

# Masonic Core Values: Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth



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## **Brotherly Love:**

In the United States, Masonic teachings indicate that we are to be accepting of persons regardless of race, religion, income, status in life, culture and most recently with the Grand Master's decision, sexual orientation. Regarding morality, we support the most universal concepts of decency and morality as dictated by each Brother's Sacred Volume. Masons must express a belief in God and an after-life.

Some of our deepest friendships may, in fact, come from meeting a Brother that we might otherwise have never crossed paths if it weren't for these principals of Freemasonry. Our membership is comprised of men from all walks of life and the entire spectrum of social strata.

As some of you know, I am a great admirer of Mozart. His biographers indicated that this was his greatest joy in being a Mason. Mozart's genius had been recognized at an early age. Yet, in his time, musicians were often treated with little more respect than the kitchen servants. When Mozart entered the Masonic Lodge "on the level" with Royalty he was recognized for the musical genius he was—on for his own merits as a man.

## **Relief**

In the general Masonic statement of relief, there is no mention of financial relief. Financial relief is emphasized in other passages but not here. This passage seems to say that the basic duty of a Mason is to be a willing and empathic listener when someone, particularly a Brother Mason, is in mental distress, to listen deeply when he has problems, to comfort him, to help restore peace to his troubled mind, and to be his very close friend on the deepest level.

This runs counter to our natural instincts—at least in this culture—to shy away from someone in mental distress: "Joe is really having issues; I'm uncomfortable being around him ...what if I say the wrong thing."

According to our Masonic teachings, it is by this very act of compassion towards a Brother that we form our friendships and establish our connections.

## **Truth**

Truth is said to be a Divine attribute and central to all virtue. But what is truth? We are informed that truth is not found where deceitful, manipulative, or hidden agenda behaviors exist. Likewise claiming that we live by certain principals as Masons and then demonstrating something very different with our actions is hypocrisy whether in or out of the Lodge. While no one is perfect at walking the walk, this passage teaches us that we should try to regulate our lives and actions by the principle of Truth. When we follow these teachings, it becomes easy to promote each other's welfare and rejoice in each other's prosperity - which is the sign of a healthy lodge.

## **The Three Principle Tenants of Masonry:**

- Tolerance and welcoming of other cultures, religious traditions, social or financial status;
- Compassion, empathy and a willingness to get personally involved when a Brother is in crisis;
- Honesty, sincerity and plain dealing with each other; "walking the talk" when it comes to our obligations and core principles as Masons.

## **Applying Brother Love, Relief and Truth to the Real World:**

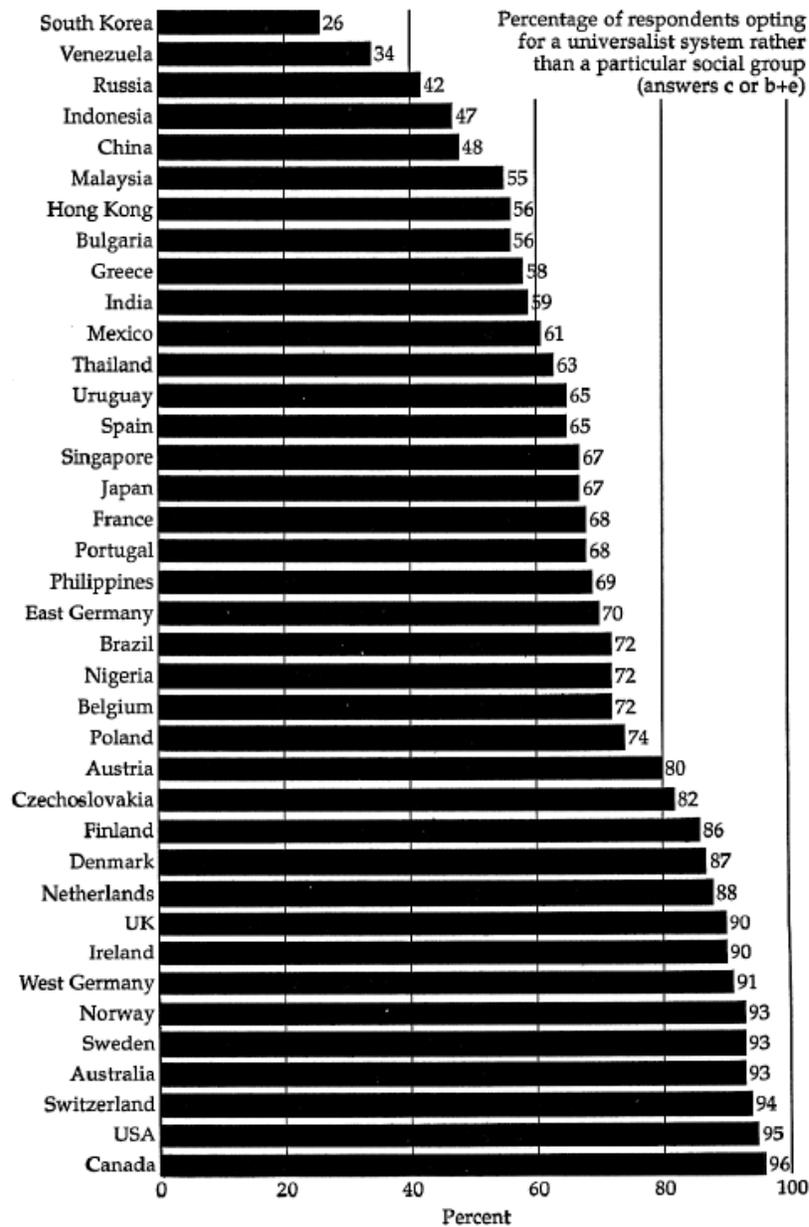
These ideas are easy to comply with when we are with a group of people that share our same values. But the combination of these tenants are often much harder to navigate when we are dealing with men from different countries and cultures. Fons Tranpenaar's book, *Riding the Waves of Culture*, aimed to help American businessmen of the 1990's understand and succeed in international business. His book was aimed at a cultural understanding of others in the world. Listed below is an example from his book which demonstrates how the balance between honesty and loyalty to a friend varies from culture to culture.

"Researchers asked groups of people all over the world to answer a dilemma question where telling the truth or not telling the truth had serious consequences. People were posed with a situation where they are riding in a car with a friend. The friend is doing 30 MPH in a 20 MPH zone when he accidentally strikes a pedestrian. Your friend's lawyer says it will greatly benefit your friend if you can testify that he was only going 20 MPH when the accident occurred. In other words would you lie for a friend to save him from serious consequences? "

[Fons Tranpenaars book, *Riding the Waves of Culture*, 1993 p 37]

The answers across almost 40 countries are given in the figure on the next page. The figure shows the percentage of people in each country who would not lie for their friend under these circumstances.

**FIGURE 4-1**  
*The Car and the Pedestrian*



In the US and Canada, nearly 95% of the people would tell the truth no matter how it disadvantaged their friend. Truth trumped loyalty overwhelmingly. But in some cultures it seemed far more important to show loyalty to a friend than to be completely truthful. This makes balancing the Three Principal tenants of Brotherly Love (welcoming other cultures and religious traditions), Relief (helping each other), and Truth (honesty, absence of deceit or hypocrisy) more challenging in an age of multiculturalism.

Think for a minute:

- How would you personally answer this dilemma question and why?
- How would you react if you saw a Masonic brother in another country lie to protect a friend?
- Would your answer be different if you witnessed this in Spain rather than in California?

**Unmasonic Conduct:**

Given that California is a melting pot of many cultures, it is not surprising that just such an incident has arisen multiple times within California Masonry. One Brother lying to protect another has resulted in charges of unmasonic conduct. Since unmasonic conduct is a very serious charge—one involving the Grand Lodge, a Masonic trial and potential expulsion from Masonry—Grand Masters have had to clarify regarding the three Principle Tenants.

A few years ago, this, as well as other moral infractions lead to a several contentious Masonic trials. To help clarify “moral turpitude” related to unmasonic conduct, the Grand Master of Masons in California added a section in the Masonic Code dealing with this topic. Section 1401.010 UNMASONIC CONDUCT was added to the California Masonic Code.

Section G.2.d specifically lists falsehood, treachery and deceit as unmasonic if such conduct results in material harm to Masonry, a Mason or the wife, child or widow of a mason.

At a recent Warden’s Retreat, I had an opportunity to discuss this dilemma case with one of Grand Lodge’s Masonic trial lawyers. In his opinion, lying to protect a Brother is unmasonic conduct. He agreed that this may be treated differently in a country where loyalty trumps truthfulness. He then cited a case where two Brothers had done something unmasonic and when a third Brother was about to interviewed, the two asked him to lie on their behalf. The third brother was found guilty of unmasonic conduct because he gave false witness. The penalties were more severe for the two Brothers and the third Brother’s penalty was less.

In summary, as far as we California Masons are concerned, Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth are all important but Truth trumps the other two when we have to choose. Truth is paramount in North America and most European countries but one could expect—at least from Tranpenaars study—that Brotherly Love and Relief may have more weight in some countries where Freemasonry exists. It is helpful to realize that in these countries, moral Masons may have a different opinion than ours in this regard.