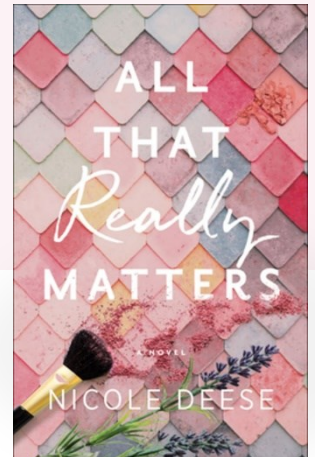




LEADER'S GUIDE

ALL THAT REALLY MATTERS BY NICOLE DEESE



Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

PHILIPPIANS 2:3-4

THEMES

Belonging

Family

Purpose

Social Media

Influence

Perfectionism

Servanthood

Friendship

HEADS UP! (TRIGGERS AND DELICATE TOPICS)

Drug/Alcohol Abuse

Adoption

At Risk Teens

CHARACTERS

Molly McKenzie is a social media influencer with over 600,000 followers on her makeup blog, Makeup Matters with Molly. Driven by her number of followers, new trends and wealth, Molly's life seems carefree and perfect. It isn't until Molly begins volunteering at *The Bridge* that she realises how much is lacking in her life. She embarks on a journey of self-discovery and faith, opening her eyes to all that really matters.

Silas runs The Bridge ministry at Fir Crest Manor, a refuge and training-in-life-skills home for at-risk young people. Having grown up in a foster family with a brother who was sent to prison multiple times, he understands the desperate need for early intervention and support for young people.

Miles is Molly's twin brother and an active Christian working in ministry. Despite Molly's desire to be close to him, their opposite lives - Pastor and Influencer - have created an enormous barrier between them.

Clara is a mentor at The Bridge and takes Molly under her wing to help train and teach her in mentorship.

Glo is a volunteer at The Bridge. She shares her passion for cooking with the young people coming through the ministry and uses her wisdom and tragic life experiences to minister to others.

STORYLINE

Molly is an influencer. With over 600,000 followers on her 'Makeup Matters with Molly' social channels, she is a uniquely gifted, sweet, bubbly and lively girl – the perfect face for any social media campaign. Despite her family's disapproval of how she makes a living, Molly adamantly believes she is more than just a pretty face with an "addictive personality". As Molly tries to grow her following, her manager and boyfriend Ethan suggests that she associate with a humanitarian cause to expand her following. Without any moral dilemma, Molly selfishly pursues a summer mentoring position at The Bridge, a refuge and home for at-risk young adults.

As Molly becomes involved at The Bridge, she begins to view her world differently. She sees her position in life as one of wealth and privilege. Molly no longer wants to be a mentor simply to further her career, but because she deeply cares for the young girls who now look up to her.

When confronted with the moral dilemma of whether or not to model in skimpy swimwear for a huge sum of money, Molly takes a stand, not just for herself, but for the girls at The Bridge, and refuses. This turning point transforms Molly's attitude towards her role as an influencer and the impact she can have on those around her.

Molly breaks up with her self-serving and toxic boyfriend and pursues a sweet relationship with the faithful Christian servant Silas, who runs The Bridge. He is a loyal and caring man who helps direct Molly and her gifts to be used for the good of others. Despite Molly being the one with over 600,000 followers, she soon learns that Silas' example and influence are something she ought to follow; his faith and how he lives his life in dedication to others are intoxicating, inspiring and refreshing to her. As Molly learns to use her gifts and influence for the good of others, she blossoms into a servant-hearted woman who meets Jesus along the way.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS & TALKING POINTS



1

Q. Which character from 'All That Really Matters' did you relate to the most?

TALKING POINTS

We may connect to a character for the following reasons:

- We feel empathy or sympathy for their circumstances.
- We share similar character traits or personalities.
- We share similar desires, hopes, or dreams.
- We have made similar mistakes or poor decisions in our own lives.
- We like or dislike particular characters because of our experiences with others.

2

Q. During the D&D discussion evenings at The Bridge, each member is asked to contribute by answering one or more of the 'Three Questions'. Read the questions [below] to the group, and answer them.

TALKING POINTS

D & D Questions:

- "Question one: What was the high point of the day or week, a moment when you felt closest to God and the truest version of yourself?"
- "Question Two: What was your low point today, a time when you felt tension or regret or most unlike your truest self?"
- "Question Three: What were you most grateful for today?"

3

Q. Influence is a theme in the novel. Why is it important to ensure we're influenced by the right people and positively influencing others?

TALKING POINTS

We are ALL in a position of Influence in some way, whether over a friend, child, spouse, colleague, Bible group or church. One way to ensure we lead well and influence others positively is to follow Jesus' example of servant leadership.

We must also remember that those around us are influencing us. Here are some suggestions from 'Social Sanity in an Insta World' about online influencers:

"As we aspire to be like the women we see online, at some point we realise that it's impossible to measure up to their curated feed" (p87). Who we're following can either encourage us towards Christ or cause us to focus on ourselves in an unhealthy way;

- We may get confused about our own giftings and offerings.
- We may stop trying to be like Jesus and in our confusion, try to be more like the women we follow.
- We may distrust God's plan for our lives while coveting another's life.
- Suddenly our view of what it means to be a "Christian Woman" is confused with things such as; cleaning, food and exercise, popular causes, and keeping up with everyone and everything.
- We need to ask: Does this person direct me towards what is good, true and beautiful? Do they help me savour and be satisfied in Christ?

First and foremost, we need to be under the Influence of the Holy Spirit;

- Sanctification and becoming Christ-like is the Christian goal.
- God designed us to be under the Influence, we can not change it, deny it or stop it, but we do need to ensure His Influence speaks loudest to us.
- As we fix our gaze on Christ, all other influencers will have less power.
- How does our social media usage compare with the time we spend reading God's Word?

4

Q. Molly initially signs up to volunteer at the Bridge for selfish reasons. How does her heart for the ministry and serving others change throughout the novel?

TALKING POINTS

"I didn't sign up to be a mentor because of some undying passion for my community or its underprivileged youth... I sought you out and applied for the summer mentor position with the sole purpose of gaining experience... to further my own career";

- Initially, Molly's intentions are serving a sinful purpose, but amazingly God uses her plan for His purposes, turning her selfish desires and heart towards Himself and others.

5

- This is a reminder that God can use our sins and mistakes to draw us closer to Him.
- All human beings are made in the image of God, with unique gifts for God's glory and purposes, not our own. Molly learns to use her gifts for God and not herself.
- Any giftings we have been given from the Spirit are not simply to bless us; but are given to us graciously, from God, for the sake of the world.

Q. Many people might consider Silas and Carlos' relationship beyond repair, but forgiveness and restoration were possible because of God. Do you believe that broken relationships can be truly healed? Why, why not?

TALKING POINTS

All good things come from God. We can forgive others and, in many cases, also experience restoration of the relationship; this is made possible because God first forgave us (Ephesians 4:32). When we experience God's gift of forgiveness and have repented and been restored to right relationship with God through Christ, we can experience this same blessing and peacemaking with others.

How can we accept God's forgiveness?

- Truly repenting; understanding that repentance is a total transformation in our hearts to come into agreement with the Lord that our sin is wrong, and a confession that we turn from that wrong towards God.
- Believing God's word, when we have truly repented and asked for forgiveness, we are forgiven through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross.
- Acknowledging Jesus as Lord of our lives and surrendering to Him; admitting God is sovereign and all-powerful.

Once our hearts are made right with God, we can then experience forgiveness with others;

- We must forgive others as God forgives us.
- Forgiveness is a choice, not an emotion.
- God will forgive us in the same way we forgive others - unforgiveness is a sin.
- Forgiving someone does not excuse their sin but cancels their debt toward us.
- When we forgive someone who has wronged us, it surrenders justice to the Lord, knowing He will right all wrongs and that ALL sin must be punished.
- It doesn't necessarily mean trust is re-established when we forgive someone or forgive us. Trust building takes time, and sometimes trust will never be rebuilt.
- Forgiveness, in many cases, can feel impossible, but with God, all things are possible. Seeking professional support and assistance for deep trauma and unforgiveness towards those who have done imaginable wrong toward us does not mean we are weak or bad Christians; it means we are hurting people who need help – and that's okay.

6

Q. Molly's family do not agree with her lifestyle and choices. How can we love others well, even if we don't agree with their lifestyle or decision-making?

TALKING POINTS

It is counter-cultural to love those who we disagree with, but it is God's desire for us to love all people. This includes gently speaking gospel truth, praying for them, and serving them in the capacity God has called us (this will look different for each person and situation we encounter);

- We must begin the journey with prayer, especially for their hearts and our approach to them.

- Be cautious entering the relationship, do not move too fast or come on too strong in your attempt to show the love of Jesus.
- Be curious; ask them about themselves and practise active listening.
- Serve them where possible (with your time and resources).
- Love out of obedience to God and leave the results to Him.
- We should expect nothing in return.
- We must recognise that we are not perfect and easily lovable ourselves – yet God loves us.
- When we operate from a heart posture of humility, it is easier to love those who we don't agree with.

7

Q. Molly's relationship with her parents has left her feeling abandoned with an intense fear of rejection. Can you relate to her feelings? Discuss.

TALKING POINTS

"...in my experience, showing up after a rough day or a hard meeting is worth more than the fanciest words in the universe to these kids. That said, you can do everything right and still be rejected in the end. We don't get to control how someone else chooses to respond." – Glo

Rejection can be devastating to experience and difficult to forgive. It may cause ongoing emotional pain, affect our self-esteem, lead to poor decision-making, and affect us physically (such as in cases like abandonment and/ or neglect).

- As Christians, we can find hope knowing that we will be fully accepted and embraced when we come face to face with our Lord Jesus.
- When we hold an eternal perspective, this moment of either being accepted or rejected by Christ is the only one of lasting significance.
- This doesn't mean rejection doesn't hurt now, but there will be a time when those rejections and the tears they caused are wiped away, and all wrongs are made right through Christ.
- It is okay to seek professional support to help us heal from rejection.
- Reading the Bible helps us determine what is true about ourselves.
- Others may reject or abandon us, but God never will.
- We have inherent value as His children despite how others treat us.
- Surrounding ourselves with great Christian friends, mentors, and support can allow us to lighten our load and share the burden in life-giving fellowship.

8

Q. Molly describes having saving faith in God as "faith... that requires me to take off my life jacket [in a deep ocean]". Can you relate to her experience? How do faithful Christians such as Miles and Silas help her overcome her fear and take a leap of faith?

TALKING POINTS

"It's like there's a giant ocean just beyond the safe-for-swimming area where we now tread water, but for so many years, he used to beg me to venture further out, to take a risk with him in the big water so I could learn to love the way he does...";

- Although Molly feels as though Miles has given up on her having saving faith, we must always remember that we sow seeds with abandon and leave the growing and fruit up to the Holy Spirit.
- We may never see the fruit of the seeds we've sown until eternity – and so we continue to do good works and share the gospel – despite the results we see with our earthly eyes.

- Those who live the Christian life well, with integrity and honesty, prove that the Holy Spirit and His work are real. They are a tangible way to see God's goodness in the world.

9

Q. Proverbs 17:17 says, "A friend loves at all times". How does Molly grow in her capacity to be a good friend to others? What have you learnt about friendship since reading this book?

TALKING POINTS

In the foreword of Christina Fox's book 'Closer Than A Sister', Jen Wilkin advises what Christian friendship ought to look like by saying, "Christian friendship is to be sought and stewarded with wisdom and grace." (p14);

- Sought; The seeking of life-giving, sister-friendships is a very intentional activity.
- Stewarded; As good stewards of our gifts, we lavishly pour into our friends' lives, seeking to be more others-focused and entering relationships wanting to bless others. Ultimately thinking more about our sister and less about what we can get out of the friendship.
- Wisdom; God generously pours wisdom into our lives when we ask for it. We need His wisdom to enter into the right relationships and maintain those relationships as we grow and learn together.
- Grace; As imperfect women, we require grace to cover one another's faults, forgive one another, and flourish together.

10

Q. Servanthood is powerfully modelled by those who volunteer and serve at The Bridge. How can you be more available to follow Christ's example and serve others?

TALKING POINTS

"If there's room in your heart, you'll make room in your home" – Karen Ehman, 'Listen, Love, Repeat' (p136). We are all called to serve exactly where we are. Our homes can become our primary ministry base and be used to help build the kingdom. Here are some things we can remember and draw encouragement from as we open our homes or seek to be generous to others;

- We should be willing to be good stewards of our stuff; this includes sharing what we have with others because, ultimately, God has given us everything we have – He owns our stuff.
- When we stop stressing about our homes being perfect, we can focus on blessing others and sharing Jesus. Most genuine people do not care whether our homes are perfect or up to display home standards.
- It's okay to present a house that is well-loved and lived in – clean and somewhat tidy is enough.
- If you can't open your home, you may consider hospitality or organising fellowship for those in need in a different capacity. For example, a regular catch-up at the local coffee shop or perhaps some baked goods – or even purchased snacks - dropped at someone's door with an encouraging card.
- If we'd like to serve God outside our homes, we can serve at our church or local volunteer organisations.



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