

Reflections

JUNE 2023

On Friendship



In his book, *The Four Loves*, C.S. Lewis discusses four kinds of human love, one of which is friendship. Among other things, he observes that friendship “arises out of mere Companionship when two or more of the companions discover that they have in common some insight or interest or even taste which the others do not share”¹, and he imagines how friendships might have occurred among early hunters and warriors. He continues:

In our own time Friendship arises in the same way. For us of course the shared activity and therefore the companionship on which Friendship supervenes will not often be a bodily one like hunting or fighting. It may be a common religion, common studies, a common profession, even a common recreation. All who share it will be our companions; but one or two or three who share something more will be our Friends. In this kind of love, as Emerson said, *Do you love me?* means *Do you see the same truth?*—Or at least, “Do you *care about* the same truth?” The man who agrees with us that some question, little regarded by others, is of great



importance, can be our Friend. He need not agree with us about the answer...

In a circle of true Friends each man is simply what he is: stands for nothing but himself.

You become a man’s Friend without knowing or caring whether he is married or single or how he earns his living. What have all these “unconcerning things, matters of fact” to do with the real question, *Do you see the same truth?* In a circle of true Friends each man is simply what he is: stands for nothing but himself. No one cares twopence about anyone else’s family, profession, class, income, race, or previous history. Of course you will get to know about most of these in the end. But casually. They will come out bit by bit, to furnish an illustration or an analogy, to serve as pegs for an anecdote; never for their own sake. That is the kingliness of Friendship. We meet like sovereign princes of independent states, abroad, on neutral ground, freed from our contexts...

Lewis observes that as friendships continue over time:

... our reliance, our respect and our admiration blossom into an Appreciative Love of a singularly robust and well-informed kind... In a perfect Friendship this Appreciative Love is, I think, often so great and so firmly based that each member of the circle feels, in his secret heart, humbled before all the rest. Sometimes he wonders what he is doing there among his betters. He is lucky beyond desert to be in such company. Especially when the whole group is together, each bringing out all that is best, wisest, or funniest in all the others. Those are the golden sessions; when four or five of us after a hard day’s walking have come to our inn; when our slippers are on, our feet spread out towards the blaze and our drinks at our elbows; when the whole world, and something beyond the world, opens itself to our minds as we talk; and no one has any claim on or any responsibility for another, but all are freemen and equals as if we had first met an hour ago, while at the same time an Affection mellowed by the years enfolds us. Life—natural life—has no better gift to give. Who could have deserved it?²

Do you have the kinds of friendships that Lewis talks about? Are there any activities you would like to begin, or other steps you would like to take, to help begin or develop friendships?



“A friend loves at all times...”

PROVERBS 17:17A (ESV)

¹ C.S. Lewis, *The Four Loves* (New York: Harcourt, 1988), p. 65.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 65-66, 70-72. (For another *Reflections* on friendship, see February 2015—*The Gift of Friendship Love.*)

