



PAPER

The meaning of charity According to Fred & Charlie



Summary: A discussion about Brotherly Love & Charity.

'And though I have all faith... and have not charity, I am nothing.'

1 Corinthians 13:2

Charlie re-filled the glasses. *'Did you hear how much our Festival raised for Grand Lodge this year? We beat our target hands down. That should be a good talking point when our Provincial Grand Master meets the Duke. Freemasonry must surely be the richest charity in the country.'*

Fred paused, not wishing to dampen Charlie's obvious excitement. *'I don't think we have ever claimed to be a charity, Charlie. Yes, we practise charity and it is a core principle, but what you referred to was really fund-raising. That's not Freemasonry's aim and purpose.'*

Charlie protested. *'We all subscribe to the Masonic Charitable Foundation. What's that if it isn't a charity?'*

Fred was thoughtful. *'It's not easy to explain quickly, Charlie. The word charity in our ritual, the public's understanding of charity, and a Grand Lodge charity are completely different things. Let's just say they represent very different levels of personal involvement.'*

'Without wishing to sound pompous the word charity in our ritual comes from the Latin caritas or agape which simply means Brotherly Love - a real concern for our fellow human being. It means giving up something precious to you for the benefit of that other person.'

'Look Charlie, few Lodge members are strapped for cash, so buying a raffle ticket is effortless, and therefore not true charity. For most of us though it is time that is precious. True charity might mean using not spare money, but scarce free-time to visit someone in hospital, mow a widow's grass, ferry a friend to the surgery...'

Fred paused, *'Yes our principles are Brotherly Love, relief of another's sufferings and being true to one's own conscience, all but these all flow from the heart. They can only be offered to fellow human beings. Love can't be given to a building, a funding target, or even to a good cause, however worthy.'*

Charlie broke in. *'No Fred. For the public the word charity means putting your hand in the pocket, and maybe buying a copy of The Big Issue, or slipping some coins into the alms plate, buying a strip of raffle tickets, or having a standing order for your favourite charities. That's charity.'*

Fred retorted, *'That's all very commendable but, I say again, at the end of the day it is just some loose change, which we don't really miss. It comes from the head, not the heart. It can't be true charity.'*

He continued, *'Fund raising for good causes, e.g. our Provincial Festival, the Charitable Foundation, a local air ambulance or rescue boat, a hospital scanner, is always a winner. But it is in giving up free-time working with others that is the personal charity, not the money raised. That is fund raising.'*

Charlie finally broke the silence. *'That's too deep for me. Are you saying there is nothing worthy about the millions that Grand Lodge send to good causes on our behalf?'*

'Not at all', said Fred. *'Many organisations such as the Lions, Rotary, the Buffalo and Caribou, all raise vast sums for good causes. In this, Grand Lodge is no different, but remember the others are primarily fund-raising organisations. Where we differ is that Freemasonry is a personal system of morality that lights up a candidate's own sense of right and wrong; in short it provides something far deeper!'*

'And quite what?' demanded Charlie.

'Charlie, Masonic charity means Brotherly Love and however worthy fund-raising may be, we can only love another human being. For Masons, people must always come first. Money may sometimes be helpful, but it is human compassion, human friendship, human caring, human contact, that always matters most. That is what being a Freemason is really all about.'

They finished their drinks in silence. Both had a lot to reflect on.



Recommended use of Papers

Papers offer a simple, direct means of advancement in a particular aspect of Masonic knowledge. They can be used in a variety of ways:

- Read at home for private study
- Shared for pre-reading by members of a discussion group
- Read aloud in Lodge or Chapter, or in an LOI/COI/new members forum
 - Followed by 'any questions'
 - As a precursor to a discussion (in which case much more time is needed, possibly more than double that allocated to the paper itself)
 - Supported by audio-visual aids, if necessary

They can be delivered by a single person or split into bite-sized pieces and read by multiple presenters (in which case, the speaker(s) should have read and practiced the delivery of the paper beforehand).

If the paper is to be used to introduce a discussion, the presenter will need to have thought about the material, done a little research, and prepared some open questions to engage with the audience. Kipling's dictum can be of help in preparing open questions, which should begin with one of his 'serving men', as follows: *'I keep six honest serving men (they taught me all I knew). Their names are, What and Why and When and How and Where and Who'*. Rudyard Kipling

*Note: All biblical passages are taken from the Authorized King James version and any reference to ritual will be from Emulation unless otherwise specified.

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Acknowledgement:

UGLE gratefully acknowledges Michael Lee as the author of this document and for his permission to publish it in this form.

Fred and Charlie character drawings courtesy of Eddie Wildman.

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