



**The Grand Lodge of Ancient, Free and
Accepted Masons of Virginia**
Committee on Masonic Education



Lodge Presentation Program Paper

**“INCORPORATING OUR OBLIGATIONS
INTO OUR DAILY LIVES”**

By Right Worshipful Paul D. Sleeper

The topic for this evening is “incorporating our obligations into our daily lives.” This talk will not be a line-by-line listing of each item contained in our Masonic obligations, but focused instead on how we can each live our lives, so we truly benefit from a being a Mason, and also so others may recognize us as Master Masons. Of course, getting to this point does not come automatically; it involves a transformation in the way we live.

The lessons of Freemasonry are presented to us in stages, with time built in between each degree to reflect and study. This design allows us to learn from conversing with more experienced Masons and observing how they act. Just as our children learn more from our behavior and actions than from our words, so do we as candidates learn, both the good and the bad, from the Brethren in the Lodge we come in contact with as we progress through the degrees. The candidates very quickly observe whether the lessons in the ritual are mirrored in the actions the Brethren,

and so it is important that we model the behaviors we are teaching so we are reinforcing rather than detracting from the ritual.

The success of a project often depends on the quality of the materials used, and Freemasonry seeks in its candidates only men of good character. Petition signers and members of the investigating committee need to be confident that the petitioner is worthy of our great Fraternity. Perhaps central to this is determining how seriously the petitioner takes his obligation to his God. This is the first and most important of our many obligations. Of course, by the time a petitioner seeks admission to the Fraternity, he may have taken upon himself many more obligations, perhaps including obligations to his wife, his children, his work, etc. We need to assess how well he lives up to all of these obligations as evidence as to how seriously he will take his Masonic obligations, if he is elected to receive the degrees.

Our “Masonic” obligations are designed to reinforce our previous obligations and build upon them. As we kneel in the center of the Lodge room upon our first admittance to the Lodge, we learn that we are to dedicate and devote our life to the service of God, not Freemasonry. We realize that Freemasonry is a tool to help us live as God had intended us to live. Thinking back, did this take you by surprise? Well, go back and read the first prayer at the initiation of a candidate.

We learn from the beginning of our Masonic experience that Freemasonry is religious but not a religion. Freemasonry does not teach the word of God, that is left up to each candidate to learn in his own place of worship. But, it does stipulate that the great book of nature and of

revelation must be upon our altar and must be used as the guide to how to live our lives.

We also quickly learn that in addition to being a God fearing person active in his place of worship, a Mason is calm and in control of his outward emotions. He is one who can be expected to keep a secret a secret. He is one who, in his business and personal affairs, deals squarely and justly with others. He is one who his neighbors feel comfortable going to for guidance and assistance. He shows a concern for his community and for other people in general.

The question we need to ask ourselves is how well we have incorporated these qualities into our daily lives and whether, if a person were to examine us today, they would find that we are attempting to live life according to the Book of Sacred Law, which is an indispensable part of the furniture of the Lodge but also an indispensable part of our lives.

We learn that our obligations generally fall into three categories: to God, to our neighbors, and to ourselves. In the Lodge, we learn valuable lessons to assist us in carrying out our obligations, and while there we also enjoy the opportunity to refresh and re-invigorate ourselves with fraternal fellowship. Before we leave the Lodge we hear the closing charge – which so concisely but so eloquently summarizes our values. Then, once we leave the doors of the Lodge room, our real work begins.

We need to think about our Masonic role model. I suspect he is a very kind and caring man of sterling character. He takes his time to teach new Brethren as they begin their own Masonic journey. He reminds his Brethren when they stray from the Masonic way and offers his assistance

to square up their error. He is the one who returns to Lodge to continually improve upon his own character throughout his life. He watches over our widows and orphans, offering his ear or his helping hand where needed. He takes the time to phone and visit with his shut-in or homebound Brethren. He is the one walking the halls and taking the time to visit with, and listen to, our hospitalized Brethren. He enjoys his fellow Brethren's friendship and fellowship as he visits other Lodges. He mans the booth during our Child ID Programs and is there when blood needs to be donated. He is concerned with our youth and offers his time, knowledge, and helping hand so our youth too may become young men and women of character. He is the one who drives a child to the hospital for treatment. He is the one who opens his wallet to help others meet their needs. He is the one who spends hours upon hours making certain our Masonic Home really is a home to its many residents. He is the one who takes the lead for the betterment of others at his place of worship, within the community, at home, and at work.

Well, I suspect that many of us have a way to go to be like that mentor and role model, but each of us came here to learn to better control and improve ourselves. God has provided each individual with certain talents, and we are each called upon to live in a way that is somewhat different from everyone else. But all of us as Masons can, and should, periodically reflect upon the obligations of each of the three degrees and strengthen our resolve to live up to the high standards of the Fraternity.

In closing, let me quote a lesson, which you have already learned:

“The three steps are emblematical of the three stages of human life - Youth, Manhood, and Old Age.

In Youth, as Entered Apprentices, we ought industriously to apply our minds to the attainment of useful knowledge;

in Manhood as Fellowcrafts, we should apply our knowledge to the discharge of our respective duties to God, our neighbors, and ourselves;

so that in Old Age, as Master Masons, we may enjoy the happy reflections consequent upon a well-spent life, and die in the hope of a glorious immortality.”

So mote it be...