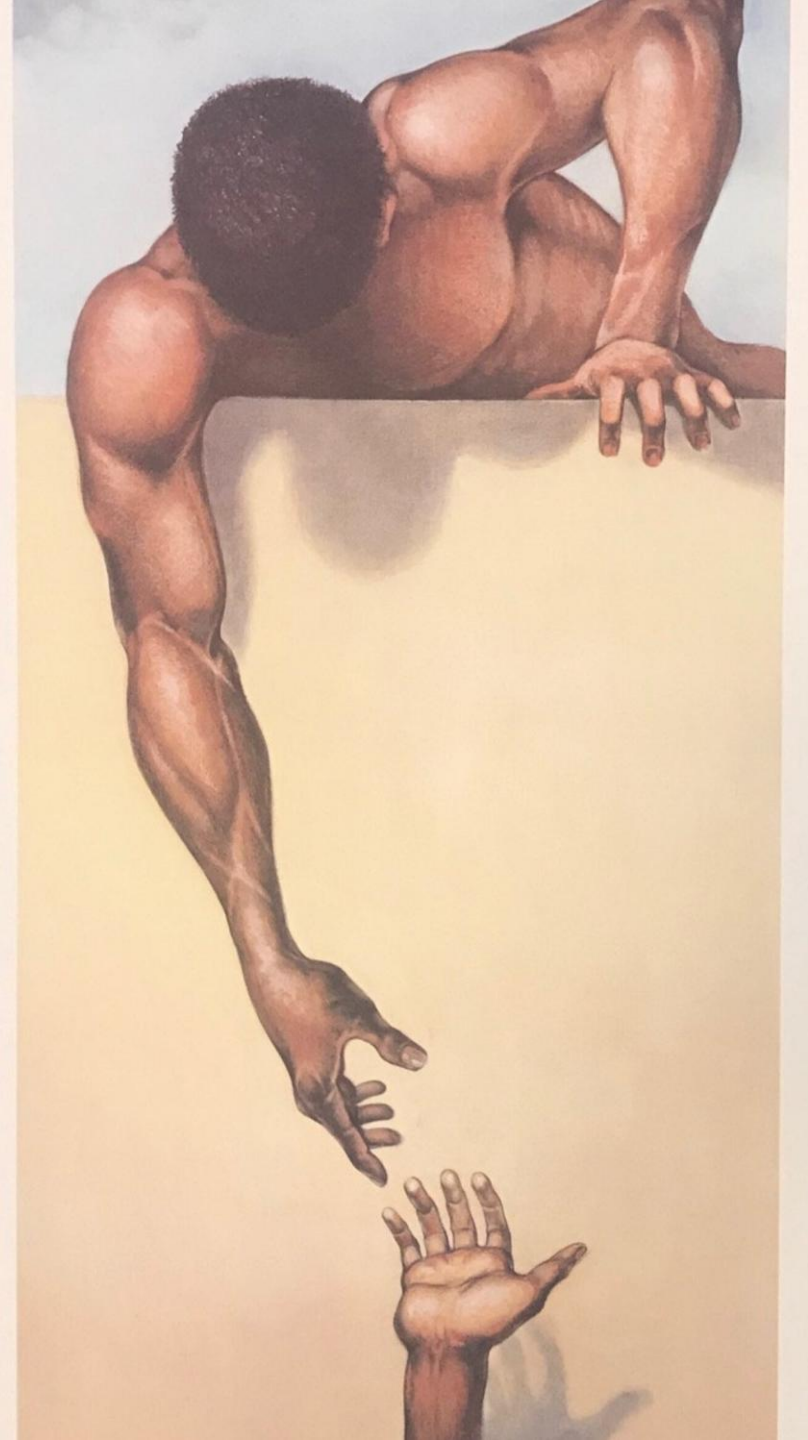


Are You Your Brother's Keeper?

PM Robert Barbour Jr. , KYCH

North Star Lodge #3

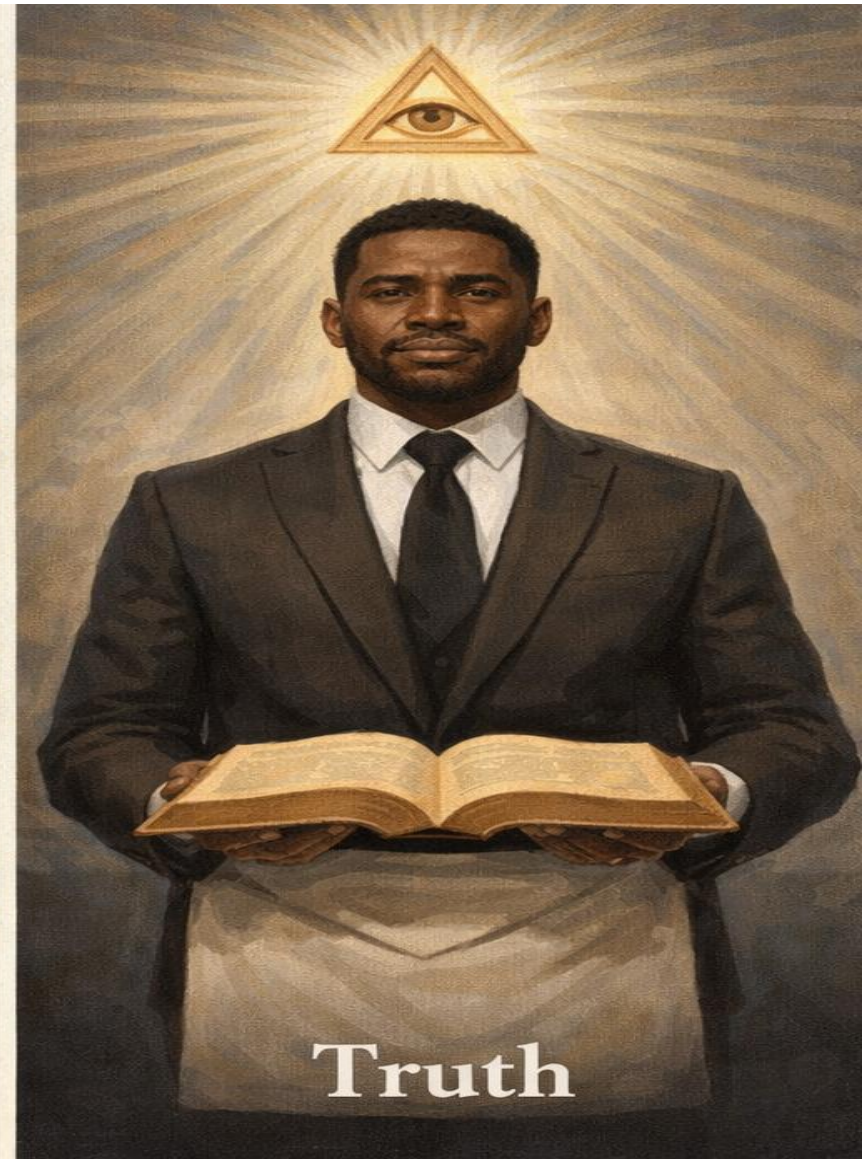


Origin of the phrase

The phrase “ Am I my Brother’s keeper originates from the Biblical verse in Genesis 4:9. After murdering his Brother Abel, Cain spoke these words to God to try to avoid accountability for the act that he had committed against his Brother. Today, the phrase is used to signify the moral obligation to care for others. The word “keeper” comes from the Hebrew word shamar, which means to guard, watch over, or protect.



Principal Tenets of Masonry



- **Brotherly Love**: Freemasons strive to regard the human species as one family, promoting tolerance, respect, and kindness toward all, regardless of their background.
- **Relief**: Freemasons practice charity and care, not only for our fellow members but for the community at large, through voluntary efforts and philanthropic works.
- **Truth**: Freemasons strive for honesty, integrity, and personal self-improvement, adhering to moral virtues and seeking wisdom.

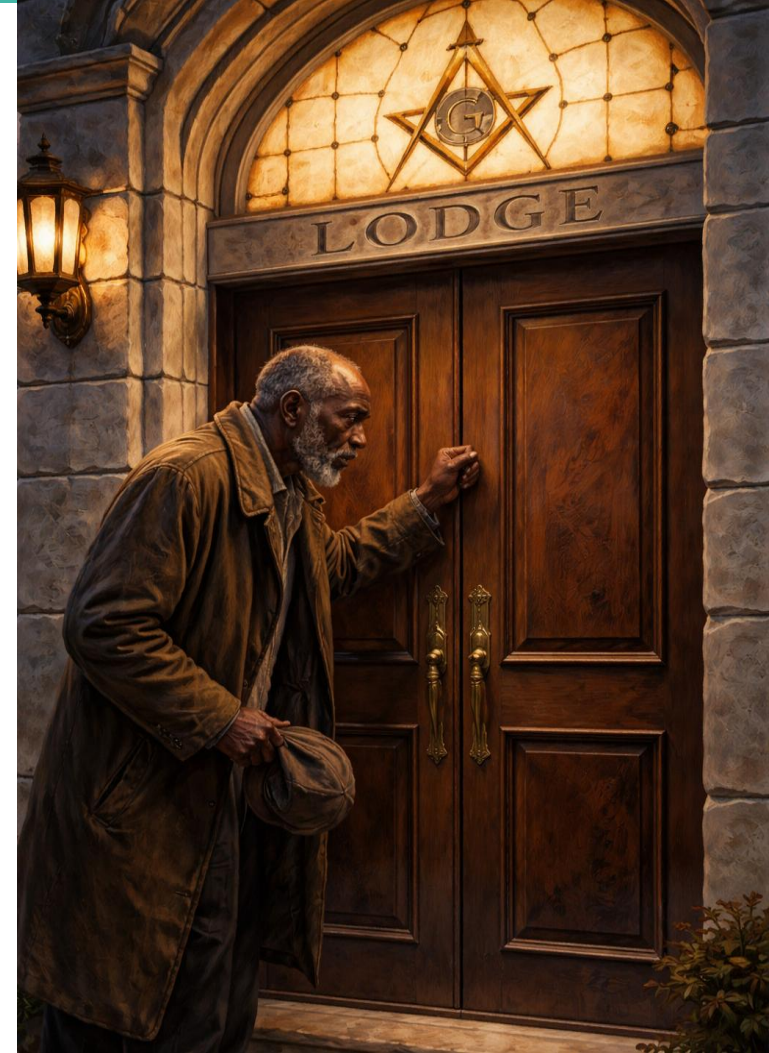


What is Brotherhood?

Brotherhood signifies the bond between male siblings, or a close supportive fellowship between men based on shared goals, values, or solidarity. It usually refers to organizations like fraternities, unions, or religious orders, representing loyalty and mutual support.

Does Your Brotherhood Have an Expiration Date?

Brotherhood is a wonderful expression of love and support for the Brothers that are in your Lodge but what about the Brothers that can't attend meetings anymore. Do you still reach out to them? Do you still make sure that their needs are met? Sadly, in many cases, the Brothers that can't make it to meetings are often ignored once they stop showing up. New members come in and have no clue who the Brother is or what contributions he made to the Lodge. We don't hear from them again until the family reaches out asking for us to perform their Masonic Rites. Then we stand up there saying how much we loved Bro. Joe and how much he will be missed. In actuality, we know that we haven't attempted to reach out to Brother Joe in many years, and his family knows it too. If your Lodge doesn't have a committee to check on your Senior Masons, you should establish one now. We are all getting older and I'm sure nobody wants to dedicate all the time and money that we do into Masonry, only to be forgotten when the steps get too hard to climb.



Does Your Brotherhood Have an Expiration Date? (continued)

Our rituals also mention how we should act regarding our fallen Brother's widow and orphans. We say in our opening that we were induced to be a Mason to receive Master's wages to support ourselves, our families, poor and distressed Master Masons, their widows, and orphans. Does your charity and outreach continue after our Brothers are laid to rest?



He Ain't Heavy

The painting “He Ain’t Heavy” was created in the late 1970’s by the artist Gilbert Young. The artwork depicts a man reaching down to help another and is celebrated as a symbol of unity and social responsibility. My first time seeing this artwork was on a Masonic T-shirt under the words, He Ain’t Heavy, He’s my Brother. He Ain’t Heavy , He’s my Brother is a saying that signifies that Brotherly love provides the strength to endure challenges and sometimes makes the assistance that we provide feel effortless.



Closed Mouths Don't Get Fed

In the painting, many people focus on the Brother reaching down to help the Brother in need. While important, the Brother reaching up for help is equally important. This Brother most likely had to fight an internal battle with himself to even admit that there was a problem and to ask for help. Men often struggle to ask for help due to unrealistic expectations from society around masculinity. We sometimes think that asking for help is a sign of weakness, failure, and not having it all together. Men in a Brotherhood should feel comfortable expressing their feelings to their Brothers, knowing that it will be kept confidential. They should be able to feel comfortable enough to ask for help without feeling judged. We learned about the three precious jewels of a Fellowcraft in terms of getting and protecting Masonic information. In this situations the **Instructive Tongue** should be able to tell another Brother if there is a problem, The **Attentive Ear** should be able to listen without judgement, and the **Faithful Breast** should be able to keep the information that is told to you private. Don't suffer alone in silence when you have an organization full of Brothers that are willing to listen and help you.

You Can't Choose Your Phamily

Outside of our individual Lodge's ballot box, we don't get to choose who gets to join the Masonic Phamily. Once a man is raised, he is our Brother. He is a part of our Phamily. You may not always get along with him. You may not always see eye to eye on certain topics. You may not even like them. The key is to remember that no matter what happens, at the end of the day he is your Brother. I'm sure that there are some Brothers that don't like me and some Brothers that I may be closer to than others. My time in Masonry has taught me that I don't have to like a Brother to love a Brother. At the end of the day, we should be able to put personalities aside and work towards our common goal of making Masonry the best that it can be.



Every Brother Isn't Brotherly

Many Brothers enter Masonry with rose colored glasses on. They believe that everything is harmonious and all the Brothers get along. The truth is every Mason is a man that brings the baggage that he had before joining into the Order. Some Brothers will lie on you, some Brothers will hate on you, and some Brothers will go out of their way to make you fail. I tell newly elected Masters to watch out for the Ruffians in their lodge. They don't pop out immediately but over time they reveal themselves through their actions. Their actions don't have to make you act in a similar manner though. Continue to be a good Brother and maybe they will change their minds over time by watching your example and feeling the love you give them.



What Does it Mean To Be Your Brother's Keeper

Being your Brother's keeper means to show genuine love and compassion for one another. It means being empathetic and putting yourself in your Brother's shoes. It means taking on his problems even though they don't belong to you. It means encouraging and strengthening your Brothers in their weakest moments. It means praying for your Brother and being concerned with his spiritual walk. It means offering correction with a loving spirit when you know that a Brother is in the wrong. It means forgiving and loving your Brother even if he wrongs you. It even means being vulnerable and willing to open up so another Brother can feel comfortable to do the same. The list of things that you can do to be your Brother's keeper is extensive but the main things that you can do are show up, show love, and show that you are a dependable brother that can be relied on.

Be like the Brothers in the painting. Willing to reach down to help someone up and willing to admit that you need help. It is truly a powerful statement of individuals showing Brotherly love. No disrespect to the artist, but I feel that the painting is missing something in terms of Prince Hall Masonry. Can you imagine if instead of just showing the one Brother helping, it showed several other Brothers in the background supporting him, while he tries to support someone else. As Masons we are not alone. This is not a solo mission. We are in this together and we have a common goal of making Prince Hall Masonry in Indiana the best that it can be. If everyone does their small part, nobody will have to do a lot. We would be amazed at we could accomplish if we worked together as Brothers and stayed focused on the issues that really matter. So can you imagine what a painting like that would look like? I can. I imagine that it would look something like this.

