

Core values

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Framing this thought without getting overtly political is a challenge but I'm going to give it a go and hope you'll bear with me.

I've seen several posts go by recently, via You Tube and other channels, asking folks to consider the difference between personal opinion and fundamental moral concepts. Seems like people are having trouble maintaining friendships with folks based on this stand or that, nuances of comments rather than their core intent, positional assumptions as to what another thinks or *should* think, and so on.

By friendships, I don't mean 'Facebook friends' or that sort of algorithm-driven grouping. People who are my 'friends' in that framework are based as much on accidents of common experience and background as personal preference. We 'friend' each other based on shared vacation memories rather than shared adherence to foundational concepts. Which is fine, so long as we don't confuse the two.

Folks will come to this site because we are truly friends and it's a way to stay in touch, or because they enjoy reading my missives (thank you!) or because they like to watch a geezer in his workshop. I hope it entertains and I'd love to eventually have enough friends engaged to make this my primary means of staying in touch. And as promised, I will try to stay within the guardrails and not go off on a politically charged, partisan rant. Which should be a fairly simple promise to keep, given that I could not, with a gun to my head, honestly express devotion to any of the current political parties. But of course, as promised, that's a discussion for another time and venue.

I've struggled with how to state principles that I consider core without going off on a potentially divisive tangent. But then, reading through posts from my earlier channels (former blog, articles for tiny pubs, etc.) I realized that it all has to do with that word – principles. As opposed to stances.

So, if you're going to decide whether to continue joining me here based on my stance on gun control or Federal tax rates, that's your right. But I would rather build my friendships around principles. With apologies to those of you who have already been down this road with me, some of mine are:

- Every child should be able to rely on every adult for protection, support, nurturing. Period.
- That being said, Mary and I never, ever leave a child standing alone in a darkening school parking lot.
- Constitutional arguments should be left to those who have actually, you know, read the document.
- The purpose of government is to do those things collectively that we can't accomplish individually. Securing liberties is one of those things. And that means the other person's liberties in full measure as compared to one's own.
- I find religion of any stripe baffling. That's okay; we each have our own take on the world. I'm even willing to listen if you care to try to convince me. Just please don't expect me to accept your 'proofs' unless they're, you know, provable. And don't feel badly for me if I fail to measure up according to your church's tenants (not a typo).
- Opinions can be demonstrated, and may be compelling, but only facts can be proved.
- I'm kind to cats, goats and turtles but only dogs are real companions.

- I don't express allegiance to flags. Doesn't mean I don't love my country; I'm just not particularly chauvinistic about it. Especially when so many people waving them these days don't seem to share my core values.
- 'My truth' and 'your truth' might differ widely, even though we adhere to similar core values. Experiential truths are especially difficult to align, one to another. I pledge to try hard to be true to you, even when our 'truths' diverge.
- A good friend always has the right to tell me to clam up, so long as they are willing to discuss how they think I've erred. The frequency with which I misspeak or use an awkward approach is dismaying, and unwillingness on your part to help me grow will leave me wandering in the dark. Please speak up.
- I've studied many of the prominent philosophers from the Greeks to present day and I try to structure my own belief system around Rawls' Veil of Ignorance (one slices the cake, then the other chooses their piece) and Kant's Categorical Imperative (we must adhere to those principles which are right for all and then maintain that adherence even when such a rule seems to sometimes operate to our personal detriment). In Kant's words, "Act as if the maxims of your action were to become through your will a universal law of nature."
- I will never understand all the puts and takes of moral reasoning, which is why ethics is such a fascinating realm for me, although it's both academically and personally challenging.
- We should so structure our society that we will be comfortable with what our children and their children choose to write on our tombstones.
- Broccoli be evil. Likewise, Brussels Sprouts.

So, there you have it – my necessarily incomplete statement of principles. If I sound like a friend, please keep coming back. And if not, the choice is still yours. Just don't expect me to walk away from what you see above, especially as to cruciferous vegetables.

Thanks for your time and attention.