

grandstanding with intimacy. Therefore, it is time to revisit the idea of what constitutes a friend — for which the best way is to begin with Aristotle.

Aristotle wrote a detailed treatise on friendship in his *Nicomachean Ethics*. The fact that it is still read today, some 2300 years later, is a testament to his enduring insights into human nature. Aristotle viewed friendship as a necessity. Unless one is a god or a wild beast, one is going to be in need of friends for various reasons: The young need friends to guide them and help them from making mistakes. The elderly need friends to help them with things they can no longer do for themselves. The poor need friends for assistance and as a refuge from their troubles. The prosperous need friends with whom they can share their prosperity. People in positions of power and influence need friends to help protect their status and to bestow favors and beneficence.

Another prominent writer from antiquity was Cicero. Three centuries after Aristotle wrote his treatise on friendship, Cicero wrote an essay entitled “De Amicitia” (On Friendship), in which he expanded upon the thoughts of Aristotle. Cicero said that with the exception of wisdom, the greatest of all possible gifts was friendship.

A millennium and a half later, the English Renaissance writer Francis Bacon said this in his essay on friendship: “When we share our joys with our friends, we rejoice all the more; and when we share our troubles with our friends, the burden becomes less.” About the same time, the French philosopher Montaigne also wrote an essay on friendship in which he noted that “our free will has no product more properly its own than affection and friendship.” In other words, we have the ability to pick and choose our friends. As Hugh Kingsmill remarked, friends are “God’s apology” for our families.

What constitutes friendship? Aristotle listed two qualifications: (1) Friends must be well-disposed towards each other: goodwill and (2) This feeling must be recognized and returned: reciprocity. He pointed out that sometimes people confuse a feeling of good will with friendship. For example, we can have a feeling of good will for people we don’t know personally, but whom we admire or respect from a distance. Or we may confuse friendliness with friendship. For example, you may project congeniality in all of your social interactions. But mere good will and congeniality do not constitute friendship. These qualities, rather, provide the basis upon which a friendship may be built. Cicero added another qualification for friendship: the willingness to give and