

Holy Friendships: Nurturing Relationships that Sustain Pastors and Leaders. By Victoria Atkinson White, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2023, 177 pps.

In an age where leadership often feels isolating and spiritual guidance is in high demand, Victoria Atkinson White's *Holy Friendships: Nurturing Relationships that Sustain Pastors and Leaders* is a beacon of hope and wisdom. With insight and a heartwarming narrative, White explores the invaluable role of holy friendships in the lives of pastors and leaders, offering a refreshing perspective on the importance of community and connection in the spiritual journey.

The heart of *Holy Friendships* is the unique challenges faced by pastors and congregation leaders. White, herself a seasoned leader in Christian ministry, intimately grasps the weight of responsibility, the toll of constant giving, and the inevitable loneliness that can accompany spiritual leadership. Drawing from her personal experiences and those of numerous others, she conveys the crucial message that leaders need genuine, supportive friendships to sustain themselves and continue their vital work.

The book delves deep into the concept of holy friendships, defining them as sacred relationships rooted in faith and love. White emphasizes that holy friendships are not just about mutual benefit but rather a spiritual calling to nourish one another's souls. Through real-life stories and biblical examples, she illustrates how these relationships can provide solace, accountability, and a sense of belonging to leaders who often feel like they have no one to turn to.

One of the book's strengths is its practicality. White offers readers actionable advice on how to cultivate holy friendships. From the importance of vulnerability to the need for boundaries, she provides a roadmap for building and maintaining these essential relationships. Her guidance is both relatable and applicable, making it accessible to leaders of all backgrounds and experiences.

Throughout *Holy Friendships*, White skillfully weaves together theology, psychology, and personal anecdotes to create a compelling narrative. Her writing style is approachable and practical. As readers journey through the pages, they'll find themselves not only inspired but equipped to embark on their own quest for holy friendships.

Perhaps the most significant achievement of *Holy Friendships* is its capacity to heal. White acknowledges that many pastors and leaders carry deep wounds and scars, often in silence. By advocating for holy friendships, she provides a balm for these wounds, encouraging individuals to seek out and nurture the connections that can lead to emotional and spiritual restoration.

In conclusion, *Holy Friendships: Nurturing Relationships that Sustain Pastors and Leaders* is a must-read for anyone in a leadership role within the realm of spirituality. Victoria Atkinson White's insights, relatable stories, and practical guidance make this book a lifeline for those who may be feeling isolated or burdened by their responsibilities. It serves as a timely reminder that, in a world that often emphasizes individualism, the power of holy friendships can transform and sustain even the most dedicated leaders. White's work gives focus to the enduring strength of faith and our capacity for connection.

Chelle Huth
United Lutheran Seminary
Gettysburg, PA 17325