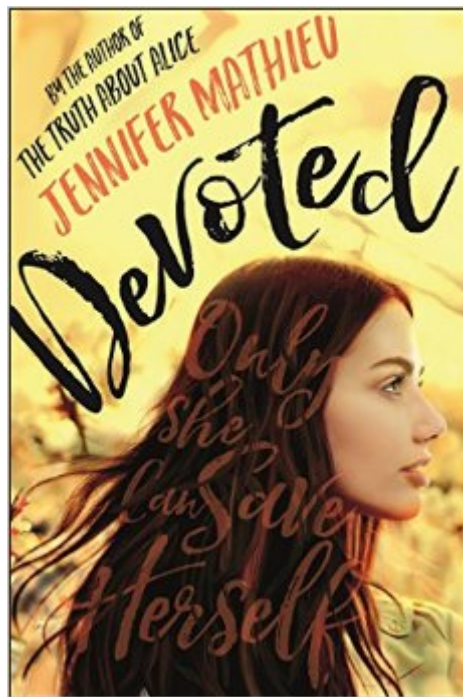


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Devoted: A Novel



Synopsis

A powerful coming-of-age story from the author of *The Truth About Alice* Rachel Walker's family and community have turned away from the world. Every part of Rachel's life is controlled, from what she reads to where she goes and what she wears. Her parents dictate how her life must be: marriage, modesty, children, and obedience to her future husband. But when a former member of her community, a girl who escaped, moves back to her small Texas town, Rachel's world turns upside down. She realizes that her life is her own—if only she can find the courage to fight for it.

Devoted: A Novel by Jennifer Mathieu is an empowering young adult contemporary novel about self-discovery, by the author of *The Truth About Alice* and *Afterward*. An *Amelia Bloomer List Top Ten Book*! Jennifer Mathieu put her name on the YA map with last year's heart-wrenching high school bullying novel *The Truth About Alice*. . . . her sophomore novel is tackling subjects just as difficult: religion and cult, particularly as they relate to young women. Rachel grew up in the Quiverfull movement—one similar to the Duggars' practices on TLC's *19 Kids and Counting*—but as she finds herself connecting illicitly to the outside world, she starts to wonder if there's more for her as a woman outside of bearing children." —*Bustle*

Book Information

Paperback: 352 pages

Publisher: Square Fish; Reprint edition (September 20, 2016)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1250090695

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Product Dimensions: 5.1 x 1 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 9.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars — See all reviews (61 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #601,968 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #32 in Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Religious > Christian > Social Issues #259 in Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Social & Family Issues > Values & Virtues #1223 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Family Life > Values

Age Range: 12 - 18 years

Grade Level: 7 - 12

Customer Reviews

DEVOTED is Jennifer Mathieu's second novel and because of my enthusiasm for THE TRUTH

ABOUT ALICE, I was already a little bit interested when I had first heard of the concept from Jennifer on a Fierce Reads tour. I have to admit that my interest was there, but I wasn't wholly convinced to pick it up but I'm so, so glad I did and I'm especially thankful that the publicist, Mary Van Akin, was there to encourage me to read it as well! If you've looked into the book at all, you know that it's about a girl named Rachel Walker who has grown up in a very Christian family and has spent her life being a good daughter and staying devoted to God... and I will be perfectly honest with you that the religious mentions and Christian themes immediately had me hesitating. I'm not a religious person (even though I went to a Catholic school for 10 years... actually, that's probably WHY I'm not a religious person) so I tend to steer clear of any books with Christian or strong religious themes. It's just usually not something I enjoy and it's very hard for me to read. The wonderful thing about DEVOTED is that it's really not a religious book. The story really revolves around Rachel and the fact that she's starting to question everything. She still loves her family and she still loves God but all of the rules are becoming a bit much and she doesn't feel like she's as devoted as the rest of her family. The religious movement featured in the book isn't quite a cult but one character does compare it to a cult due to its strict rules and highly protective nature. It's especially patriarchal with women being told that they're there to start a family, be a good wife, and remain a good Christian woman, always thinking of God, their husbands, and families first. Sometimes it's a bit hard to read -- especially if you're strongly feminist -- but it's very eye-opening and a reminder that these communities do exist and people really do follow these rules tightly. I really, really liked Rachel's character. So much. It's a very difficult thing to break away from your family's and your community's beliefs to explore your own. As a teenager and a young adult (hell, even as an adult), I found myself forming my own opinions but still generally latching on to the ideals and principles on which my family raised me. I still share the same general opinions as my family and my husband and that's only natural -- but I really admired Rachel's courage to push outside of her sheltered world to explore what else is out there. She has to defy her parents to do so, abandon her family, and really question everything she's been taught in order to discover what she really and truly believes. It's essentially starting her life completely over and catching up to where the rest of the world is now. I felt like this was a very character-driven book, closely following Rachel's story and including some powerful and heart-warming stories from the people she meets along her journey. It's definitely a quieter book but it felt so powerful and I was so emotionally invested in it. I really cared for Rachel and she became such a real person to me. There was also just something about this book -- I couldn't put it down! I was so interested and yet a bit horrified at the Walkers' religious practices but witnessing Rachel's struggle to rebel against her parents as a teenager but in such an

atypical manner was truly fascinating. I definitely felt compelled by her story and I'm so glad I got to read it! If you've gotten this far in my review, I really hope that means you're considering picking up the book! Please don't let the religious nature scare you away. I promise you that it's not something I'd ordinarily pick up either but the story is so interesting and the characters are so wonderful... you would really be missing out to pass it up! I'm so glad I was reassured that reading it was the right choice and I really hope the spark has now caught you too! DEVOTED was such a well-crafted and powerful book and you can bet that I'm picking up anything that Jennifer Mathieu writes here on out, regardless of topic. She knows how to handle these enormous and yet sensitive topics in just the perfect way and I look forward to reading more of her work in the years to come!

After reading Kathryn Joyce's book about the Quiverfull movement, I've been waiting for a book like Devout. Rachel did everything she was told to do but she had a yearning and an unquenchable need for learning. She was sheltered from the big bad world because her church told her it was evil. Her wondering about a young woman who came back to their little town after being shunned was the opening of the door for her. Read's like fiction, a family shunning a young woman because she wanted more than to marry young, have baby after baby, and be at the beck and call of her husband, to whom she would be handed over like a piece of property at her wedding. Shirt shows more collarbone than acceptable, you are called out. Bra straps show through 2nd hand me down clothes, called out. Always being warned that you are the cause of a man's lust because they can't control themselves? Sadly there is a percentage of religious cultures here in the US who raise their daughters this way. No interaction with the outside world if they can help it. Sermons which condemn, no loving God in these homes, the God of condemnation and hellfire. This was one of the best books that I have read this year. Kudos to the author.

My thoughts are really scattered after reading this book. It shows a world that is so alien to me. Rachel Walker is a member of a very strict religious sect where young women are taught to dress modestly so as not to incite lust in males and who are taught that their only future role is to be a helpmate to their husband. But Rachel is chafing at the restrictions of her life. She is smart and curious and doubts that she can fit. Not that she isn't devoted to God, she tries to pray and does believe but she has questions she knows she isn't allowed to ask. She sees her older sister Faith who is married with one baby and another on the way by age 20. She sees that her sister sees to fit into the life as if it were made for her. When Lauren, a young woman who left the congregation six years ago, comes back home, Rachel has someone she can talk to. However, it has to be secret.

Once someone leaves the strict Calvary Christian Church it is as though they are dead. Rachel uses the family computer, which she has taught herself to use and uses to manage her father's landscaping business, to begin sharing secret emails with Lauren. When her parents find out about the emails, they decide to send her to Journey of Faith, a camp that reprograms those who are straying. Rachel knows that the camp would change her to someone she isn't. She runs away to Lauren. Lauren takes her in and helps her find her feet in a world that is really strange to her. Luckily, for both Lauren and Rachel, Lauren's boss at the veterinary clinic and his family help the girls. His real estate agent wife hires Rachel to organize her business which gives her some money and a chance to see what happens in the outside world. Their son Mark also shows her what boys can be like as he offers her friendship with no strings. This book is great at portraying the range of emotions that Rachel feels. At one point she says that she alternates between mournfulness and euphoria. I enjoyed getting to know Rachel and am hopeful for her future. Readers who wonder what it might be like inside the world shown on 19 Kids and Counting will enjoy this inside look from the perspective of a young woman who just doesn't fit there.

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