



FRIENDSHIP

It has been said that friendship is the only unsinkable ship. That was said about the Titanic too, and look what happened! Friendships are not eternal. But their effects can be and frequently are life-long. Like all things valuable that are not eternal and indestructible, friendship is not less important or even less indispensable because it is not everlasting.

The idea that friendship is or ought to be eternal is simply our wishful thinking about something that is very important to us. Like the "forever" vows of lovers, it is a sign of how strongly we can feel about the connections to others that give meaning to our lives and, indeed, help to make us feel alive. We never want to give that up.

Fiction is sometimes a useful learning tool, so long as we realize its unreality. Well-known fictional friends include such pairs as Batman and Robin, the Lone Ranger and Tonto, Laverne and Shirley, Starsky and Hutch, Mork and Mindy, Mulder and Scully, Cagney and Lacey, and Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid. These friendships are portrayed as close associations based on a shared living situation or occupational/professional commitments. But the connection between the friends goes even further, into a sort of devotion and sympathy in which each friend puts the interests of the other almost on the same footing as their own.

Real-life offers similar lessons in the famous associations of Antony and Cleopatra, Penn and Teller, Ben and Jerry, Marx and Engels, Gilbert and Sullivan, Masters and Johnson, Rodgers and Hammerstein and Siegfried and Roy. These pairings are also rooted in mutual interests and shared goals, often commercial or political. In real life, of course, we can only guess at the sense of human connection that such friends enjoyed. Sometimes it is recounted in biography, but friendship is one of those subjective experiences that, while it can be talked about, is not about talk.

It has been said that to have a friend one must be a friend. This is why it is important to consider what friendship means. For how will we have friends unless we know how to be a friend? Not that there is any uniform understanding of friendship. We must each form that idea for ourselves. Then, while we conduct the ongoing experiment of living, try to learn and help others to learn so that we can come to a better idea of what friendship is.

THINGS SAID ABOUT FRIENDSHIP BY FREETHINKERS

When we think of friends, and call their faces out of the shadows, and their voices out of the echoes that faint along the corridors of memory, and do it without knowing why save that we love to do it, we content ourselves that that friendship is a Reality, and not a Fancy--that it is builded upon a rock, and not upon the sands that dissolve away with the ebbing tides and carry their monuments with them.

- Mark Twain, Letter to Mary Mason Fairbanks

The holy passion of Friendship is of so sweet and steady and loyal and enduring a nature that it will last through a whole lifetime, if not asked to lend money.

- Mark Twain, Pudd'nhead Wilson's Calendar

FRIENDLESS, adj.

Having no favors to bestow. Destitute of fortune. Addicted to utterance of truth and common sense.

FRIENDSHIP, n.

A ship big enough to carry two in fair weather, but only one in foul.

- Ambrose Bierce, The Devil's Dictionary

COMING IN JUNE: "Social Ethics"

Many churches have and promote their version of "Social Justice." The NTCOF does not. But at our June service we will take note of the idea of "Social Justice" and its implications. Can a society, as opposed to individuals, be said to have ethical obligations? Can there be collective compassion and societal caring? And is this synonymous with the government's being a "Welfare State?"

People have very strong feelings about these questions. Feelings that they often see as following inexorably from flawless reasoning. And reasoning that may cause them to see those who disagree with them as stupid, heartless, or worse.

Sensible freethinkers won't undertake to offer final answers to such questions, at least not without a large measure of healthy doubt and humility. But we should make an effort to try to understand the issues better and especially where those with whom we disagree may have a point worth considering

Join us on June 6th of this year for another inimitable exploration of an important part of the human condition: "Social Ethics." And, as usual, there will be fun and new things to learn for Freethinking children and teens as well.

MORE THOUGHTS ON FRIENDSHIP

“Friendship is to be valued for what there is in it, not for what can be gotten out of it. When two people appreciate each other because each has found the other convenient to have around, they are not friends, they are simply acquaintances with a business understanding. To seek friendship for its utility is as futile as to seek the end of a rainbow for its bag of gold. A true friend is always useful in the highest sense; but we should beware of thinking of our friends as brother members of a mutual-benefit association, with its periodical demands and threats of suspension for non-payment of dues.” [Trumbull - not sure which Trumbull!]

“The idea, so common in the ancient writers, is not all a poetic conceit, that the soul of a man is only a fragment of a larger whole, and goes out in search of other souls in which it will find its true completion. We walk among worlds unrealized, until we have learned the secret of love. We know this, and in our sincerest moments admit this, even though we are seeking to fill up our lives with other ambitions and other hopes.

It is more than a dream of youth that there may be here a satisfaction of the heart, without which, and in comparison with which, all worldly success is failure. In spite of the selfishness which seems to blight all life, our hearts tell us that there is possible a nobler relationship of disinterestedness and devotion. Friendship in its accepted sense is not the highest of the different grades in that relationship, but it has its place in the kingdom of love, and through it we bring ourselves into training for a still larger love. The natural man may be self-absorbed and self-centred, but in a truer sense it is natural for him to give up self and link his life on to others. Hence the joy with which he makes the great discovery, that he is something to another and another is everything to him. It is the higher-natural for which he has hitherto existed. It is a miracle, but it happens.

... friendship is not an obsolete sentiment. It is as true now as in Aristotle's time that no one would care to live without friends ... It is still necessary to our life in its largest sense. ... There is possible to-day, as ever, a generous friendship which forgets self. The history of the heart-life of man proves this. What records we have of such in the literature of every country! Peradventure for a good man men have even dared to die. Mankind has been glorified by countless silent heroisms, by unselfish service, and sacrificing love.”

[Hugh Black 1868-1953; a Scottish-American theologian!]

**YOUR GENEROUS
DONATIONS TO THE NTCOF
ARE NEEDED, APPRECIATED,
AND TAX-DEDUCTIBLE!!**

TEEN GET-TOGETHER AFTER LUNCH TODAY AT THE MALL!

All NTCOF events can be found through our website calendar, or through our page at www.meetup.com/church-of-freethought from which you can also RSVP.

Social Luncheon: Today, immediately after our Service, join us for lunch and discussion at the Golden Corral Buffet and Grill in Grapevine, located just across from the Grapevine Mills Mall, at 2605 E. Grapevine Mills Circle, phone (972) 874-7900. To reach Golden Corral from the Wyndham, take the SOUTH exit from the parking lot (turn your head left as you walk out the main entrance), then drive across Esters Blvd onto John W. Carpenter Freeway (114). Then take the first exit RIGHT onto International Parkway (121), then Grapevine Mills Parkway exit. Turn LEFT on Stars and Stripes Way, continuing on to E. Grapevine Mills Circle.

Game Night: The regular game night crew meets nearly every Friday night at the IHOP on 2310 Stemmons Trail (I-35), near Northwest Highway (Loop 12). Plan to arrive at about 7:30 PM, and stay late playing Risk, Rummikub, and other fun games!

Secular Singles: Freethinkers have met their life-partners with whom they have begun families through the Secular Singles group. Check the meetup site for the next date, time and location!

Facilitated Discussion on Recovering From Religion - join at <http://www.meetup.com/Freethinking/> - meets monthly on a Tuesday.



DFWCOR

Dallas-Fort Worth Coalition of Reason

The North Texas Church of Freethought
A Fellowship of Unbelievers

Presenters: David Burgess, Dr. Tim Gorski,
Don Lewellyn, Erin Taylor,
and Lu Whipple

Music Coordinator: Jay Purrington

Videographer: John Gauthier

Ministers: Dr. Tim Gorski and Lu Whipple LPC

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