



EXCERPT



Knowing and Being Known *Hope for All Our Intimate Relationships*

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College chaplain Rev. Erin Moniz is deeply attuned to the questions and concerns of today's emerging adults. She explores the essential elements of healthy relationships, addresses the complexities of intimacy, and shines a light on the barriers that can impede genuine connection.

The Problem with Intimacy

"I can live without sex, but I cannot live without intimacy."

I was participating in a conference where a fellow college minister was speaking. But this talk was specifically about her commitment to a celibate life. When I heard these words from the stage, it was like someone hit the brakes too hard in my mind. "I can live without sex," I repeated to myself, "but I cannot live without intimacy."

Days, weeks, and even months after hearing this maxim, it swirled in my thoughts. Each time bringing along with it the same two questions: "What are we talking about when we use the word intimacy? And why would intimacy be necessary?"

The beauty, or annoyance, of questions like these is that they operate much like a Rube Goldberg machine. One question hits the domino, that flips the switch of another question, that launches the pencil into the cup that tips over and releases the toy car, that glides down the chute, and so on. For example, if it is true that intimacy is essential for life, why are we all so lonely? Can we live a full life without sex? Where does intimacy come from?

But if I can risk starting with an honest question I never thought to ask, until I was confronted with finding a theology of intimacy, my favorite one is this: *Should Christians be better than non-Christians at relationships, and why?*

When I asked this in my research, an overwhelming majority of responses from my emerging adults conceded that, yes, there should be something about the Christian faith that produces Christ-followers who are contributing to healthy, sustainable, flourishing relationships. Though many could not articulate what it is specifically about Christian teachings and practices that would make this happen, they agreed that the general premise of Christianity at the very least should orient Christians toward healthy relationships. But wait, there's more.

Despite the initial consensus, there was another consensus: that the best examples of healthy relationships in their lives were from non-Christians. In fact, my respondents lamented that some of the worst examples of relationships they knew of were relationships between so-called Christians. In the end, it was apparent that the lived experience of my emerging adults did not match their ideology about faith and relationships.

But you don't have to take my word for it. Research tracks divorce rates across faith traditions. Even with variables applied for church attendance, regular prayer, and frequency of Scripture reading, the stats between those who profess a Christian faith and those who do not are neck-and-neck in divorce and separation. Even more disturbing is the research on the prevalence of domestic violence in highly religious households. The #MeToo and #ChurchToo movements bring their own illumination. My students are observing these disparities played out before their eyes.



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Yet there is also research that supports how religious adherence and participation actually increases social capital and decreases loneliness. Faith communities help us deal better with suffering and create valuable and unique support systems. Just the other day, a student showed me a thread where five atheists were contemplating and affirming the merits of joining a church just to have the benefit of a larger supportive community to help with life's struggles.

As my emerging adults attested, it seems that Christians should be leading out as examples of healthy, intimate relationships, but something is off. In my search for answers, however, I was initially confronted with a problem about questions.

–adapted from chapter one, “Defining Intimate Relationships”



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Rev. Erin F. Moniz, Deacon and College Chaplain

Rev. Erin F. Moniz (DMin, Trinity School for Ministry) is a deacon in the Anglican Church in North America and currently serves at All Saints Waco.

Erin serves as an associate chaplain at Baylor University and is the Director for Chapel. As a chaplain to an undergraduate community, she's active in spiritual formation, mentoring, discipleship, and programming for young adults.

She is a trained conciliator and enjoys conflict-coaching and third-party mediation. She preaches, guest lectures in college classes, and enjoys public speaking in a variety of settings. She writes and contributes to a number of sites such as: AMEN (Anglican Multi-ethnic Network), Anglican Compass, and Mutuality Magazine.

She helped create the podcast, [Mutuality Matters](#): gender theology for the gospel empowerment of men and women, which now partners with [CBE International](#). She is also on the Board of [Equip](#) (Nashville), the premier consulting and training solution for churches aspiring to be places where gay Christians thrive for a lifetime according to a historic sexual ethic.

Erin's specialties include:

- Intimate Relationships (including singleness, community, family, etc.)
- Reconciliation (Interpersonal and Communal)
- Gender Theology
- Racial Healing / Social Justice
- Ecumenicism and Interfaith Cooperation

Visit Rev. Erin's website at www.erinmoniz.com



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