

After College: Navigating Transitions, Relationships and Faith

Available August 2016
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978-0-8308-4460-9

“With an epidemic of young people delaying adulthood and not sure *how* to successfully emerge into life, *After College* steps into the gap and offers a resource that helps recent graduates launch out of college and land well. It takes a ‘pro-millennial’ approach in that the book believes in our recent grads and all of their potential; they can thrive, they just need a little help and hope.”

— Erica Young Reitz, author of
After College

I Graduated, Now What?

“College [professors, advisers, etc.] stress the importance of preparing for graduation and the job, but they cover none of the topics that concern me most.” – a graduating college senior

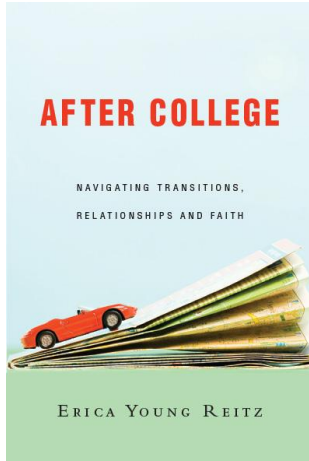
Many recent college graduates find themselves unprepared for the new responsibilities, hardships and questions that come with post-college life.

In her book *After College*, Erica Young Reitz steps in as a wise mentor for these recent graduates. She uses her decade’s worth of experience to answer grads’ top concerns, including questions on dating, making decisions, managing money, finding friends and more.

Reitz compiles advice, stories from other graduates and biblical insight in this thoughtful and encouraging guidebook for transition into a new stage of life.

Reitz is director of Senior EXIT at Penn State University, a program designed by Reitz and her colleagues to prepare students for success in their post-college years. Her professional experience and ongoing interactions with graduates help her answer questions such as:

- What are the top issues facing recent graduates today?
- What do millennials need to transition well into adulthood?
- How do I make God-honoring decisions about what job to take, where to live and whom to marry?
- How do I manage my money?
- How do I find friends in my new community?
- What can I do when my hopes and expectations for life after college aren’t met?
- If I didn’t meet my spouse in college, will I ever?
- How do I set boundaries in dating relationships?
- What can I do to persevere through sickness, family problems, a difficult job or loneliness?
- Does finding a church and committing to it really make a difference?
- What if I have no idea what job I would be good at?
- What if I don’t like my job or have to take a job I don’t want?
- Is it the weekend yet? Why do we have to work anyway?
- How do I interact with people from different backgrounds and life stages?
- Do the decisions I make now matter?



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“The strangeness of life after college can make us want to run from it all. We can feel lost, alone and unknown. . . . You are not alone. Many alumni have gone before you, have shared in the same struggle and have lived to tell you that this only lasted for a time until they established a new normal.”

— Erica Young Reitz, author of
After College

Answers to the Top Concerns of Recent College Grads

So, are you ready for life after college?

Leaving the gates of university life often comes with the expectation that we’re ready for what’s on the other side. But what does readiness even mean? Some students feel ready in September of their senior year (get me out of here!) while others – who may actually be more equipped for the “real world” than they realize – dread college coming to a close. In the scurry of résumé preparations and job applications, it’s easy to reduce readiness to our emotions about entering adulthood or to a list of key items necessary for life on our own.

But preparedness is not just about securing a job and apartment, or a paycheck in hand. It’s about much more.

It’s about preparing not just for a career but for a life of faithfulness in a complex world. It’s about connecting what’s happened in the classroom for the last four years to our calling – to what we will do and who we will be after college. It’s about practical tools and resources for navigating the transition in areas like budgeting, finding community and making decisions. It’s about having a healthy perspective and proper expectations. It’s about finding answers to questions we may not even know we should be asking. And it’s about knowing it’s going to be okay when we don’t have the answers right away.

Working with hundreds of seniors and recent graduates over the last decade, I have learned that leaving college does not automatically mean readiness for what comes next. As evidenced by the growing conversation in higher education regarding senior year preparedness, lots of recent graduates are floundering on many fronts as they emerge into adulthood. Observing this trend forced my colleagues and me to ask, “What can we do during the college years, especially senior year, to prepare our students for life after graduation?”

Our answer led to the launch of a senior year experience called Senior EXIT. With a team of collaborators, I have spent the last ten years helping seniors at Penn State University prepare for the transition into the next phase. Through Senior EXIT, we address both the philosophical and practical realities of post-college life. We help seniors “pack their bags” with the resources they will need to faithfully navigate the changes, challenges and choices of the first year out. Our hope is not only to prepare students to successfully “exit” college, but also to see them flourish in the months and years that follow.

This book is a culmination of my master’s work and professional experience working with

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seniors and recent graduates, but it is also personal. My own transition out of college wasn't the smoothest. Though I had a good head on my shoulders, a great educational experience, strong faith and a loving family, entering the "real world" after seventeen straight years of school (grade school, middle school, high school and college) came as a shock to the system in ways no one prepared me to consider. I struggled with loneliness as my close friends and I scattered across the country, I felt directionless in my career, and I didn't know how to manage my minimal income. On a deeper level, I wrestled with questions of faith, doubt and identity. I was used to playing the role of a student, and I didn't know how to measure success in a system that wasn't set up like college. Simply put, I struggled to "make life work" in many areas, and – for a time – I thought I was the only one who felt this way.

I'm certain my own story shapes my passion for working with college seniors. I love being able to address topics that are crucial for a successful transition from a faith-based perspective. As one graduating senior puts it, "College [professors, advisers, etc.] stresses the importance of preparing for graduation and the job, but they cover none of the topics that concern me most."

This is where Senior EXIT steps in. For years, our graduates have asked us to capture everything we talk about at Senior EXIT into a book they can reference later on. This is that book.

This book is about pursuing faithfulness in life after college. It can feel overwhelming as we consider all the ways we're called to be faithful as well as all the potential challenges. Don't worry; we'll take this step by step, topic by topic. Though the issues related to the transition are interwoven, we'll take this on in three parts. We'll start by looking at what it means to be faithful in our relationship with Christ – how to cultivate real faith in the face of real world demands. Then we'll discuss faithfulness to community – how to find and foster healthy relationship with others. Last, we'll talk about faithfulness to our calling – how to discern our vocation and honor God in our output to the world.

– Taken from the introduction, "Why This Book?"