that she does not feel left out of the conversation in any way. She is the key to her husband's retention in the Masonic Fraternity. Observe her reactions to questions and to the general

conversation and make careful mental notes of her reactions. At appropriate pauses in the flow of the interview, attempt to address any concerns the wife might have that have become evident by her responses, reactions, or body language. Remember, just as you are there to judge her, she is judging you.

If the petitioner or his wife displays adverse reactions at any time during the interview, gently find out the reason for their negativity. Their negativity probably has absolutely nothing to do with you or your Masonic Investigative Committee.

There are many misconceptions about Freemasonry that abound in whispers, on the Internet and in other places. She or he may have heard about some of them and have some concerns. The Committee needs to address these concerns and any unfavorable information she or he have heard. It is your job to truthfully tell her what Masonry is about. The best way to shed light upon the subject may well be to explain the moral and spiritual underpinnings of the fraternity, the role that the Bible (or other holy book such as the Koran, Torah, etc.) have, and the requirement that each member believe in a Supreme Being.

It is the job of the Masonic Investigating Committee to be well versed in Masonic knowledge and history in order to correctly explain Freemasonry, and describe to the petitioner and his wife the support, friendship, and brotherhood the Lodge and fraternity extend to its members and their families.

Each member of the Masonic Investigative Committee should extend the right hand of friendship to the petitioner and his family prior to departing from their home. A warm and friendly grip is the one form of body language, when used in conjunction with a sincere smile, which overcomes reservations and encourages positive relationships.

In addition to these suggestions, I also commend to your attention the booklet entitled *For the Investigating Committee* which is on the Grand Lodge Website. From the Grand Lodge of Virginia Home Page click on to the brown bar labeled "Masonic Education" on the right side of the screen, then click on the blue bar labeled "Publications" on the left side of the screen to see all of the publications which are listed alphabetically.