

**“IF YOU WERE ACCUSED OF BEING A MASON,  
WOULD THERE BE ENOUGH EVIDENCE TO CONVICT YOU?”**

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During our catechisms, we are asked what it is that indicates to ourselves that we are Masons, and also how others may know that we are Masons. As a result of the teachings and obligations that we take upon ourselves as we progress through the degrees and continue on our Masonic journey, we are continually challenged to examine and question what it is that indicates that we are Masons, both to ourselves and to others; and further, to question whether our behavior reflects Masonic ideals and tenets both inside and outside of the Lodge room.

In other words, if we were accused of being a Mason, would there be enough evidence to convict us?

At the closing of every Master Mason's Lodge, prior to returning to the concerns and pressures of the outside world, we are given a charge by the Master while we gather around the altar. A Charge is a set of instructions or directives to produce results within defined guidelines. For example, a judge gives a charge to a jury prior to sending the jury out to deliberate and render a verdict. In the book of Genesis, Isaac is told by the Lord that he will be blessed because his father Abraham, “obeyed my voice and kept my charge.”

The second half of the Master's charge tells us to "Remember that around this sacred altar you have solemnly bound yourselves to befriend and relieve every Brother who shall need your assistance. You have promised, in the most friendly manner, to remind him of his error and aid a reformation. These generous principles are to extend further; every human being has a claim upon your kind offices; do good unto all; recommend it more especially 'to the household of the faithful'. Finally, Brethren, be ye all of one mind; live in peace; and may the God of peace and love delight to dwell with and bless you."

We would do well to listen intently to the message given in this charge, for by it we are told how we should conduct ourselves as Masons, and how the world at large should expect us to behave both inside and outside of the Lodge. We are directed to befriend and relieve a Brother, to aid a reformation, if needed, to do good unto all, and to live in peace.

In fact, expectations of upright Masonic behavior are set forth early in our Masonic career, and are not limited to Master Masons. As soon as we have been initiated as Entered Apprentices, we are taught that the tenets of our profession are Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth. We are taught that we are sent into the world to aid, support, and protect each other; and that on this principle, Freemasonry unites men of every country, sect, and opinion and conciliates true friendship among those who might otherwise remain at a perpetual distance.

We are also taught that to relieve the distressed is a duty incumbent on all men, but particularly upon Masons, who are linked together by an indissoluble chain of sincere affection; and that on this basis, we form our friendships and establish our connections.

Finally, we are told that truth is the first lesson we are taught in Masonry, when we are directed to be good men and true. We are reminded that while influenced by this principle, hypocrisy and deceit are unknown among us, sincerity and plain dealing characterize us, and the heart and tongue join in promoting each other's welfare and rejoicing in each other's prosperity.

These tenets tell us how to deal on the square with our Brethren and with the rest of humanity, and, when combined with the regulation of our conduct by the Four Cardinal Virtues (Temperance, Fortitude, Prudence, and Justice), we have the guidelines necessary to define us as men and as Masons.

When we follow these guidelines, and live in accordance with our Masonic obligations, there would be no doubt in the mind of that imagined jury, or in the opinion of anyone else, that we have truly earned the title and distinction of Master Mason.