



English Tea Brings Two Parties Together

Update from Jacob Burow - February 2014



“If someone had told me four months ago that I would be sitting around the table with a bunch of pro-life Republicans, I would have laughed really hard!” said “Sarah,” who had joined us for one of our tea parties. Sarah is pro-choice, agnostic, and a member of the College Democrats on her campus. Our tea parties are a time to focus discussion on important life issues and theological questions while drinking high-quality English tea. You may be wondering how Sarah came to be among us.

Justice For All was conducting outreach on a university campus when one of my colleagues had a good conversation with the president of the College Democrats which resulted in an invitation to visit their regular meeting. We brought several JFA staff members and volunteers to the meeting, which lasted three and a half hours because everyone was having such a good time. Sarah was at the meeting and actually decided to skip a class to stay and talk. She commented at the end that we were the sort of people that she could be friends with...and that is exactly what happened.

She friended several of us on Facebook and kept in touch. My friend Tim extended an invitation to her to join us at our next tea party because she might enjoy the discussion. She took him up on the offer and even brought her boyfriend whose worldview is similar to hers.

Something interesting happened that night. Tim opened the meeting as usual, explaining that prayer is a part of our tea party, and asked for praise reports or prayer requests. The first one to speak was Sarah.

“I’m agnostic,” she explained, “but I think

that there is some sort of higher power. I’m just not sure who or what. So, my mother is traveling right now, and I would appreciate it if you would pray for her safe return.”

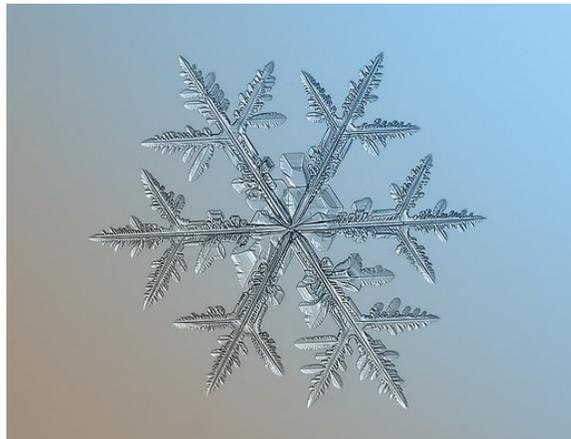
My mind was blown. If someone had told me four months ago that a pro-choice, agnostic Democrat would be sitting at the table with us asking for prayer, I might have laughed. What was it that brought Sarah to us? Two things: **humility and care.**

First, we showed humility by admitting that we might be wrong about our beliefs and by being willing to talk about them. Second, we showed that we cared about Sarah by taking her and her ideas seriously in our discussions.

In taking the time to humbly care about Sarah, we learned something tragic: she had grown up in the church, believing in the Christian God. When she eventually had questions about the Bible, they remained unanswered for her. When she quit going to church, the people there asked only why she was not coming to church. No one asked how she was or what her struggles were. To her, it felt like they just wanted her back in the club. That night we all had a good discussion about God, the nature of love, and who Jesus is. Sarah asked about the next tea party, so I expect that there will be more opportunities to minister to her.

Lessons from Snowflakes

Recently I read an article about snowflakes. I thought I knew that each snowflake was sort of different. I had an idea of what I thought snowflakes should look like, but this article explained why each snowflake is truly unique. Although



the laws of physics are constant, constantly changing atmospheric conditions produce a high degree of variance in the crystalline growth of each snowflake. We know that every single snowflake is different, not just in a different category than most, but literally like no other snowflake on the planet. Look closely at snowflakes, and you will begin to marvel with me at how their designs seem less and less like what you always thought they were.

Do you marvel at God's creation of different people? Do you treat each person as unique, or do you assume that you know what unique looks like? Do you really take the time to understand the complexities of each person's opinion and how it was formed? Dialogue is important because people are important. Having real dialogue with people allows us to see them and appreciate them for the unique snowflakes that they are.

Practicing Humility and Care

Would you be comfortable finding out that you are wrong about something? Why, or why not? If we hang out only with people who believe the same things we do, then we will not likely find out if any of our beliefs are false, or help others discover the same thing. And who wants to go around believing false things?

So, here is my challenge to you. Do you know someone who believes different things than you? How can you be a friend to that person? How can you get a conversation going about things that matter?

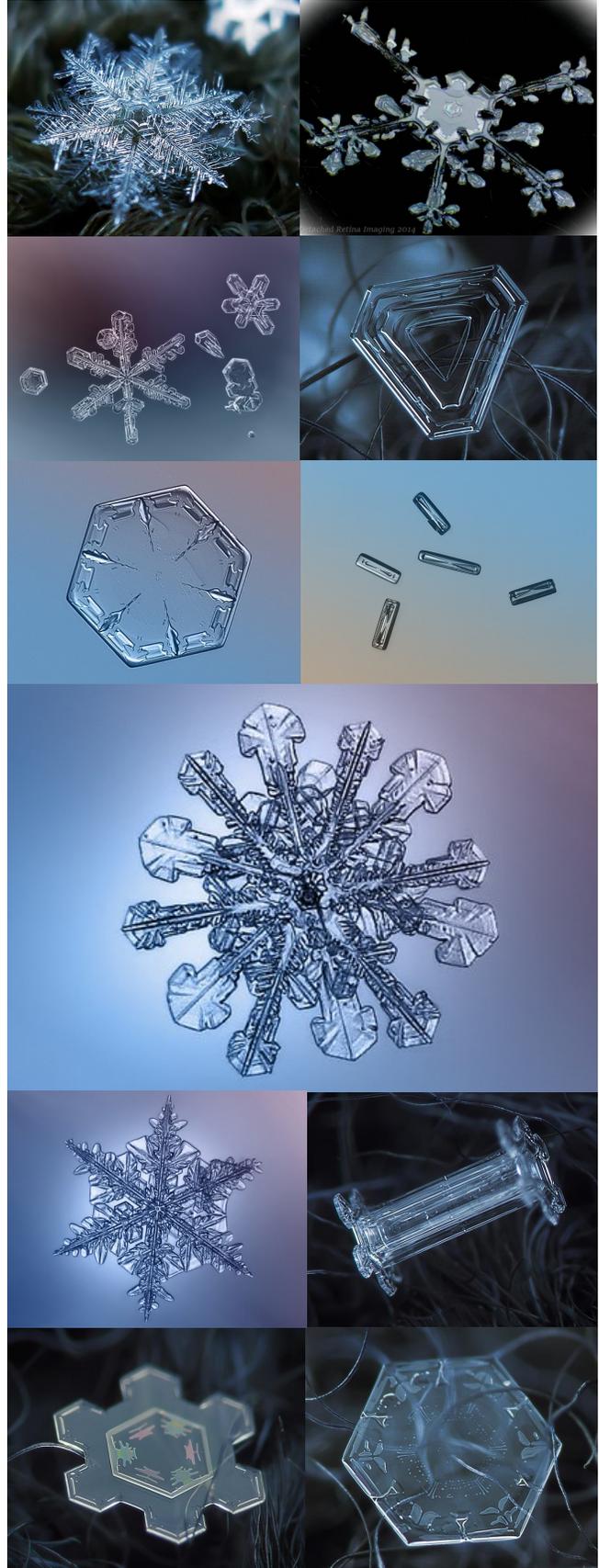
Tips for Good Dialogue:

1. Don't tell others what you think first. Rather, ask them what they think.
2. Don't be upset that people are deceived; it has been this way since the beginning. You have been deceived in the past, and you surely believe things that are false today.
3. Be content to share what you believe to be true with others, and continue to be friends even if they do not accept your beliefs.

Thank you for your prayers and support!

God bless,

Jacob Burow



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