

Chapter Prompts

- 1. Introduction: To the One Who Might Become a Friend**
 - a. *Who comes to mind when you hear the word friend?*
 - b. *When in your life have you most clearly felt the presence of a true friend?*
- 2. Chapter One: What Is Friendship?**
 - a. *Do you have your own working definition of friendship? If so, what is it?*
 - b. *Who was the first person you would have called a true friend?*
 - c. *Which of Aelred's four qualities—loyalty, right intention, discretion, patience comes most naturally to you? Which is hardest?*
- 3. Chapter Two: Best Friends**
 - a. *Who in your life knows the long version of your story?*
 - b. *When did you first recognize that bond?*
- 4. Chapter Three: When Friendships Fail**
 - a. *Is there a friendship in your life now that needs honest attention?*
 - b. *Has a friendship ever ended badly, and that sting still lingers? What did—or might—it teach you?*
- 5. Chapter Four: Befriending Ourselves**
 - a. *How can you be a more supportive friend to yourself?*
 - b. *How would you talk to a friend in your situation?*
- 6. Chapter Five: Spiritual Friendship**
 - a. *Who in your life has listened to you in a way that helped you notice something meaningful that you might otherwise have overlooked?*
 - b. *When did you offer that same kind of listening to someone else?*
- 7. Interlude**
 - a. -
- 8. Chapter Six: Becoming Friends with the World**
 - a. *Where in your own life has a friendship pulled you toward something larger than you anticipated?*
 - b. *What of the world is asking for your attention?*
 - c. *Where might you focus your attention to become a better friend to the world?*
- 9. Chapter Seven: Friendship and the Paradise Already Here**
 - a. *Where in your life have you felt a moment of presence that seemed to open something larger than ordinary life?*
 - b. *Who are the people—expected or unexpected—with whom you can practice this level of friendship, where you are seen and where you are willing to see?*
 - c. *Where, without meaning to, have you created distance—the distance that becomes its own small hell—and what might it mean to turn toward presence again?*
- 10. Chapter Eight: Loneliness and the True Self**
 - a. *Is there a truth about yourself you have not yet been able to say aloud to another person?*
 - b. *Who in your life has the kind of presence that might make it possible to say it?*
 - c. *Have you seen your own pure diamond?*

11. Chapter Nine: When a Friend Is Ill

- a. *Who in your life has stayed when illness made it easy to leave?*
- b. *What would it mean to be the loving rock for someone you love?*

12. Chapter Ten: Spiritual Companionship

- a. *What did you feel stir in you as you read—recognition, longing, resistance, grief?*
- b. *Where does that feeling lead you?*
- c. *Have you heard the sound of the genuine in another? If so, what was that experience like?*

At FriendshipInALonelyAge.com, and at our Instagram and Quora.com profile you will find ongoing reflections on friendship, presence, and the inner life—new stories, new thinkers, and responses to what readers are bringing to the conversation.

Friendship is not a subject that runs out. The blog is where the book keeps going.

Some questions that go further than these prompts:

- What does it mean to be a friend to someone who is dying?
- Can a friendship survive a serious political disagreement?
- What do we owe the friends we have lost touch with?
- Is there such a thing as too many friends?
- What does friendship look like in the second half of life?

If any of those questions are yours too, or if you have one not named here, please offer it to us and to your club. The conversation is better with more voices in it.