

# **MAKING DISCIPLES**

READINGS IN SCRIPTURE, AELRED,  
AND ROBERT E. COLEMAN

**T. M. MOORE**

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*A PASTOR TO PASTOR RESOURCE*



**The Fellowship of Ailbe**

*Making Disciples*

Making Disciples  
*Readings and Reflections from Scripture, Aelred, and Robert E. Coleman*  
T. M. Moore  
A Pastor to Pastor Resource

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## Introduction

Welcome to *Making Disciples*, 28 days of meditations and the Great Commission and how Scripture and great leaders of the Christian movement help us to understand this holy calling.

We'll be looking at the disciple-making teaching of two Church leaders separated by almost a thousand years. It's remarkable how similar many of their ideas are, but not so remarkable when we keep in mind that each of these leaders was grounding his teaching in the Word of God.

Jesus calls all His followers to engage the work of making disciples. Thus, whatever we can learn from men like Aelred and Robert E. Coleman, we should discover and put to use as fully as we can.

Incorporate these brief meditations into your daily devotions. Share them with your church leaders or other pastor friends. Let this great leader from our Christian past speak into your present, and listen as the Spirit of God leads you to fan into flame His calling on your life.

The entries in this, as in every *Pastor to Pastor* study, are arranged for a month of readings, one reading per day followed by a series of Questions for Reflection or Discussion at the end of the week.

We're happy to provide these readings at no charge for you to use, personally and with your staff or church leaders. Please feel free to make copies for your leadership team or to forward the link or PDF to as many people as you like. If you find these meditations beneficial, we hope you'll consider making a gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe to help support this and our many other outreaches to the Church.

We hope you will find this study helpful and encouraging as you continue the Lord's work in building His Church, His Body, His Bride.

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*Week 1, Day 1*

## The Touchstone and Goal

*Yes, brother, let me have joy from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in the Lord. Philemon 1.20*

### ***Spiritual Friendship***

*Aelred of Rievaulx (1109-1167)*

“For what can one say about friendship that is more sublime, more truthful, more useful, than that friendship will be shown to be formed in Christ, advanced according to Christ, and perfected by Christ?”

Jesus called His disciples “friends.” Friendship is a source of joy, a means of support, a buttress in times of trial and uncertainty, and a resting place of peace and renewal. Friendship in Jesus Christ is true friendship, because those who, like Paul and Philemon, enter such a relationship “in the Lord” and “in Christ” have a focus, fount, and future which goes beyond their own peculiar interests and needs. Jesus Christ is the Touchstone and Goal of all true friendships, as well as of the work of making disciples. True discipleship is friendship in Christ, and every believer – not just pastors – needs such true and spiritual friends. And every believer is called to work at making true friends of others in the Lord.

*Does your ministry encourage friendship among the people of God – friendship in Jesus Christ? In what specific ways?*

*Week 1, Day 2*

## Guardians of the Soul

*Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you. Hebrews 13.17*

### ***Spiritual Friendship***

*Aelred of Rievaulx (1109-1167)*

“...my friend must be the guardian of our mutual love, or even of my very soul, so that he will preserve in faithful silence all its secrets, and whatever he sees in it that is flawed he will correct or endure with all his strength. When I rejoice, he will rejoice; when I grieve, he will grieve with me; he will consider as his own everything that his friend experiences.”

Pastors and elders are called to watch over the souls of God’s people – to be their true friends in the Lord. Here is where the path of disciple-making begins. Yet most people in churches today feel distant from their leaders. They don’t think anybody really knows or cares about them among the leadership of the church, so they seek their friendship within small groups or Bible studies or other church activities, where, for many, success in discipleship is paltry. If the elders and pastors of our churches do not watch over the souls of God’s people, in ways such as Aelred describes, in what sense can they be said to be fulfilling their calling from the Lord?

*What arrangement does your church have to enable your pastors and elders to watch over the souls of God’s people?*

*Week 1, Day 3*

## Preparing for Friendship

*Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.*  
1 Timothy 4.16

### ***Spiritual Friendship***

*Aelred of Rievaulx (1109-1167)*

“Thus it is the mark of a virtuous mind always to meditate upon lofty and difficult things, so that it either attains or more clearly understands and recognizes that which it desires: so we should not believe that a man has made but little progress when he has recognized virtue and learned from that how far he is from virtue. However, the Christian ought never despair of attaining any virtue, since his ears echo daily with that saying from the gospel, “Seek and you shall find.”

True friendship and discipleship requires virtue – Christian virtue. Friends need to love one another, trust one another, and be able to depend on and confide in one another. But virtue comes only through the contemplation of Him Who is all virtue, even our Lord Jesus Christ. Without a clear and compelling vision of the exalted Christ, coupled with regular communion with Him through various spiritual disciplines, it is impossible to make progress in virtue, or in friendship and watching over the soul of another.

*How familiar are you with the spiritual lives of your church’s leaders? Are they preparing adequately to exercise friendship with the members of your congregation?*

*Week 1, Day 4*

## True Friends

*So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us.* 1 Thessalonians 2.8

### ***Spiritual Friendship***

*Aelred of Rievaulx (1109-1167)*

“...we say that only they are friends to whom we are not afraid to entrust our hearts and everything that is in them – to those, in turn, who are bound to us by the same law of faith and security.”

No one can be everyone’s friend. We must, as Aelred explained, be prepared to exercise “good will” toward all people, “For the law of grace compels us to receive not only friends, but also enemies, with heartfelt esteem.” But it’s different with friends. To them we give ourselves, without fear they will betray or despise us. And from them we receive the same. Such spiritual friendship brings to expression the oneness of the Spirit and strengthens the bonds of unity among us (Eph. 4.3), thus enhancing our experience of and witness to the Lord Jesus Christ (Jn. 17,21) and furthering the work of being and making disciples.

*Do you have any true, spiritual friends from other congregations? Or with pastors of other churches in your community? Should you?*

*Week 1, Day 5*

## Love not Iniquity

*You who love the LORD, hate evil! Psalm 97.10*

### ***Spiritual Friendship***

*Aelred of Rievaulx (1109-1167)*

“Worldly people falsely assume for themselves the outstanding name of friendship if they base their bond upon an agreement in vices, since he who does not love is not a friend. But he who loves iniquity does not love his fellow man, for ‘he who loves iniquity does not love, but rather hates his own soul.’ And certainly he who does not love his own soul will in no way be capable of loving the soul of another.”

If we cannot be friends of the world and also friends of God (Jms. 4.4), so we may not be friends with sin and true friends to others. If we are friends with sin we do violence to our own souls. God will not hear our prayers (Ps. 66.18), we cut ourselves off from fellowship with Him (and, hence, the source of friendship’s needed virtues, Is. 59.1, 2), and we walk a slippery slope that leads to more peril (Ps. 73.18). We cannot love others except in the same way we love ourselves. And if loving ourselves means tolerating sin, then we will tolerate it in our “friends” as well. And this will be detrimental, rather than helpful, to their souls.

*How do you encourage your church leaders to practice vigilance against sin?*

*Week 1, Day 6*

## For Mutual Edification

*Let all things be done for edification. 1 Corinthians 14.26*

### ***Spiritual Friendship***

*Aelred of Rievaulx (1109-1167)*

“For spiritual friendship, which is what we mean by true friendship, should be desired not with a view to any worldly good, nor for any reason extrinsic to itself, but from the worthiness of its own nature, and the feeling of the human heart, so that it offers no advantage or reward other than itself...For in this true friendship one makes progress by bettering oneself, and one bears fruit by experiencing the enjoyment of this increasing degree of perfection. And so spiritual friendship is born among good people through the similarity of their characters, goals, and habits in life.”

As we grow in virtue and the life of faith, Christ is formed in us by the Word and Spirit of God (2 Cor. 3.12-18). But this is not merely for our own advantage. We benefit by experiencing a greater degree of the glory of the Lord; but this equips us to share that glory with others, through mutual friendship and the encouragement and example of love. When friends are growing in the Lord, they reinforce and extend one another in ways wonderful to experience and to see. And they are growing as disciples as well.

*What evidence do you see that your church’s leaders are seeking these kinds of friendship with one another, or with members of the congregation? How might you encourage greater mutual affection and growth among your church’s leaders?*

*Week 1, Day 7*

## Linked in the Lord

*Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. Galatians 6.1, 2*

### ***Spiritual Friendship***

*Aelred of Rievaulx (1109-1167)*

“Not only is God self-sufficient; he is himself the sufficiency of all created things, granting some mere existence, granting others sentience, and granting still others knowledge, while himself remaining the cause of all existing things, the life of all sentient things, and the knowledge of all knowledgeable things. And so God himself, as the Highest Nature, established all natures, put all things in their proper place, separately distributed all things to their proper times. But because his eternal reason demanded it, he wished all his creatures to be joined together in peace, and for community to exist between them. And thus all his creatures are allotted a certain vestige of unity from him who is supremely and purely one.”

Friendships between true disciples bear witness to the oneness of God and His purpose for all of creation – that all creation should be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 5.17-21). Thus true spiritual friendships witness to the reality of God; to the dependence of all creation His purposes, presence, and will; and to the true joy and *shalom* which can be found in union with Him alone. Think how such friendships, actively encouraged and pursued, might transform a local church and its presence in the community!

*Meditate on the last sentence above. Jot down whatever ideas come to you concerning the potential for your church to impact your community through true spiritual friendships.*

*For reflection or discussion*

1. How would you describe the state of disciple-making at your church? What is done in order to make disciples? Are all members of the church involved? What evidence of fruit do you see?
2. How does Aelred define friendship? Why is this kind of friendship so important to the work of making disciples?
3. What does Aelred mean by saying friendship and discipleship depend on Christ? In what ways? How can we foster this kind of dependency among friends and church members?
4. How do you define discipleship? How would you assess the state of your own discipleship at this time? Of your work in making disciples?
5. What are your goals for these meditations? What do you hope to learn? How to you hope to grow or improve in your walk with and work for the Lord?

*Prayer:*

*Week 2, Day 1*

## Nothing Sweeter

*Two are better than one,  
Because they have a good reward for their labor.  
For if they fall, one will lift up his companion.  
But woe to him who is alone when he falls,  
For he has no one to help him up.* Ecclesiastes 4.9, 10

### ***Spiritual Friendship***

*Aelred of Rievaulx (1109-1167)*

“For in human affairs there is no goal that is holier than friendship, nothing more useful, nothing more difficult to find, nothing that is sweeter to experience, nothing more enjoyable to maintain.”

It can be difficult for pastors to enter into true spiritual friendship with members of their congregation. Certainly there will be a leader here, an elder there, or a mature older friend who will stick with the pastor and treat his soul like his own. Pray that God will give you such friends, brethren. But pastors need to look beyond their own churches to other pastors in the community. If we can make friends with other pastors, and enjoy one another as Aelred suggests, this might be a solid first step for our congregations learning to pursue sweet oneness in the Lord. And that will certainly get the attention of the larger community (Jn. 17.21).

*Talk with a couple of local pastors about this idea of spiritual friendship. Do they seem open? Interested? Would they be willing to pray with you about this?*

*Week 2, Day 2*

## Headless Beasts?

*For we have great joy and consolation in your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed by you, brother.* Philemon 1.7

### ***Spiritual Friendship***

*Aelred of Rievaulx (1109-1167)*

“A human being without a friend is like a beast: for he lacks someone with whom he can share his joy in prosperity and his sadness in adversity, to whom he may unburden his mind when he is preoccupied, with whom he may talk whenever he has had a particularly sublime or illuminating insight... That person is completely alone who has no friend.”

St. Brigid said that a man without a spiritual friend is like a body without a head. He can't think clearly, can't see the world as it really is, and doesn't even know what's wrong with him. Aelred says that those who have no friends are like beasts – competing for everything, wary of everyone, consumed only with, well, consuming. True spiritual friends care about our souls and seek, like Philemon, to bring refreshment and renewal to our hearts, that we might know joy and comfort. This is what it means to be a true spiritual friend.

*To whom are you a true spiritual friend like this?*

*Week 2, Day 3*

## The Path to Perfection

*As iron sharpens iron,  
So a man sharpens the countenance of his friend. Proverbs 27.17*

### **Spiritual Friendship**

*Aelred of Rievaulx (1109-1167)*

“...friendship is a path that leads very close to the perfection which consists of the enjoyment and knowledge of God, such that a man who is a friend of man is made into a friend of God, according to what the Savior said in the gospel: ‘Now I will not call you servants, but my friends.’”

Two important aspects of spiritual friendship are glimpsed here. First, true friendship focuses on God, on knowing Him, dwelling in His presence, and becoming like Him in all the perfections of virtue and knowledge. True spiritual friends thus sharpen one another as image-bearers of God and Christ. And, second, such a project is a path, a journey. True friendships are going somewhere together. They have intermediate goals and objectives, and take stock of their progress. They carry each other when discouragement or weariness befalls. They enjoy the journey together by enjoying together the presence of the Lord. They are disciples together of Christ.

*Talk with a close friend about these two aspects of spiritual friendship. In what ways are you sharpening one another according to these two criteria?*

*Week 2, Day 4*

## Into Christ

*I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Philippians 3.14*

### **Spiritual Friendship**

*Aelred of Rievaulx (1109-1167)*

“And so in friendship are joined honesty and agreeableness, truth and pleasantness, sweetness and will, affection and action. All of these qualities come together in Christ, they are advanced through Christ, and in Christ they are perfected.”

The goal of discipleship is to be found in Christ, in knowing Him (Jn. 17.3), becoming more like Him (2 Cor. 3.12-18), and, ultimately, seeing Him face to face (1 Jn. 3.1-3). Friendship is an important part of the process of making disciples because as friends grow “into” one another they learn what it means to grow up “into” Christ in all things. But friends will need to encourage one another in their individual journeys in the Lord, exercising all the “one-anothering” obligations true love requires. Thus they may hope, individually and together, to make real progress in knowing, enjoying, and refracting Jesus to the world.

*How might you improve some of your friendships so that each of you became more consistently focused on this prize?*

Week 2, Day 5

## Willing to Die?

*Peter said to Him, “Lord, why can I not follow You now? I will lay down my life for Your sake.” Jesus answered him, “Will you lay down your life for My sake? Most assuredly, I say to you, the rooster shall not crow till you have denied Me three times.”*  
John 13.37, 38

### **Spiritual Friendship**

*Aelred of Rievaulx (1109-1167)*

“Christ himself has set up a sure goal for friendship by saying, ‘Greater love has no man than this, than that a man lay down his life for his friends.’ Behold, how far love must be extended among friends – to the point that they are willing to die for one another!”

At dinner with a couple of pastor friends the topic of persecution came up, at which time one of the pastors opined that he was not quite certain whether he would be willing to lay down his life for the Lord Jesus. He said he hadn’t thought about it, but he hoped he would – he just didn’t know. If we are not willing to lay down our lives for Jesus, we certainly will not lay down our lives for a mere mortal. Love for Christ, to the point of being willing to die for Him, is foundational to true friendship. If we will betray the Lord, Who died for us – by reticence or silence or catering to this or that group or individual – what will keep us from betraying those who consider us their true friends?

*Have you settled the question of whether or not you would be willing to die for Jesus? Talk with a soul friend about this question.*

Week 2, Day 6

## Friends in Heart and Mind

*Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed...* Galatians 2.11

### **Spiritual Friendship**

*Aelred of Rievaulx (1109-1167)*

“...affection without reason is the sort of attraction mere beasts feel for each other; among humans it is given to forming attachments that are in many respects illicit – indeed, it cannot tell the difference between the licit and the illicit. However, we understand that often affection precedes friendship, but it ought never to be followed unless it is led by reason, moderated by a sense of honor, and ruled by justice.”

Peter and Barnabas were friends; they had true affection for one another. But they were not true spiritual friends, for their “friendship” failed to keep them from falling through temptation into sin. Paul was the true friend of both Peter and Barnabas, for he loved them enough to confront them in their sin, and that in front of a large company of their peers – those before whom they had sinned together. Paul had affection for Peter and Barnabas. But sound reason, rooted in the divine Word and focused on the upward calling of Christ, prevailed to risk “friendship” in order to strengthen true friendship in the Lord. Friends are like that, yeah, they are.

*Talk with some of your soul friends: How do affection and reason work together to strengthen true friendship? How can you together strengthen each of these?*

*Week 2, Day 7*

## Together before the Lord

*I was glad when they said to me,  
“Let us go into the house of the LORD.”* Psalm 122.1

### ***Spiritual Friendship***

*Aelred of Rievaulx (1109-1167)*

“Friendship will be full of riches for those who cherish it when it is completely centered upon God; for those whom friendship joins together, it immerses in the contemplation of God.”

True friends spend time together in the Lord’s presence – sharing favorite passages of Scripture, praying and singing to the Lord, talking with one another about His abundant goodness, truth, and grace. Susie and I grow in friendship with one another and the Lord as we share from our times of meditation and prayer. Friends I talk with from different states lead me into the Lord’s presence by sharing from their morning devotions, praying with and for me, and probing me to learn what the Lord is doing in my life these days. We need such friendships, brethren, friends who will keep us centered upon God and gladly join us in His holy throne-room.

*If we are truly together in the presence of the Lord, the Lord will be the focus of our words and meditations. Can you think of some ways to bring more of this experience into your friendships?*

*For reflection or discussion*

1. How do affection and reason work together to make strong friendships?
2. How do you determine when you are making progress in your walk with and work for the Lord? How can friends/disciples help one another in this matter?
3. Can we make a true friendship work merely by sharing in the outward things of life – interests, hobbies, sports, etc.? Why or why not?
4. If disciples are friends of Christ, can we really hope to make disciples in our churches if we do not build this effort on friendships among Christians? Explain.
5. Is your thinking about the work of making disciples changing in any ways? Explain:

*Prayer:*

*Week 3, Day 1*

## Begin Here

*No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us. 1 John 4.12*

### ***Spiritual Friendship***

*Aelred of Rievaulx (1109-1167)*

“One must first lay a solid foundation for spiritual friendship upon which its principles may be based. If this is done, the person who is ascending the higher reaches of spiritual love by a direct path ought not to neglect this foundation nor go beyond it, but instead exercise the greatest caution. The foundation of which I speak is the love of God; by this foundation we should measure all those things which either love or affection prompts, all those things which either the heart secretly suggests or some friend openly urges.”

Only as we love God, and are growing in love for Him, can we sustain the kind of spiritual friendships Aelred has in mind. Because only the love of God gives us the strength to deny ourselves in preference to others, the orientation to sort out proper from improper affections, and the wisdom to know what is the proper path for love to tread at any time. Soul friends should above all encourage one another in love for God, for by so doing they strengthen the bonds of friendship which bind them to one another.

*How do you seek to encourage others in love for God? In what ways are you seeking to improve love for God yourself?*

*Week 3, Day 2*

## Belonging to One Another

*But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, that I also may be encouraged when I know your state. For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state. Philippians 2.19, 20*

### ***Spiritual Friendship***

*Aelred of Rievaulx (1109-1167)*

“However, once a friend has been accepted, he must be so tolerated, treated, and agreed with that, as long as he has not permanently departed from that foundation of friendship which we have agreed on, he will belong to you and you to him, as much in temporal as in spiritual matters, so that there will be no difference between you on affairs of the soul, the affections, your wills and opinions.”

Soul friends will frequently disappoint or disagree with one another. But as long as love for God remains the foundation of our relationship, we need to work out our differences or find ways of tolerating them in love. This is hard work, to be sure, but this is the way friends relate. Such love is the mark of true discipleship. None of us is perfect or knows everything with complete knowledge and insight. In our friendships we need to make room for differences of opinion, but without compromising love for one another and for the Lord.

*How does Jesus' friendship for us model the behavior Aelred recommends in this excerpt?*

*Week 3, Day 3*

## Fit Friends

*...and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you... 2 Peter 3.15*

### ***Spiritual Friendship***

*Aelred of Rievaulx (1109-1167)*

“Therefore this is the sort of man you should choose for a friend: one who is not troubled by the fury of anger, nor divided against himself by instability; one whom suspicion does not wear out, nor garrulousness loose from the dignity that is customary among us. It will be especially useful if you choose as a friend one whose character and nature fit your own.”

By “fit your own” I don’t think Aelred means, “just like you.” We all need balance in our lives, and soul friends can provide that. God gave Eve to Adam because she was “opposite to him”, as the Hebrew has it. That is, she complemented him in many ways and was thus a “fit” companion. Peter and Paul were friends, but it took some doing for them to fit together. Paul submitted to Peter in Jerusalem – which may have been a bit of a struggle for him, given their respective backgrounds. And Peter was taken to the woodshed by Paul in Antioch – which was just what he needed at the moment. But the two loved and respected each other and benefited from their friendship, in spite of the fact that their backgrounds, callings, and personalities were different in many ways.

*What would you describe as a “fit” friend for you? Do you have such friends in your life?*

*Week 3, Day 4*

## In the Worst of Times

*“But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.” Matthew 5.44, 45*

### ***Spiritual Friendship***

*Aelred of Rievaulx (1109-1167)*

“However, in this respect friendship is more probable and its virtue is more clearly proved, when a friend does not cease to be the friend he was, even to one who harms him: he loves the one by whom he is not loved, he honors the one by whom he is despised, he blesses the one by whom he is cursed, and he does good to the one who devises ruin for him.”

This is a tall order, indeed. But if we are called to love our enemies, who always abuse us, how much more must we continue to love our friends who sometimes fail us, though we know they continue in love for God? We take comfort in knowing that Jesus perseveres in loving us, though we fail and betray him often. He has called us to love one another as He loves us, so we can do no other. When the world sees this kind of love among the members of Christ’s Body, it will have reason to believe that something truly new and mysterious is at work in our midst.

*What do you consider to be the keys to continuing to love someone who has wronged or harmed you in some way?*

*Week 3, Day 5*

## Four Considerations

*“Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends...No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.” John 15.13, 15*

### ***Spiritual Friendship***

*Aelred of Rievaulx (1109-1167)*

“Four considerations seem to hold especially in the case of friendship: love, affection, security, and delight. Friendship involves love when there is a show of favor that proceeds from benevolence. It involves affection when a certain inner pleasure comes from friendship. It involves security when it leads to a revelation of all one’s secrets and purposes without fear or suspicion. It involves delight when there is a certain meeting of the minds – an agreement that is pleasant and benevolent – concerning all matters...”

These seem like reasonable tests for a friendship. Do we truly love one another, so that we are willing to set aside our own interests if need be? Do we feel deep affection for one another, reinforcing our commitment and deepening our love? Do we feel safe in one another’s confidence? And do we truly enjoy one another? All these criteria, of course, can be found, to some extent, among friends in the unbelieving world. But when founded upon love for God and held together by Christ’s love for us, then true friendship – which is able to overcome trials, obstacles, setbacks, and disappointments – can blossom and bear true spiritual fruit.

*Suggest some ways for strengthening these criteria with one of your soul friends, then talk with him about it.*

*Week 3, Day 6*

## Faithfulness above All

*Moreover, it is required in stewards that one be found trustworthy. 1 Corinthians 4.2*

### ***Spiritual Friendship***

*Aelred of Rievaulx (1109-1167)*

“In friendship there is nothing more outstanding than faithfulness, which seems to be both the nurse and guardian of friendship. In all of life’s turns, in adversity and prosperity, in joy and sadness, in delightful and bitter circumstances, it reveals itself to be comparable to friendship, holding in the same regard both the humble and the exalted, the poor and the rich, the strong and the weak, the well and the infirm.”

A friendship is like a trust. Someone entrusts us with the care and nurture of his soul, and we become stewards of his wellbeing. Paul says that stewards must be trustworthy. Whatever their stewardship requires of them, they must be faithful and reliable to perform. Don’t we all want friends like that, who will stand by us in good times and bad, when we’re up and when we’re down? Then if we would have such friends, we must show ourselves to be friends like this as well – faithful stewards of the trust placed in our hands.

*What are your friends looking for from you in the way of faithfulness?*

*Week 3, Day 7*  
**As Yourself**

*“And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”* Matthew 22.39

***Spiritual Friendship***

*Aelred of Rievaulx (1109-1167)*

“Behold, here is the reflection of love: Do you love yourself? Yes, indeed, if you love God, and surely if you are the sort of person I describe as worthy to be chosen for friendship. But do you think that you should give yourself some reward for this love of yourself? Not at all: Everyone holds himself dear. Therefore, unless you transfer this affection for yourself to another, and love your friend freely, because your friend is dear to you simply because of who he is, you will not be able to enjoy the pleasures of true friendship.”

It’s not wrong to love ourselves. It *is* wrong to love ourselves too much. We love ourselves too much when love for ourselves overrides love for God and others. But if we keep love for God pure, and founded on His Word and grace, then we can learn to love others in the way that we love ourselves. And that’s what the Lord intends. Healthy self-love should translate into healthy love for others if we are to fulfill everything that is written in the Law and the prophets. Only God can enable us to love like this.

*How do you know when love for yourself is beginning to go awry?*

*For reflection or discussion*

1. What are the most important things you’ve learned from Aelred about *being* a disciple?
2. In what ways does Aelred’s teaching about friendship inform your thinking about the work of making disciples?
3. How do the skills of “friend-making” prepare us to be more effective as witnesses for Christ?
4. What are some ways you might bring more of the “friendship” aspect of discipleship into the disciple-making work of your church?
5. What will be your “next steps” for improving your work of disciple-making and friend-making?

*Prayer:*

*Week 4, Day 1*

## Rub Shoulders

*Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him...* Mark 3.14

### ***The Master Plan of Evangelism***<sup>1</sup>

*Robert E. Coleman (1928 - )*

“Knowledge was not communicated by the Master in terms of laws and dogmas, but in the living personality of One who walked among them. His disciples were distinguished, not by outward conformity to certain rituals, but by being with Him, and thereby participating in His doctrine.”

If pastors are too busy to spend time with men, they will not have much success at making disciples. We cannot make disciples through programs; Jesus shows us that we must be willing to invest personally in the lives of a few, by spending time with them in a variety of personal and ministry situations.

*How does spending time with men feature in your own work of disciple-making?*

*Week 4, Day 2*

## Not That Easy

*So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us.* 1 Thessalonians 2.8

### ***The Master Plan of Evangelism***

*Robert E. Coleman (1928 - )*

“Preaching to the masses, although necessary, will never suffice in the work of preparing leaders for evangelism. Nor can occasional prayer meetings and training classes for Christian workers do this job. Building men is not that easy. It requires constant personal attention, much like a father gives to his children. This is something no organization or class will ever do... The example of Jesus would teach us that it can only be done by persons staying right with those they seek to lead.”

One of the evidences that the modern age has leached into the life of the church is that we tend to think of equipping the saints for ministry primarily in terms of classes and programs. I'm not opposed to classes and programs, unless they become a substitute for following the Biblical model for making disciples. We have to strike a balance between formal and informal times for equipping the saints.

*What are some of the obstacles and challenges that can keep a pastor from spending time with men?*

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<sup>1</sup>All quotations are from Robert E. Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism* (Old Tappan: Revell, 1963, 1987).

*Week 4, Day 3*

## No Substitute

*“Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.” Acts 20.28*

### ***The Master Plan of Evangelism***

*Robert E. Coleman (1928 - )*

“There is simply no substitute for getting with people, and it is ridiculous to imagine that anything less, sort of a miracle, can develop strong Christian leadership. After all, if Jesus, the Son of God, found it necessary to stay almost constantly with His few disciples for three years, and even one of them was lost, how can a church expect to do this job on an assembly line basis a few days out of the year?”

No pastor can do all the work of making disciples in the church. Making disciples, and spending time with those who are being discipled as part of that process, must become a pervasive attitude and an expected practice of all those who are entrusted with this task. You know, what you might expect if people were really friends. The pastor shows the way, and all the other disciple-makers follow his example.

*What would it take to enfold your entire congregation into a web of disciple-making like this?*

*Week 4, Day 4*

## Followers Must Have Leaders

*And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. 2 Timothy 2.2*

### ***The Master Plan of Evangelism***

*Robert E. Coleman (1928 - )*

“Followers must have leaders, and this means that before much can be done with the church membership something will have to be done with the church officials. If this task seems to be too great, then we will have to start like Jesus did by getting with a few chosen ones and instilling into them the meaning of obedience.”

What criteria for leadership does your church use in electing officers or asking people to serve? Are your church’s leaders true leaders, or are they merely managers and teachers? Are they friend-makers and disciple-makers? A church of managers and teachers will not lead people to turn their world upside-down for Jesus Christ. That takes leaders, and leaders must be made, not recruited.

*How would the people in leadership in your church define the word, “leadership”? Would it include a healthy disciple-making component?*

*Week 4, Day 5*

## On the Job

*...but Paul chose Silas and departed, being commended by the brethren to the grace of God. And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches. Acts 15.40, 41*

### ***The Master Plan of Evangelism***

*Robert E. Coleman (1928 - )*

“As they watched Him minister to the sick, comfort the sorrowing, and preach the Gospel to the poor, it was clear that the Master considered no service too small nor sacrifice too great when it was rendered for the glory of God. They may not have understood it, and certainly could not explain it, but they could never mistake it.”

People learn by observing and doing, more than by merely sitting and listening. All our efforts at making disciples must include some “on-the-job” training component, where people are able to see what’s to be done and can actually begin doing it with those who are equipping them. Every aspect of the life of a disciple can be modeled and learned in this way. We’ll do a better job making disciples if we incorporate this principle into our training.

*How many different ways do the men you’re discipling participate in your own ministry?*

*Week 4, Day 6*

## Life on Life

*Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock... 1 Peter 5.2, 3*

### ***The Master Plan of Evangelism***

*Robert E. Coleman (1928 - )*

“Basically His way was His life. And so it must be with His followers. We must have His life in us by the Spirit if we are to do His work and practice His teaching. Any evangelistic work without this is as lifeless as it is meaningless. Only as the Spirit of Christ in us exalts the Son are men drawn unto the Father. Of course, we can not give something away which we do not possess ourselves. The very ability to give away our life in Christ is the proof of its possession.”

We must always take care that the example we set before the people of God is a snapshot of what the Lord desires for them to become. The pastor “sets the bar” for the spiritual life, personal demeanor, relational skill, and ministry effectiveness of all the people in his care. This is a matter for much prayer, throughout the day, lest, by our example in unguarded moments, we cause the brethren to stumble.

*Who are some disciple-makers whose personal example has greatly affected your own life? How is your example affecting others?*

*Week 4, Day 7*

## The Supreme Objective

*The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life,  
And he who wins souls is wise. Proverbs 11.30*

### ***The Master Plan of Evangelism***

*Robert E. Coleman (1928 - )*

“Through this manner of personal demonstration, every aspect of Jesus’ personal discipline of life was bequeathed to His disciples, but what perhaps was most important in view of His ultimate purpose was that all the while he was teaching them how to win souls. Practically everything that Jesus and did had some relevance to their work of evangelism, either by explaining a spiritual truth or revealing to them how they should deal with men.”

I wonder if this could be said of us. Is it plain to all that we are passionate to reach the lost? To proclaim the Gospel of the Kingdom? To lead people to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ? No disciple will rise above the level of his teacher. If we aren’t committed to the supreme objective of seeking and proclaiming the Kingdom of God, we have no right to expect it of anyone else.

*How do you renew yourself daily in the pursuit of this supreme objective?*

*For reflection or discussion*

1. What points of agreement about discipleship and disciple-making can you find between Aelred and Robert E. Coleman?
2. Rather than a “programmed” disciple-making, Coleman prefers a more “life-on-life” approach. Explain the difference. Why does Coleman think the “life-on-life” is better?
3. Have you mapped out your [Personal Mission Field](#)? Do you think this could be an effective tool for disciple-making? Why or why not?
4. What’s the most important lesson you’ve learned from these readings and meditations on Coleman’s book?
5. How are you planning to put that to work in your walk with and work for the Lord?

*Prayer:*

## The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Fellowship of Ailbe is a spiritual fellowship in the Celtic Christian tradition. Our goal is to promote revival, renewal, and awakening, following the teaching of Scripture and the example and heritage of our forebears in the faith.

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Thank you.