



FRIENDSHIP

By Wayne Visser

~ Friendship is the bond between hearts and the bridge between souls ~

Who are you friends?
What makes them so special?
How do we make friends, and what makes friendships last?

Our world is crowded with people and our lives are cluttered with meetings. But so much of our interaction with others is superficial. We don our personas as work, wear our masks at social occasions, and play our expected roles in public.

We communicate, but only as a means to an end, an efficient way to persuade others, an effective way to further our own goals; or else just to fill the space of time, to connect the dots of silence in our days. We connect with people in a functional way, more interested in what they can do for us than who they really are as complex human beings; more willing to listen to their next line of dialogue than the incredible story of their lives.

Friendship is the exception to the rule of shallow relationships. We make friends when we throw a line across the void of surface acquaintances, and discover someone on the other side; someone who is intrigued enough to throw the line back.

Friendship begins as a delicate thread between two people, which, with time, is first woven into a thin chord, and then plaited into a strong rope. The bond remains tenuous in the early days of friendship – a careless tug or thoughtless breach of confidence can break the tie, and either side can simply drop the rope and walk away. But as trust builds, so it becomes possible to string a rope-bridge across the divide, and to test its weight under strain.

If the friendship holds up under stress, the two intrepid adventurers can make their clutching way out to the middle of the swaying bridge and greet each other, face-to-face for the first time. As friends meet and get to know each other, the bridge is made sturdier by adding planks of understanding, until eventually the rope-bridge is replaced by a wooden foot-bridge.

The friendship remains vulnerable to inclement weather or weakening if it is not maintained, but easier access strengthens the foundations of commitment. With time, the foot-bridge may become a sturdy stone-bridge, and although no friendship is indestructible (for flash-floods and earthquakes can strike without warning), the longer it lasts and the more it is reinforced, the better its chances are for survival.

We look to friends for honesty in a world of half-truths and lies, for support when our lives creak under the weight of life's pressures, for encouragement when we are shooting for the stars and only hitting the moon.

Friends listen when we need to talk, comfort us in our tears, and celebrate with us in our moments of joy.





Friendship is the journey of discovering the miracle of another's being.

When we begin a friendship, we light a single candle in the dark room of mistrust and scepticism, and we are delighted by the hope it gives us.

As the friendship grows, as we reveal more of ourselves to each other, we light more candles, and are amazed by the glorious sights that become illuminated – parts of ourselves and our friends we never knew existed.

Occasionally, some of the candles may go out – blown by the winds of our changing circumstances, or snuffed out in our impetuous anger and frustration – but always, they can be relit.

The trail of light which is friendship knows no end.

For once one room is bright and our exploration of it complete, there are other rooms, other houses, cities, countries, planets.

The answer to "what are the limits of friendship" is "how many candles and how many lifetimes does it take to light the universe?"

There are no shortcuts to friendship.

Building bridges takes time and effort; lighting candles takes care and attention; sharing another's world takes curiosity and endurance.

But who would want to take a shortcut when walking the path of friendship is in itself so rewarding?

So take hands with your friends today, enjoy their company, shed a little light on each other's lives, and build a bridge across forever.



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