

Why you shouldn't become a Freemason.

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Freemasonry is shrouded in a pop-culture mystique of danger and intrigue. Now I won't comment on if any of those intrigues are true ([hint](#)), but one thing is for sure, Freemasonry has gotten a reputation as an organization in decline. This is very much not true.

Freemasonry is growing almost everywhere in exciting ways. Lodges are bringing in young, vibrant members, eager to learn traditions and add their own modern perspective. What is true, however, is that Freemasonry, along with every other fraternal club, saw huge booms in the twentieth century, and those boom times are gone. Frankly, those boom times were probably not that great for Freemasonry. They drew the focus away from self-improvement and brotherhood, and into more publicly-focused areas. Rather than helping each other grow better, many used their brotherhood to help each other grow richer. Charity became an industry, rather than a personal offer of relief, and to the receiver an acceptance of responsibility.

When membership declined from these lofty heights, some Masonic lodges moved toward an any-and-all-comers view of membership. But Freemasonry is not for everyone. Sadly, it's not even for most people. And joining a Masonic lodge when you shouldn't isn't good for you, or your lodge. Here's why you shouldn't join Freemasonry.

You're looking for business contacts

I can't say you won't find them in a lodge. You can't help meet potential business contacts when you meet new people. But frankly you're probably not going to have much luck. Masons come from every walk of life. Going to a lodge for networking is like going to a ball park for networking. No one is there to listen to your pitch, the person you're talking to is as likely to be out of work as he is to be able to do anything for your business interests, and frankly, you're a giant distraction.

There are networking benefits. If you meet a brother who is a mechanic, then you're a pretty good chance he'll give you a square deal (there's no Masonic discount, sorry) and treat you right. Not because you're both Masons, but because he's probably just a good guy. If you're looking for help expanding your client base, however, look elsewhere.

Who you should join: The Rotary Club



[Rotary International](#) is a worldwide service club for both men and women, dedicated to bringing together businessmen and professionals, conducting business in an ethical manner, and coming together to serve their communities and provide humanitarian efforts. Their motto: *Service above Self*.

You're looking for a place to serve pancakes

Masonry has been called the world's greatest charity, and though we do affiliate ourselves with several charitable groups, and believe that relief is a core tenet of being a better man, Freemasonry isn't a service club, it's a brotherhood.

Community service—raising money for your town, or youth groups, park amenities—is a beautiful, noble thing. Plenty of Masonic Lodges that do this. In some of these cases the pancake breakfasts, spaghetti dinners, corn roasts, etc. are more to keep a lodge's doors open than for the community at large, but most are to raise money for Masonic youth clubs and educational scholarships.

But in all honesty, if your focus is on community service, there are clubs that just plain do it better than we ever will.

Who you should join: The Lions Club



[Lions Club International](#) does community service probably better than anyone in the world. I frequently see them out in my community, getting involved and getting their hands dirty. They are also very active in charity work. Their motto: We Serve.

You're looking for a social club

A great masonic lodge will have great fraternity, and that fraternity is part of a package of dedication, ritual, education, and self-discipline. Freemasons aren't friends, we're brothers. Members just looking for pals and drinking buddies, without being willing to give that extra part of themselves will ultimately find Freemasonry a very lonely, unfulfilling pursuit. It can be said of any group that you get what you give, and that's especially true in Freemasonry.

Who you should join: The Elks Lodge



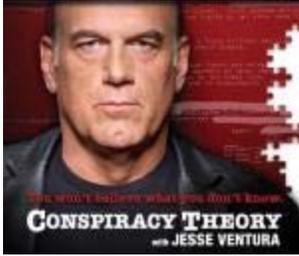
[The Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks](#) began in much the same way as the Shriners began. As an excuse to drink. The organization has since expanded from these modest goals into a larger service organization, doing charity and community work, but still greatly remain a social fraternity.

They are open to men and women, and include some light ritual and regalia, originally borrowed from the Freemasons but have long since been adapted to their own purposes. Much like Freemasonry, they are enjoying a youthful resurgence in places across the country, by young men and women looking for fraternity and people of good character with which to befriend.

You believe Freemasons are a secret cabal here to bring about a New World Order

Yeah, we did that already. It's called Western Democracy. The representative republic you're enjoying if you live anywhere in North America or Europe is what we were working toward. We weren't the only one's, but we looked the best doing it! You're welcome, Earth!

Who you should join: This Guy



He needs friends.

Adults don't often have a lot of time on their hands, and we're all looking for different things in life. I've interviewed plenty of petitioners who try to convince me what a great Mason they'll make, but when they get that great honor, they discover they should have done more listening than talking, and that Freemasonry is definitely not for everyone. Don't settle for it. If you're exploring the Craft and you find you're turned off by aspects of it, don't limit yourself to Freemasonry. There are many opportunities for you.

But if you find yourself interested in not just friendship, but brotherhood; if you believe you need to improve yourself rather than just your community; if you believe that charity begins with a hand up, not a hand out, then absolutely knock on our doors. We'll be there to answer.

About the Author: Matt Gallagher is a Master Mason at Braden Lodge, and father of four. He has been a member of the Craft since 2010, blogs at Braden 168 each Thursday, and regularly at his own blog at [Stones 'n' Bones](#). His opinions are his own, and do not necessarily represent the thoughts or opinions of Braden Lodge No. 168.