

***The Nicomachean Ethics***  
**Aristotle, 350 B.C.E**

**BOOK VIII: FRIENDSHIP**

The next topic is friendship; for it is a virtue, or involves virtue, and besides, it is most necessary for our life. For no one would choose to live without friends even if he had all the other goods. Still, there are quite a few disputed points about friendship. For instance, does friendship arise among all sorts of people, or can people not be friends if they are vicious? And is there one type of friendship, or are there more?

Perhaps these questions will become clear once we find out what it is that is lovable. For, it seems, not everything is loved, but only the lovable, and what is lovable is either good or pleasant or useful. These are the three causes of love.

Now love for an inanimate thing is not called friendship, since there is no mutual loving, and no wishing of good to it. For it would presumably be ridiculous to wish good things to wine; the most you wish is its preservation so that you can have it. To a friend, however, it is said, you must wish goods for his own sake. If you wish good things in this way, but the same wish is not returned by the other, you would be said to have only goodwill for the other. For friendship is said to be *reciprocated* goodwill.

Those who love each other for utility love the other not in his own right, but insofar as they gain some good themselves from him. The same is true of those who love for pleasure; for they like a witty person not because of his character, but because he is pleasant to them. And these sorts of friendships are easily dissolved, when the friends no longer remain similar to what they were; for if someone is no longer pleasant or useful, the other stops loving him.

But complete friendship is the friendship of good people similar in virtue; for they wish goods in the same way to each other insofar as they are good, and they are good in their own right. Now those who wish goods to their friends for their friend's own sake are friends most of all; for they have this attitude because of the friend himself, not coincidentally. Hence these peoples' friendship lasts as long as they are good; and virtue is enduring.

These kinds of friendships are likely to be rare, since such people are few. Further, they need time as well, to grow accustomed to each other as they cannot accept each other or be friends until each appears lovable to the other and gains the other's confidence. Those who are quick to treat each other in friendly ways wish to be friends, but are not friends, unless they are also lovable, and know this. For though the wish for friendship comes quickly, friendship does not.

## LESSON PLAN FOR 40 MINUTE READING AND DISCUSSION

### Icebreaker:

Name + one thing you love

### Opener:

What do you call the person you follow on instagram/snapchat that you like their posts, they like your posts, but you've never actually met in person? What about people you follow that don't know you exist? Why aren't these friends? What is a friend? Aristotle had answers to this...

### Who is Aristotle?

Aristotle was Plato's student, just as Plato was Socrates' student. Aristotle lived from 384 BCE to 322 BCE, and in his lifetime he explored philosophy, literature, mathematics, and the natural sciences, among seemingly endless other topics. He taught at the Lyceum in Athens, and his institution came to be known as the Peripatetic school, as Aristotle would walk while he lectured to his pupils. Of course, his most famous student was Alexander the Great of Macedon. This excerpt comes from the Nicomachean Ethics which were named after Aristotle's son. The text includes ten books on different ethical topics, and two of them are about friendship. Let's explore together what he says.

**Text:** Have students take turns reading out loud, pausing between each paragraph to ask questions:

- **Par. 1:** What other questions do you have about friendship?
  - Other questions Aristotle asked:
    - Can bad people be good friends?
    - How many friends is too much?
    - Are friends more needed in good or bad fortune?
    - Can teachers and students be friends?
    - Can parents and children be friends?
    - Why do happy people need friends?
    - Can you be long-distance friends?
- **Par 2:** How many of you loved something that is good/pleasant/useful?

- **Par 3:** What does it mean “you must wish good for his own sake?” How do you measure whether you wish good for someone’s own sake?
  - Highest example from Aristotle is a mother giving up her child
- **Par 4:** Have you ever grown out of a friendship? Do you agree with Aristotle that it was because this was a friendship of use or pleasure? Aristotle thinks young people love pleasure friendships, what do you think about that?
  - “On the other hand the friendship of young people seems to aim at pleasure for they live under the guidance of emotion, and pursue above all what is pleasant to themselves and what is immediately before them; but with increasing age their pleasures become different. This is why they quickly become friends and quickly cease to be so...”
- **Par 5:** Do you agree that two people must be similar in virtue to be real friends?
- **Par 6:** Do you think Aristotle believes in love at first sight?
- **Conclusion:** What does this have to do with politics, freedom, or citizenship?
  - According to Aristotle, friendship is about community, so is justice, therefore understanding friendship is a way of understanding political societies