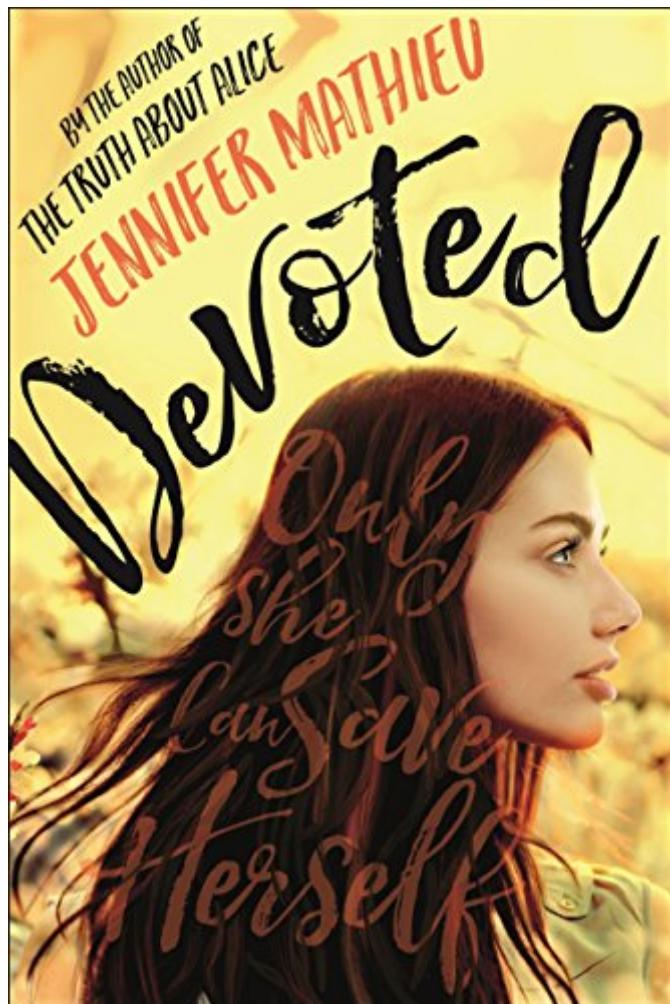


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## Devoted: A Novel



## **Synopsis**

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.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

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 mans 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.

5 of 5 A++++At age seventeen, Rachel Walker begins to question the strict rules of her fundamentalist puritanical church, where fear and shame are preached from the pulpit and at home. She's homeschooled, prevented from reading books other than textbooks and the bible. When rumors that a troubled girl named Lauren is back in town, Rachel sneaks onto the computer and finds Lauren's blog about running away and leaving the church she calls a cult. For the first time, Rachel imagines a life where she's free to read books, and learn, where she isn't subservient to men and where she can become something other than a wife and mother. But, if Rachel gets caught emailing Lauren, she might just be sent away to a christian labor camp where she'll be brainwashed into submission. I felt like I won the ARC lottery when I received the email from Net Galley this morning saying I was selected to read DEVOTED, Jennifer Mathieu's second book, in exchange for my honest review. I postponed my todo list and hunkered down with my Kindle and my cat. I normally never read books with religious backdrops, but after Mathieu's stunning debut THE TRUTH ABOUT ALICE, I wanted to read everything she wrote, including her grocery list. A few pages into reading, realized DEVOTED wasn't a story with religious themes, but a breathtaking coming of age novel about family, loyalty, judgment, independence and what we owe ourselves vs what others tell us we owe them. The first half of the book reads with the level of intensity of a good thriller. I found myself holding my breath, worried at any minute Rachel would be caught using the computer and when caught would she be beaten, shamed in front of the church or sent away to labor camp. While the second half was purposely less intense, the pace was still fast, because I couldn't wait see what happened next. Rachel is an incredibly complex and easy to fall in love with from the get go. DEVOTED is very much a character study on her coming of age. Lauren is also multilayered, full of anger at her former church and full of love in mentoring Rachel. Rachel's family were more one dimensional, though each of her nine siblings had unique qualities, including her closest sister Ruth. I would give DEVOTED more than five stars if I could. DEVOTED has my highest

recommendation. Mathieu's sentences practically sing off the pages in the way that made me feel sad when I knew the end was near. I wanted the story to go on and on, already hoping that there could be a follow up. I'm eagerly awaiting her next book, which she's probably/hopefully still writing. Thanks again to Net Galley and Mathieu for this beautiful story and opportunity to read it early.

I bought this one for the sole reason that Jennifer Mathieu was coming into town for the Fierce Reads tour. As soon as I read the blurb, I realized I needed to read it. Books about religion are tricky, especially when they are critical. Sometimes, by telling a sensational story about a girl (or woman) trapped in a patriarchal religion, it becomes a spectacle. It's relatively easy for those who aren't raised in these kinds of environments to watch a TV show about someone's "weird" religion and feel isolated from it and superior to it. It's a form of entertainment to watch the strange beliefs of these people and treat them like a zoo animal—gawked at or pitied. But doing this further victimizes women. I've taken a special interest in patriarchal Christian religions lately. I've done extensive research on polygamy and its effects on my own Mormon culture and in so many ways it rocked me. I've read books, listened to podcasts, and really immersed myself in this very dark part of my religion and even family history. This book isn't about polygamy, but some of the same rules apply. Tread lightly and don't eviscerate the beliefs of others, but don't hide the truth. Mathieu does this beautifully. This is a kinder, gentler book than I was expecting and it was refreshing. Of course it's devastating, sad, and riveting. But, Rachel doesn't get caught in an endless cycle of victimization. This is more a story of rebuilding rather than wandering through darkness. It's a book that would be appropriate for younger teens as well, given how sensitive Mathieu is with this subject. I was truly moved by Rachel's story. If you'd like a glimpse of what it's like to leave a religion that rules with a tight patriarchal structure, pick up this novel. It's going to give you a clearer picture of survival than Kimmy Schmidt ever would.

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