



Devoted

Jennifer Mathieu

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Rachel Walker is devoted to God.

She prays every day, attends Calvary Christian Church with her family, helps care for her five younger siblings, dresses modestly, and prepares herself to be a wife and mother who serves the Lord with joy.

But Rachel is curious about the world her family has turned away from, and increasingly finds that neither the church nor her homeschool education has the answers she craves. Rachel has always found solace in her beliefs, but now she can't shake the feeling that her devotion might destroy her soul.

Devoted Details

Date : Published June 2nd 2015 by Roaring Brook Press

ISBN : 9781596439115

Author : Jennifer Mathieu

Format : Hardcover 336 pages

Genre : Young Adult, Contemporary, Religion, Fiction, Realistic Fiction

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From Reader Review Devoted for online ebook

Shannon (It Starts At Midnight) says

This book was amazing. I am always so fascinated by a religious cult situation, and while the Walker family may not be in a cult in the typical sense of the word, they are clearly not in a healthy situation. The girls are treated as second class citizens, only existing to do stuff for the men and make babies. Rachel doesn't even have much of an education, just enough so that she can teach her younger siblings. All the people in the church are kept as sheltered as possible from the outside world, and if they dare try to forge their own path, they're sent to a creepy "rehabilitation" (read: Brainwashing) camp.

Rachel has heard stories of people being sent away to this camp, and has witnessed them coming back as shells of their former selves. She's also heard that a girl a bit older than her who had left the church has recently come back to town, and her curiosity is piqued. Rachel isn't sure what she wants or should want out of life, but she does know that being a subservient baby maker isn't it.

This book is hard to read, in the sense that you are left wanting to punch fictional characters and can't. This "church" treats its congregation abysmally, stigmatizes mental health issues, and basically tries to paralyze the members into submission. The families are all quite poor, since they not only try to keep away from the outside world, but have gaggles of children to care for. When Rachel wants to read a book, she is caught and has to destroy it. It's all so painful to read about, but I was so invested in her story, there was no way I was turning away.

It's hard to say a lot about this book for fear of spoilers, but I will say that the most amazing thing about it is that religion is not vilified in any way. There are some lovely examples of religious groups that are so kind and wonderful, and the author is so careful to show that it is not all religions that are the problem, just this particular group of extremists. I am not religious myself, but I feel that people who are will really appreciate the tone of the book. It is also not at all preachy, it is about having the right to make your own choices and to live your own life. It's about kindness and love and family and friendship. There is a beautiful poem that is referenced many times during the story, in the best of places. I am not going to share it, because reading it in context is much better.

Bottom Line: This book is fabulous. The characters, even the ones you won't like, seem so incredibly real. I was so mad, so sad for Rachel and felt like she was a friend. The growth of some of the characters is overwhelming, and the fact that there are some who don't grow makes it so realistic. This book was an absolute win.

Emily May says

What is it I plan to do with my one wild and precious life?

My wild life?

My precious life?

Jennifer Mathieu has done it again.

I was really pleasantly surprised by the author's debut novel - The Truth About Alice - and the way she

flawlessly crafted many different characters and their perspectives, breaking apart high school cliques and stereotypes to sensitively portray each one as a human being. Her second book is just as good.

Here she returns with a story about seventeen-year-old Rachel Walker - a girl who has spent her whole life devoted to God and preparing to be a good wife and mother. But when Rachel finds a blog from a girl who "escaped" their church, she starts to question everything she's been told about her reason for being alive. Suddenly, Rachel wants more; wants to be more. But what will she have to lose to get it?

This book could have easily turned into another scare story about religions, but the author handles it in a subtle way that works very well. I always find it hard to believe in those stories where girls are brought up devoutly religious, believe they should be subservient to their husbands and then overnight throw off their modest clothing and become full-blown feminists. Unfortunately, it's rarely that simple.

Mathieu shows that. And, though I am personally not religious, I appreciated the way she distinguished between believing in God and organized religion. Oh, and it was interesting to discover that Rachel's religion is very real - I even had to go look up the Quiverfull movement after reading because I was so curious.

Rachel herself is a very sympathetic character. Despite our completely different circumstances, I felt that I understood her feelings about her family, her church, God, life, her new friendships and her desire for knowledge and a career. The unfairness of her situation makes the book gripping, whilst the author's knack for well-developed characters makes this more than your typical fast-paced contemporary.

Engaging, emotional and informative.

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Sam says

Huge thank you to Raincoast Canada for this ARC!

I fell deeply in love with Jennifer Mathieu's first novel *The Truth About Alice* last year and remembered being completely enamoured by her writing. There's a raw and rich quality to her work, and she leaves the reader with so much to think about both as the story progresses and when it ends. Colour me excited when *Devoted* showed up in the mail, because I admit, books on religion are something that always make me a touch nervous.

Devoted is written with honesty, kindness, and raw force. Rachel is the kind of heroine who a reader can connect with because she is someone who is being ripped a part at the seams. We can sympathize with her because she wants to be a devoted Christian woman, but she also has a strong desire to see the world beyond the walls of Calvary Christian, the commune she lives in.

And here's the thing, the book does a wonderful and respectful job of looking at both of Rachel's wants. She understands what is right and wrong about the cult she grew up in, she's sympathetic to the people she once lived with, and yet the other half of her knows that (and through discovering Lauren's blog) that there's more to the world outside of it. She wants an education, she wants to have a job, she wants more for her life than simply bearing children and being a good helpmeet.

I really adored the characters in this story. Rachel's family is exceptionally frustrating, but I found myself sympathizing with them at times, particularly Rachel's sister, Ruth, who seemed the most frazzled by Rachel's abrupt departure. I also loved Lauren and how she comforts Rachel, and I love her genuine attitude towards helping her get settled into a normal life. I loved the Treats family, especially Diane, who was just so nutty and fun. Mark was a cutie too, and I liked that Mathieu didn't try to force a romance between he and Rachel, but rather went very subtle about it. This book was more about Rachel's growth, and Mark has such a sweetness about him that he wants to encourage her transition than spoil it.

So I am two for two with Jennifer Mathieu, and I know that I'll be reading more of her books as they are published. She knows how to provide such thoughtful reads, and with such a touchy topic like religion, does it with such grace. I encourage everyone to check out *Devoted*, simply because it's one of those books that offers a perspective often not considered, and it leaves a such a last impression. This is a tough read, but it's the kind that is also so rewarding, that you'll still be thinking about it well after it's over.

Nicole Pramik says

Note: Long review but this book was worth it! :)

As a Christian (and a former homeschooled kid), I always feel a bit apprehensive any time a fictional story comes out that focuses on a small segment of the "Christian" or homeschooling community. (I say "Christian" in quotes because these sects, cults, etc. do not follow Scriptural teachings and, instead, twist the Bible to fit their needs.) My fear is that people who are not religious will assume the worst about Christians and think all families who homeschool do so for devious reasons. Hence was my worry about this novel and I almost didn't read it, assuming it was going to examine one segment of people and make scathing, overarching judgments. But, as it turned out, my fears were never confirmed and, for that, I was both surprised and impressed.

(Now, before I begin this review, I want to say that this will probably be geared more for Christian readers who are considering this book. That's not to say non-religious readers won't get anything out of what I share, but be mindful that I'm going to be exploring this novel's theological musings as well as its literary value.)

Devoted focuses on Rachel Walker, a teenage girl living in a "Christian" home that is part of the quiverfull movement (though it's never called that by name). I had never heard of the quiverfull movement before and did some light research into it. In brief, this movement (which, by the way, is not indicative of all Christians) applies a very literal meaning to Psalm 127:3-5. While the Psalm's author is using a metaphoric device, some persons have interpreted this to mean that a Christian household should literally be full of children, regardless whether or not the couple can effectively care and provide for them. The man's role is to be the head of the family, but any Scriptural requirements for the husband to love his wife and be willing to sacrifice himself for her are seemingly disregarded in favor of a one-sided, patriarchal power structure (as opposed to mutual love and respect as taught in Ephesians 5:22-33).

In *Devoted*, young Rachel questions not so much her faith in God but the additional requirements she's been taught pertaining to this quiverfull ideology. Thus, this is a cathartic read where her inner frustrations bleed through the page in a very organic way, not via teenage angst, which would have been tempting to employ. I really felt for Rachel as she models a more theologically sound Christianity than her parents and peers as she expresses kindness, love, righteous anger, and a level-head yet she is treated as a dissenter by others within her community.

One example of this is an incident when Rachel is "caught" reading her favorite book, *A Wrinkle in Time*. Rachel is correct in saying that the novel expresses Christian themes that coincide with the Bible, but her father only sees that the book contains elements of science fiction and fantasy and, hence, cannot be "godly" somehow. Rachel is the one in the right here as she has employed Biblical discernment to her reading choices, yet she can't contradict her father and is forced to give up something she loves. Thus, Rachel's disconnect with her family's brand of faith starts in slow steps and builds which, again, came across as realistic and not hurried for the sake of plot.

Throughout the novel, it's easy to put one's self in Rachel's shoes. The faith Rachel's family prescribes to is based on legalism and male dominance, not mercy; grace; compassion; and mutual submission, love, and respect. One scene that struck me as particularly poignant and indicative of the type of legalistic "faith" Rachel's family practiced was when her father tries to console her mother after a devastating loss. Rather than show love to his wife and be mindful of her emotional needs, he just spouts off Bible verses, essentially telling her to snap out of her funk. Before he goes on one of his tirades, Rachel's mother asks him to just talk to her - not preach, but talk. Her words cut my heart as I have seen "Christians" spout off the Bible to people in need yet lack compassion - it's an unattractive combination to say the least (see II Corinthians 13:1-8).

While the first half of the novel focuses on Rachel's home life, the middle portions introduce us to Lauren Sullivan, a former member of Rachel's church who rebelled. Rachel begins to communicate with Lauren and finds in her a kindred spirit of sorts: Lauren questions what she's been taught, possesses a wider view of the world, and wants to pursue her dreams. However, Rachel and Lauren are a good study in contrasts. While Lauren has all but completely abandoned any relationship with God and delved into some questionable lifestyle choices, Rachel loves God and wants to do what's right. To her credit, Mathieu creates this balance of opposites that presents Rachel as the better example - her experiences haven't hardened her so much that she views God in light of some of the erroneous beliefs within her faith community.

Another thing Mathieu got right was the fact that she portrays Christians as unlike. It's easy to see how the members of Rachel's church might mean well but really miss the mark when it comes to truly living out Christ's example. Later on, Rachel actually gets to experience a different worship service where joyful celebration replaces dour expressions and the Bible isn't twisted to tickle the congregation's ears nor tie them up in shackles to false doctrine. It's a great study in contrasts again and I was glad it was included.

If I had any negative comment to say about this book, I think it would be that I would have liked to have seen some of the goings-on at the reeducation camp that Rachel's church sends kids and teens for misbehaving. Rachel is threatened with attending this camp and escapes in the nick of time, but I would have liked to have seen what happened there to scare the kids straight. It's possible it would have been redundant but, for its build up and referencing throughout the book's early chapters, a small peek would have settled some questions in my mind. But it wasn't a deal-breaker for me that it wasn't included.

This novel caused me to experience a myriad of emotions, from frustration over Rachel's family restricting her (when Rachel wasn't doing anything wrong), to Rachel's desire to pursue her dreams, to her ability to keep her faith regardless of negative influences. Thus, *Devoted* ends on a triumphant note: the Christian community isn't demonized, Lauren isn't hailed as a hero just for losing her faith, and Rachel doesn't become a wild child. It was a perfectly balanced story, deep with rich emotion that avoids being sappy or overdone, with realistic characters that weren't tropes. In short, this YA novel really impressed me with how it deftly, and respectfully, handled what could have been a touchy subject. And for that, I give Mathieu a great deal of credit.

Content-wise, this novel is essentially clean. There are a handful of profanities, chiefly spoken by Lauren

(including an f-word or two) but certainly nothing pervasive. There is no violence or scenes of peril but there are moments of intense emotional stress for Rachel. The final scenes are particularly heartbreaking and show just how un-Christlike Rachel's family is. Lastly, there is no sexual content though there is general, generic talk of remaining sexually pure until marriage, pornography, and modesty. There is an obvious attraction between Rachel and a young man she meets on the job but their encounters are chaste. Even though this novel doesn't contain anything most parents or guardians would find troublesome in terms of content, I would still recommend reading it first before passing it off to any teen reader as it contains quite a bit of discussion material that would be good to address openly.

Overall, *Devoted* was a highly-enjoyable novel and I was surprised at how much I liked it. I would strongly encourage, in particular, Christian readers to pick this book up as it paints a good picture of what true faith looks like and how emotionally and spiritually damaging a counterfeit truth can be. All in all, I'd highly recommend this novel as it's a very emotional and thought-provoking YA read and really is something rare for its genre.

Kelly says

Rachel Walker grew up in a Duggar-like family and decides she's ready to leave. So she does. This is the story of her making the choice and the consequences thereafter.

It's respectful of the religious movement while also respectful of Rachel needing to claim her own life for herself.

This ticked all my boxes, was well-written, well-paced, and totally fills the Duggar hole in my heart. Religious cult books are my jam, but it's even more so when both the person fleeing and the belief system itself are handled with respect and sympathy, even if the story isn't about being sympathetic to the system.

A good read alike to Carol Lynch Williams's *The Chosen One*.

Louisa says

Jennifer Mathieu is a YA author to watch. *The Truth About Alice* was similarly short in length, yet both books pack such a punch you're left in a daze of "how did I not read this before?".

What might my future husband think about the fact that I've read A Wrinkle in Time three times in the past few months and that I taught myself algebra? My future husband. I've been hearing about him since I was nine or ten, a shadowy figure God will deliver to me one day. He'll want a woman who submits to his authority.

Rachel is one of ten children who live in a closeted, very Christian community - by which I mean it's essentially a cult. The women are expected to marry young, be subservient and produce bundles of children. Computer time is extremely limited, TV is non-existent, they're supposed to dress chastely, interaction with the outside world is close to none, and teens who act out (e.g. read pornographic magazines) get sent to a

"Christian camp", where they pretty much brainwash all the rebelliousness out of you.

But Rachel wants out. She starts having doubts about her faith, nor does she feel right about her community. When she learns of Lauren Sullivan, a girl who left the community years ago, she starts realising she could have a normal life "outside". But is it worth the risk?

The whole book took me just under two hours to read, but left a deeper mark on me than much longer novels have before. It's not really about religion. Sure, their faith plays a huge part in the way they live. **But the book is more of a testament to Rachel's bravery and her journey from subservient daughter to a semi-independent young woman.**

Cults are freaky. Can't escape that. On a scale of 1 to 10, Calvary Christian honestly don't fit on the higher end - certainly those from *The Sacred Lies of Minnow Bly* or *Gated* are much more intense. It's interesting, though, how pronounced the theme of feminism was throughout this. I appreciate how Rachel grows into her identity as an empowered female - perhaps not fully by the end of the book, but with great promise.

I'd definitely recommend picking this up + Mathieu's debut too if you haven't already! And can we have a sequel with her and Mark and their adorable synonyms?! Pleaseeeee?

Paige (Illegal in 3 Countries) says

See more of my reviews on The YA Kitten! my copy was an ARC I got from the publisher for review.

Diversity Rating: 0 – What Diversity?

Racial-Ethnic: 0

QUILT BAG: 0

Disability: 1 (Rachel's mom has postpartum depression)

Intersectionality: 0

Much to the misfortune of readers everywhere who are likely finding this novel in the midst of the Duggar sexual abuse revelations, *Devoted* was written and came out before any of that came to light. The thought of how many ways Jennifer Mathieu could have taken apart how these kinds of things are covered up in fundamentalist Christian and/or Quiverfull communities make me swoon a little. Alas, what's done is done and there's no going back to add more now. What *Devoted* gives us is the least biased, most thoughtful examination of Quiverfull culture and the lovely of one girl's self-driven journey to leaving that community.

Rachel is the kind of girl any readers could be if they'd been born to a different parent. One of ten children, she's been taking care of her siblings like a mother from a young age and indoctrinated with the idea her purpose in life is to be a good helpmeet to her future husband—and there will be a husband. There is no such thing as spinsterhood or homosexuality there. Rachel's ability to simultaneously be the Everygirl without being a personality-free blank slate makes her the ideal narrator and her journey out of her Quiverfull community comes naturally.

Sometimes, it just takes something little to escape from a toxic place or mindset. You hear a woman protest

why she's expected to wear higher necklines but men aren't expected to not look at women's breasts. All of a sudden, you discover feminism. Rachel's little moment is hearing about an exiled girl who moves back to town. While trying to find out more about Lauren with clandestine computer searches (even her computer time is heavily monitored!), concerns she already had about her family's lifestyle lead to a hard choice: go get reprogrammed at a Christian camp or leave. Rachel, with Lauren's help, leaves.

Rachel's personality and struggles are so real they hurt. I don't live in a religious family like she does, but both of us have families that hold values that we don't and we deal with so much wrong because we care about our families too much to just leave. When Rachel does leave, it tears her apart to leave her siblings—especially her thirteen-year-old sister Ruth. As hard as it is to deal with my own family sometimes, I know it would tear me up just as badly to sever all ties to them in such a way.

Devoted's faults lie in how it doesn't cut deep enough. We see moments of how abuse within families and the mistreatment of mental illness is covered up and perpetuated by such fundamentalist communities, but it doesn't touch on other problems like the lack of sex education. A story from the New Republic titled "Sexual Assault at Patrick Henry College, God's Harvard" speaks for itself with its title and is a must-read companion to Devoted. Even before the Duggar story came out, there have been multiple cases of people in Quiverfull/fundie communities being arrested for sexual abuse or assault against children.

Rachel's good fortune to be a heterosexual girl in a place where being QUILTBAG would be downright dangerous leaves an intriguing angle unexplored. Were there even one QUILTBAG character among the cast, so much could be done. (Honestly, Rachel comes off to me as a lesbian who hasn't been able to discover her sexuality yet due to constant heteronormative language and teaching.) Rachel herself doesn't recognize the lack of diversity in her community and that's understandable, but readers will see it and know there are places Devoted is pulling punches.

Still, Mathieu's take on the community we're so curious about that we've made the Duggars celebrities for having 19 children and ~kooky customs~ is a realistic one, not the overly sensational one readers may expect at first. No sensationalism here; just natural development and evolving criticism. Fans of her debut novel *The Truth About Alice* will love this book too and we can all look forward to her future YA novels together!

Rin W. Vitale says

Summary:

Rachel Walker is devoted to God. She prays every day, attends Calvary Christian Church with her family, helps care for her five younger siblings, dresses modestly, and prepares herself to be a wife and mother who serves the Lord with joy. But Rachel is curious about the world her family has turned away from, and increasingly finds that neither the church nor her homeschool education has the answers she craves. Rachel has always found solace in her beliefs, but now she can't shake the feeling that her devotion might destroy her soul.

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This was such an informative & pretty enlightening read. I loved it. It was really good. Beautiful wording, beautiful story.

*"Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?"*

..but this is when me suck at, can't find a word to describe why I really enjoyed reading this. I just loved how mature Rachel was. How she handles everything in her life. It was just so wonderful to read.

The first half of the book was about Rachel and her daily life with her family. It's pretty enlightening, honestly. Growing up with so many siblings, strict religion rules, and she never rebel one single thing even though she has the thought at the time. Until one day...

The second half was more interesting. She meets new people. Learn new things. She met Lauren, the Treats-Mr. Treat, Diane, Mark. Those people were awesome. I especially loved the interaction between her and Mark. He was such a goofball! Many adorable moments with these two...

I think my most favorite part was the last exchange between the sisters -Rachel and Ruth. I cried my eyes out. It was beautiful and sad. But in the end, I am so proud of Rachel, really. As a reader that is a wonderful feeling when you can connect with the character you read and feel proud of what they did. Overall, I only have ONE complain: WHY ended so abruptly?? :(

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## Layla says

I don't know how to convince you to read *Devoted*, but I think you should. It's not the sort of thing I usually pick up – I do read broadly, but my favorite books are more likely to be sci-fi or fantasy than contemporaries – but I'm glad that I did, in this case.

*Devoted* hasn't seemed to receive much attention so far and I'm not sure why? Because this book is an excellent, though very quiet, character study. And in addition to this, it's beautifully written and it engages with many issues that are central to young adult literature. It's a good one, you all. (And I don't think you need to be religious or Christian to read it; do not be scared off by the title or the synopsis. I grew up in an interfaith household that was super different from this, and liked it anyway.)

The central premise is as follows: seventeen year-old Rachel has grown up in a religious Christian household that adheres fairly strictly to Biblical teachings. (It's suggested that they're members of the Quiverfull movement.) The family homeschools and they're regular church-goers – as an older sister who's training to become a wife and mother, Rachel is responsible for the care and keeping of her younger siblings. Rachel's father holds authority over the household – Rachel isn't allowed to go places unaccompanied, she can't read *A Wrinkle in Time* without her father's say-so, and he's responsible for her spiritual guidance.

Read the rest of my review at [The Midnight Garden](#).

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## Drew says

### 4.5

*Devoted* is a quiet, moving, and eye-opening book by the author of the spectacular novel *The Truth About Alice*. It really was unlike anything I expected, and I think the summary gives you the wrong idea. I thought this was going to be a Christian-hating book about a girl who turns her back on her faith, and for that reason I wasn't interested in reading it, but I'm **so** glad I gave it a try because it completely took me by surprise.

I'm not sure if Jennifer Mathieu is a Christian or not, but I loved how much respect she showed toward Christians in this book. She explored **how people view religion differently** in a really wonderful and mature way. Rachel, the main character, had a peaceful, loving relationship with God, which was clearly very separate from the strict, suffocating, and forced traditional ideas her father upheld. Throughout the book Rachel became more and more confident with herself and **her faith with God never strayed, but grew even stronger.**

For the first half of the book we get to experience the community Rachel lives in where all the children are under constant surveillance and girls can't wear any clothes that might be the littlest bit "tempting" to boys. That means no pants, tank tops, or even moderately tight shirts.

Then, in the second half of the book, Rachel escapes her confining household after her parents threaten to send her to a brainwashing camp for misbehaving teens when they catch her sending emails on the computer. I won't tell you how Rachel escapes the community, but I will say that it was quite an emotionally disturbing and powerful scene.

I liked that there was just a hint of romance. Rachel had some feelings for Mark, a boy she meets in the city after she moves out of her community. Mark was an awesome character. He was kind and respectful, while also being a realistic portrayal of a teenaged boy. Rachel and Mark never even kissed or anything, but I just thought their friendship and light flirtations were the sweetest thing. I wish more authors would write romance like this in YA books (though the attraction between Rachel and Mark was so faint I'm not even sure it could be called "romance"). Two young people do not need to be furiously making out a few chapters after they meet each to get the point across that they like each other.

Jennifer Mathieu is such an amazing writer. I love how she always leaves me so much more informed when I finish one of her books. Even with the main theme in *Devoted*, which I was already familiar with (my own dad grew up in a conservative situation, and I know several families who are involved in the Quiverfull group), I was still able to learn so much more about it.

I was so very impressed with *Devoted*. It was **fresh, brilliant, and extremely thought-provoking**. It's been nearly a week since I finished it and the story is still playing out in my mind.

If you're tired of reading mind-numbing young adult books that are all so similar they're starting to feel like the same book, I would highly recommend *Devoted* and *The Truth About Alice*. I think *Devoted*, especially, will appeal to fans of *The Chosen One*. Both of Mathieu's books have been challenging reads so far, but they explore their individual central ideas so well. I highly applaud the author.

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## Ashley Brooks says

4.5

I've been looking forward to this book for so long and it was definitely worth the wait.

Will write more tomorrow.

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## Audrey Laurey says

Devoted is the story of Rachel, a 17yo girl growing up in the Quiverfull Movement who is maturing to an age where she should be prepared to be the perfect "helpmeet". Something Quiverfull women are primed for since the day of their conception (i.e. Devout unquestioning wife, mother to as many children as her womb can produce, homeschool teacher, et al).

If you are like me, you can't stop reading about the Quiverfull Movement, or the Duggar's. The brainwashing, the victims of sexual abuse taking the blame for somehow "inviting" the assault through dress or behavior, women being deprived of any relationship or sex education, then thrust in to the position of unquestioning breeder. Anyhow, it is the setup for an undeniable trainwreck.

Devoted is a character profile in to the life of a young woman who has grown up in the movement and is questioning if the future laid out is right for her.

The characters were very real, and I felt like this was an honest story. Mathieu did a great job of exploring the situation without sensationalism or didacticism. I'm left with hope for Rachel, and I'm glad we have an authentic look at the harm caused by extreme Fundamentalist religions, but particularly the harm it evokes on women.

I highly recommend this book to everyone.

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## Giselle says

An unsolicited Advanced Reader Copy was provided by the publisher for review.

Rachel is a Christian living with her ten siblings and parents, she has no time for herself. Constantly taking care of her younger siblings and being a good girl so she could be married to a boy. Her parents tell her what to do, how to act, what to think. When her curiosity gets the better of her she reaches out to someone from her community that escaped their rigid lifestyle. Only to find out she wants out to live her own life.

Even as someone who believes in religion, this book was still hard to read. There is just so many things I stood against within the main character's belief system that I wanted to throw this book at the wall. The most important thing for Rachel is to be a mother and a wife. To be a child bearer and to keep a home and be submissive.

“To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands.”

Then her dad gets mad at her for reading *A Wrinkle in Time*. Because he believes it involves magic and sorcery and that is wicked and not good. When in reality we all know that the book includes some spiritual teachings and analogies. Then there's the main belief that men are served first at the dinner table. Women can't even sit first because they must stand and serve them. They're not allowed to take college classes, but the boys are. These things just bothered me so much because in my belief as a Catholic, everyone and everything is equal. So trying to get through this was just so hard. Everything has to be about God. Every single little action and thought.. And quoting scripture left and right was part of their daily life.

I like the fact that Rachel ends up questioning everything. Being inquisitive might have saved her from a life she didn't want. A life that was forced upon her. I don't believe in the literal sense of the quiver movement and I'm utterly surprised it exists. This is why this book surprised me so much. As for the other characters, I just loved Mark. He was a bright ray of sunshine that shone brightly in Rachel's life. I liked that she was beginning to feel more like herself again instead of being so robotic.

Definitely a book to read if you're looking for a different genre that pertains to a girl's devotion to God. I'm just glad that the main character ends up being who she wanted to be, and not strayed so fully away from God.

RATING 3/5

#### QUOTES

"He'll want a woman who submits to his authority." (24)

"Why do Mom and Dad believe in doctors for our bodies and not for our minds? After all, our brains are part of our bodies." (63)

"Why did God give me a brain if he didn't want me to use it to learn about anything I wanted to learn about?" (115)

"But why? Because a bunch of men who chose to interpret the Bible in a super-specific super-ridiculous way decide that to love God and Jesus you can never be sad or mad or angry?" (200)

"If I'm not supposed to notice his looks, I'm not sure why God made him so noticeable." (223)

"My body that belonged to me and wasn't just something to cover up so I didn't tempt men." (232)

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#### **Annamaria says**

**"What is it I plan to do with my one wild and precious life? "**

I devoured this book! This was not my usual read but it stuck with me in ways I didn't think were possible.

I'm an atheist, still I liked the way the author didn't shame on religion and religious people. What the book criticizes is bigotry and oppression and the way religion, if manipulated in the wrong ways, brainwashes both adult and younger people.

I loved Rachel so much, she was such a relatable character. She's part of a Calvary Christian community, a

community so devoted to its own traditions and beliefs that feels suffocating for our MC. You spend the entire book in Rachel's head experiencing her confused thoughts about what she's been taught is right and what her true self wants to experience. She never loses faith, still she understands that she's much more than an helpmeet, much more than a breeder of children and a housewife. She's curious and smart, loves reading and critically analyzes all those Proverbs from the Bible that she's been taught her entire life. She manages to understand that faith has to be free from strict rules, she can pray better when the words come directly from her heart rather than from her brain.

I loved the open ending but I still need closure. I need to know what classes Rachel will enjoy the most. Will she like the Hobbit? Will she read The Lord of the Rings? Will she keep on living with Lauren? What I'm trying to say is that my insatiable self needs a sequel even though my rational one understands that this is a perfect stand-alone.

I will surely pick The Truth about Alice by the same author one day.

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## **Nasty Lady MJ says**

Also see the review and others on my blog.

I think we should address the elephant in the room-The Duggars.

Even though this book tells the story of who believes in a similar version of Christianity than them I'm not going to try not to limit my references to those morons throughout this review (it will probably inevitably happen though and probably a lot given the circumstances since I will be talking about the quiverfull movement).

Coming into this reading experience, my only knowledge of them was of the Duggars. And since I don't have that much respect for them (if any) I didn't do that much research on them until the whole scandal involving their bigot/molester son got out and I went onto the Previously TV forums and found out way too much about their cult religion. When I heard about how Devoted looked at the quiverfull movement, I decided I needed to give a whirl because I honestly wanted to have some reading material that was not tainted by Duggar disgustingness.

I will say from what I generally have read around the internet and seen of that horrible TV show, Mathieu totally nailed it. I felt like the quiverfull religion was done well. You get that sense of blind faith, isolation, and ignorance. And my heart broke for Rachel and her family (minus her stupid father and sister) throughout the first few pages.

It was done tastefully too. It never bashed said movement, but it did portray it realistically. And even though Rachel's parents aren't exactly perfect by any means and make some big time mistakes, they aren't the Duggars.

Seriously, Arkansas CPS you failed. And girls, you should totally sue Jim Boob and Josh-lester civilly if it's still an option.

I know, I know, I promised not to talk about them but it occasionally going to happen in this review. Because

when talking about the quiverfull movement you inevitably start talking about them.

Back on topic, Mathieu really did a wonderful job portraying this religious sect as not being one dimensional. Which was probably a hard thing to do, see Duggars. You really felt like all of the people were people even with their cult like tendencies.

Where the book faltered was after Rachel escaped. I just felt like it dragged a bit and in a way went nowhere. Sure, some stuff happened. And to be honest, it was probably handled fairly realistically but it was a bit of a downer.

I did like the fact that the romance, if you could call it that, was underplayed. That was refreshing and it felt right in the story, I just...I don't know. I felt like even though the romance aspect was done right, I would've like to have seen the character deal with the years of brain washing a little bit more than she did. It just felt like she got out of there and then what...

Sighs.

I did like how Mathieu decided to show how religion COULD be a healthy part of someone's life. I often feel like people go on extremes with religion, either having it in your life or NOT having it in your life. There can be a healthy balance.

Then again, what do I know I'm just a heathen bad Catholic that just happens to be a liberal and a feminist (who doesn't believe in using solely the rhythm method).

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