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MORE  
THAN  
JUST  
PRETTY

JESSIE FAERBER



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*To my teenage self, who desperately needed a book like this*

*To your teenage self, on whom I hope and pray a book like  
this has a great impact*



Hey, lovely. This book was written for the girl who's trying to figure out who she is. This book was written for the girl who looks in the mirror and hates what she sees, worries too much about what she sees or doesn't see that she is so much more than what she sees. This book was written for the girl of no faith, the girl of the Christian faith and the girl of another faith. This book was written for the crazy girl, the quiet girl, the confused girl, the worried girl, the happy girl. You name it. This book was written to help you discover the truth about who you are despite the world's obsession with image! This book was written for you because your story matters. You matter.

This book was written by a girl, a very normal girl. A girl who has a passion to see girls discover their true value, beauty and purpose! Let's rise together. Let's empower one another. Let's explore together. Let's discover how we are #MoreThanJustPretty.

I'm excited for what you will realize about yourself and the impact it will have on your beautiful journey of LIFE.

Your friend, big-sister-type figure,

*Jessie*

So. Read this book with an open heart. Take your time. Buy a pretty, cool, new little journal and jot down anything that you know you'll need to remind yourself about. Jot down quotes/ideas/and anything else that may or may not knock your socks off. Or draw pictures (that's always fun!). Grab your set of colouring or calligraphy pens and make each page YOURS. Join the virtual conversation on the hashtag . . . wait for it . . . #MoreThanJustPretty. And start your own real-life conversations with your sister, mum, dad, carer, friend, youth group, school, teacher, cousin, mentor . . . anyone! This book is meant to be like going to the supermarket and buying a chocolate bar rather than a bag of apples (this analogy only actually works if you don't like apples that much . . .). What I mean is that my hope is that you will LOVE reading this book; you'll be excited to pick it up and dig into it! So enjoy it and treasure every last word, page and chapter – because they were intricately designed and chosen down to every last detail for YOU.

Shall we commence?

Ready. Set. Go!

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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To all the female empowerers out there (whether in the form of mothers, fathers, carers, siblings, friends, youth workers, magazine writers, charity starters, vicars, teachers, mentors, social media influencers . . .) – KEEP GOING, please. There is a shift happening for such a time as this. Let's keep praying passionately for freedom for girls and women. Let's keep speaking out when we need to speak out. Let's keep speaking truth. Let's keep mentoring, supporting, teaching and role-modelling. On behalf of girls in the years to come – THANK YOU.

To all the people who have spoken to me about Jesus – thank you for speaking truth, life and hope into me.

My prayer is that this book contains words through which God will speak to you, just as all of these people whom I have thanked (and the others that I haven't) have spoken words into my life that have come from God.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

So finally, thank YOU for picking up this book (however it has ended up in your hands!) and I pray that the words spread across the pages influence, encourage and have an impact on YOU.

# PROLOGUE

## GETTING TO KNOW ME QUIZ

You may have bought this book for yourself or your mum/ grandma/mentor/youth worker/school may have placed it in your hands and you're wondering who the heck I am and thinking that I have NO CLUE what you're facing! Stay with me, and I think you'll realize that, in some areas, I'm not all that different from you. This book will uncover the truth about some of my story and my 'experience' as well as the story and experiences of other girls like you and me.

But first, to help you get to know me better, I thought a delightful place to start would be with a little quiz. It will help you frame an idea about who it is talking to you through this book (if you don't know already), and it's a bit of fun, right?!

The questions are below, so get out that journal and jot down the options that best describe YOU. Then, towards the end of this section, you should find my personal, carefully calculated answers with which to compare!

## QUIZ

- 1 Your morning buzzzzz:
  - ☆ Tea
  - ☆ Coffee
  - ☆ Orange juice
  - ☆ None of the above.
  
- 2 Which kinda person are ya?
  - ☆ Dogs
  - ☆ Cats.
  
- 3 What colour eyes do you have?
  - ☆ Blue
  - ☆ Acorn
  - ☆ Grey
  - ☆ Green
  - ☆ Other (if that's possible . . .).
  
- 4 Thoughts?
  - ☆ I'm a Christian.
  - ☆ I'm an 'atheist'.
  - ☆ I don't really know.
  - ☆ I follow another faith.
  - ☆ I'm open to ideas.
  
- 5 OK, so which would you choose?
  - ☆ Lindt
  - ☆ Galaxy (with cookie bits)
  - ☆ The classic Dairy Milk

## GETTING TO KNOW ME QUIZ

- ☆ Mars Bar
  - ☆ Maltesers
  - ☆ Other (because I could carry on but it would take up A LOT of pages).
- 6 Choices . . . choices . . . choices
- ☆ *The Lion King*
  - ☆ *The Little Mermaid*
  - ☆ *Cinderella*
  - ☆ *Frozen*.
- 7 Do you like who you are?
- ☆ Yes
  - ☆ No
  - ☆ It's complicated
  - ☆ Sometimes.
- 8 Which one?!
- ☆ Books
  - ☆ Films.

## IT'S ANSWERS TIME (!) . . .

- 1 Your morning buzzzzz:
- ☆ Coffee – probs not a good thing. If I were to be more specific: a vanilla latte.
- 2 Which kinda person are ya?
- ☆ Dogs – because I want a husky.
  - ☆ Cats – because I have a gorgeous ginger cat called George  
(kinda cheating).

- 3 What colour eyes do you have?  
☆ Acorn – because 'brown' sounds more boring (ha).
- 4 Thoughts?  
☆ I'm a Christian – it's massively helped me on my journey but it doesn't mean it's the only answer and it doesn't mean I'm not accepting of other faiths and beliefs. You're all fab.
- 5 OK, so which would you choose?  
☆ Galaxy (with cookie bits)  
☆ Maltesers  
I couldn't possibly choose between the two . . .
- 6 Choices . . . choices . . . choices  
☆ *Frozen* – I'm (always) surprisingly not a big fan of animation but *Frozen* stole my heart. I want to be Elsa.
- 7 Do you like who you are?  
☆ Yes – although, at times I would fluctuate between all four options because that's life, eh? Or is it? It's been a long journey to get to where I am today. And I pray that this book is in the hands of someone who needs to hear the truth about who she is.
- 8 Which one?!  
☆ Books – if you'd have asked me a few years ago I would have said 'films' but now defo books. And I promise I'm not just saying that because this is a book . . .

GETTING TO KNOW ME QUIZ

PS: if you put 'films', I promise I won't be offended . . .  
let's hope you and this book become friends . . .

Hopefully you had *some* fun there! Oh, and hopefully it was relatively insightful to stop and have a think about who you are, and perhaps learn just a *little* about me! I'm intrigued as to how our answers may compare . . .

Anyhow. Probably best to get on with it now.

# VALUE

There are many things we put our value in in this world. This chapter aims to explore what these different things are, from the people we know to how we look. My hope is that it will unlock some realities for you so that your perception about who you are becomes less and less distorted and more and more truthful.

Bring it on!

## AM I WHO I KNOW?

One of the things I LOVE, because it always intrigues me, is psychology. Now, don't lose me at the first proper page of this book (!) . . . It's actually cool because it explains all about the human mind: our actions, thoughts and behaviour!

Psychologists say that our identity is 'socially constructed', meaning that it's formed in our social contexts. Think about your contexts in the list below and think about the people in your life, and how they all merge together in order to influence our identity.



Friends  
School  
Family  
Faith  
Media  
Location  
Social  
Youth  
Ethnicity  
Other

This is why we're taking up some pages to explore a little bit of why the people we choose to have in our lives do have an IMPACT.

### **'We are family' (I literally sing the song whenever I read this title)**

I'm lucky enough to have grown up in a family whom I love very much and who have treated me very well. I want you to understand that I know this isn't always the case. What I also want you to understand is HOW my family has shaped who I am and, in turn, reflect sensitively on both the positive and negative ways your family has shaped who you are, too.

My mum is very much a gentle, creative girly-girl and my dad is a logical, organized hard worker. As you'd expect, I've turned out to be a mixture of the two of them! But I think this truth is something we don't always fully realize.

When I finished school I spent my gap year interning in Wollongong, Australia. While I was there I worked for an incredible woman called Tammy and lived with her and her family. The year was formational on many fronts, but one aspect that sticks out in my memory is them banning some of my language! I'd picked up my mum's character trait of 'gentleness', yet it just so happened that in my life it outworked itself in people-pleasing. I was so conscious about making other people happy and not overstating my opinions that I answered, 'I don't mind' or 'It's up to you', or any other combination of the words, to questions thrown in my direction. It literally could be any question, e.g. 'What do you want for dinner?' Tammy consequently banned phrases of this kind from my vocabulary!

Once I was unable to say these things, I found it reshaped the way I thought about the value of what I had to put into conversation. It encouraged me to explore and shape my true beliefs and opinions without fear of what other people would think and in so doing I found my unique and powerful voice, a voice that wanted to be listened to and heard.

### **'Friends are the family we choose'**

If someone were to ask me about my experience of friends in secondary school then my mind would take me back to an experience I had in the summer before year 9. As I started secondary school, I tasked myself with becoming a part of the 'popular crew' (a cringe phrase but the easiest way to determine what I'm talking about). After much striving, I made it. I was ecstatic to know that my identity was wrapped up in

The attitude we have  
towards ourselves is by far  
the most important  
of all our attitudes

the identity of the other girls in the group. I was cool. People should like me. Boys would fancy me.

I have the delight of being a summer baby, so for my birthday that summertime I planned on having a big inflatable jousting set in the back garden for all to be impressed by and enjoy. Unfortunately the British weather was unreliable. So, bowling had to suffice!! The evening ahead involved bullying within the walls of my own home. It continued into the first few weeks of school in year 9: I vividly remember an object of some sort being thrown precisely in my direction on the school field. It broke me. I was left feeling like a nuisance, insignificant, valueless.

**Maybe some of those words resonate with how you feel? Or maybe some other words come to mind for you?**

Did you notice that my experience all started with putting my value in popularity?

It may be that your situation at school was worse. It may be that it was better. We all have different encounters with different people but each encounter has the opportunity to shape who we think we are AND who we're likely to become.

With the power of hindsight, I can see that how the people in my life (at school) made me *feel* about who I was quickly morphed into who I thought I was. Do you see the difference? My perception about myself was distorted by my perception of what other people thought about me through how they treated me.

When our opinions about ourselves are distorted, we start to believe a distorted truth about who we are (i.e. a lie) and I can see this so clearly in how the whole situation panned out. I thought that without popularity I would be empty and useless. Yet once I achieved popularity I was left feeling empty and useless. A distorted opinion led to a distorted truth. A bit of a lose–lose, right?!

People are a gift. People are constantly entering and leaving our lives and yet, as you’ve seen, each one has the ability to shape us for better or for worse. Choose wisely. You’ll hear me repeating again and again how *awareness = action!* The two are intrinsically linked. What I mean by this is that once we’re aware of something, it inevitably leads us to act differently in some way. Awareness drives us to create some kind of change in our lives or with ourselves. We’ll explore more of this very soon.

## Teenhood sweethearts (as opposed to childhood sweethearts . . .)

One promise that I have to make to you and to myself is that I am not going to get all cringey and weird talking about CRUSHES. There are just a few things I want to iron out for you because I think they are a MUST-KNOW.

Often, as we ‘grow up’ we’re trying to make sense of ourselves and how we fit into the world. And sometimes we feel rubbish about ourselves (it’s a normal feeling to feel at times, I assure you). One of the key things that society tells us is that gaining a partner will fill the hole that makes us feel rubbish and life

will be a wonderful fairy-tale of romance and flowers and chocolate. We see this through TV, film, social media, friends – everywhere we look.

Think all the way back to Barbie and Ken and how we immediately associate one with the other. Think back to the fairy-tales you used to (and may still!) watch and how the ‘happily ever after’ was only reached with true love’s kiss from some kind of knight in shining armour. Think about the last pop song you listened to and how it’s likely to be written about love in some way or another. This idea that we need a partner (or ‘another half’) to complete us is EVERYWHERE.

But *don’t fret, my friends*. Luckily, I’ve been there and done it. I used to get on a lot better with boys because my metaphorical walls were up so high when it came to girls, so I totally understand that guy friends are FAB. But here’s a little advice.

Gloria Steinem is an American feminist and journalist and she says this:

**Far too many people are looking for the right person,  
instead of trying to be the right person.**

You’re amazing. You have your whole life ahead of you. You have dreams, passions and goals. I’m not gonna get all ‘you don’t need no man’ because one day it will become a matter of want over need. But what you will never *need* is ‘another half’. You are a whole in yourself. In my experience, taking

time to just BE YOU is the most self-fulfilling, confidence-building choice you can make and action you can implement, HONESTLY. If you can't be yourself without a partner, you won't be yourself *with* a partner. And being yourself is vital for the whole of life.

## Sticks and stones

Probably the main reason other people influence what we think about ourselves so much is because of the words that they say to us. We're talking about how important it is to be ourselves and to value ourselves, but we need to understand the devastating impact that words can have and how to navigate them.

Psychologists also say that our thoughts about who we are revolve around our ideas of what others think about us. For example, other girls in year 9 made me feel useless and insignificant, which then became an idea I believed to be true about myself. We know that the phrase 'sticks and stones can break my bones but words can never hurt me' isn't legit because words can cut our souls.

I know that I've had words spoken over me such as 'boring'. Sounds lame, right?! But even now, if for example my sister is joking around and utters the phrase 'You're boring', it cuts me inside. This was an insult thrown my way in my younger years, and even now I have to call time and explain to her that it has such negative emotional connotations that I need her to take it back! (She would never mean it meanly anyway.)

Another word that people used to brand me with was 'shy'. You may or may not know that I spent three years studying for a degree in theology and youth ministry. It basically meant three years studying and essay-writing about God stuff and youth stuff with a bunch of inspiring college mates and lecturers. ANYWAY. I remember a particular Monday morning, aka the first time I met the five other people I'd be journeying the next three years with. Thoughts were racing through my head. How should I act? What should I say? What if they don't like me? I'm really shy and stuff so how should I play this?

By the end of the day I'd never felt more myself. I realized I'd been nothing close to 'shy' – what did that mean, anyway?! It began a process of reflection for me: a good reflection, not a boring one. I realized that during my childhood someone had spoken the word 'shy' over me repeatedly. I realized I had grabbed that mask and worn it for many years. I carried 'shy' for so long that it started to define who I was and how I approached different situations. I would immediately cave in. But that wasn't me. I realized at that point I had the choice to let the power behind the word 'shy' disintegrate. I'm open, I'm chatty, I'm passionate, I'm loved, I'm significant, I'm confident. I'm learning to own who I am. Love it. Embrace it. Choose what you let define you.

**What words do you think describe you?**

### ***Negative words***

As I mentioned, two words used to describe me were 'boring' and 'shy'. I let these words define me, and yet it wasn't at all who I was. Here's where the awareness equation kicks in again

Words only have  
**POWER** when they  
become what we think of  
**OURSELVES** about  
who we are

Brené Brown

(awareness = action). By being aware that someone is speaking insulting words about you and by being aware that you don't have to carry those false words any more, you inevitably change the extent to which you allow that person to play a role in your life and begin the process of letting go of what was said.

(CUE – 'Let it go' by Elsa).

#### Tips and tricks

- ☆ Take a moment to write down those negative words that have been spoken over you and scrunch them up tight in your fist before throwing them away. They don't define you.

#### *Positive words*

Just as negative words have the power to break us down, positive words can build us up. Being aware that words have power changes the attitude with which we use our words.

#### Tips and tricks

- ☆ Take a moment to encourage someone today.
- ☆ Take a moment to tell a family member what you love about him or her.

Ultimately, other people saying something about us doesn't mean it's true just because they say it. Not one bit. This is why it's so important to know who we are inside and out. It means that with any words thrown our way, we get to assess them against what we KNOW is true about ourselves, and if it isn't in line with these things then we can scribble it out. And yes, it's a process, but every little step will make it more ingrained into our natural way of thinking/doing things.

## AM I WHAT I ACHIEVE?

Recently, I've been thinking about the difference between the words we speak to ourselves and the words we speak to our mates. If I were to write down some of the negative words that used to cross my mind throughout the day, the list would be the following:

Ugly  
Useless  
Insignificant  
Lanky  
Etc.

Yet I would NEVER speak those things to my best mate. Imagine if I did!! The point I'm trying to make here is that the words we speak to ourselves aren't always kind. What if we were to speak to ourselves just as we'd speak to a friend?

The words we speak and the words we latch onto are like the hands of a potter on wet clay: they mould and shape our character and our life.

But let me tell you something: the words of others only have power when we let them. Words do NOT have to define you. Words do NOT have the last say about who you are.

## AM I WHAT I ACHIEVE?

School. We all have different experiences at school, don't we?

I did some research:

Primary school children generally spend about 779 hours in the classroom every year and secondary school 'young people' (because you're no longer children, according to me) spend around 656 hours at school every year.<sup>1</sup> This means we spend about 10,045 hours at school in total over our lifetime. They look like crazy numbers, especially considering they're only every YEAR.

That sounds like a crazy amount of time, right?!

HOWEVER. The average life expectancy is 75 years, which means that we will live on this Earth for around 657,450 hours.

### **Now what does that make you think?**

You may be somewhere between thinking that you spend a heck of a lot of time at school or slightly bewildered by how you'll spend the 647,000ish other hours of life.

The thing is that, right now, school is your world. And I get it. I did school. I've been there. And it is a vital part of life, a blessing, a privilege that we get to 'enjoy'. You're also at school during your most formative years. Although your brain is learning so many new things, your whole being is also forming. A changing brain means a changing identity.

You may find yourself asking questions such as:

What am I good for?

How can I be liked by other people?

What is my unique stamp on the world?

How far can I push myself?

How far can I rebel?

So, although your school years are forming your world, there is so much more to come.

As I mentor girls tackling their secondary school world, there is one thing that always comes back to haunt me. It's this ingrained lie that 'who you are is what you achieve'. The majority of us are pressured on every side to achieve the grades we 'need' because otherwise we enter a spiral of self-doubt, insecurity and a good-for-nothing mentality.

Girls, we were each designed with the innate desire to pursue dreams, to learn and to explore our unique potential. Many of us will achieve far more than we could ever imagine. BUT: who you are does not start or stop there.

At school, I placed so much of who I was in my achievements. I strived for the highest grades, the commendations, the merits and to be the best. If I was achieving great things, I was content in myself. And, yes, we should celebrate great things and there's nothing wrong with that. But it will get to a point when these things cannot sustain us any longer. We run faster, harder, longer on the treadmill and we never see the top of the ladder. We have to be content in ourselves as we are: failures, mistakes, accolades, triumphs.

Just know that school isn't life. It's only for such a time as this. Try to enjoy it, challenge yourself and grow in learning all about who you are: your passions, dislikes, character and ability. See it as a stepping stone to whatever is next for you. Seeing the big picture allows us to treasure the smaller details.

## AM I WHAT I LOOK LIKE?

Every morning I would wake up and look in the mirror. I'd scan my face and my stomach would sink with hate at what I saw. Every morning I would wake up and look in the mirror and proceed to make myself over. Make-up was my saviour. It made me feel better about myself. But also worse about myself, because I knew my 'new face' technically wasn't me. I longed to like what I saw in the mirror but the hate just spiralled and spiralled until a conversation was sparked by someone asking, 'Jessie. Do you think you're beautiful?' I wonder what you'd say if someone asked you that exact question: 'Do you think you're beautiful?'

This world is so incredibly image-saturated. By that I mean that we are confronted with images left, right and centre! Think of TV, magazines, social media, advertising hoardings, etc. This has sparked our obsession with image. Although I do think it's great that we care, I think we have to be SO careful that it doesn't become our life's obsession. We have to be careful that who we are doesn't become what we look like, *because that's deception at its very best . . .*

**Do you remember when you stopped loving the way that you look? Why did your attitude change?**

The most *important*  
thing in your life is not  
what you do; it's *who you*  
*become*. That's what you will  
take into *eternity*

Dallas Willard

Recently, I gave up make-up for the duration of Lent because I wanted to prove that who we are isn't defined by how we look, I wanted to be an example to other girls and I wanted to become more comfortable in my own skin.

It was HARD! I journalled and blogged my experience, so I thought I should share with you some of the thoughts I had after only four days:

- ☆ Is it too late to back out?
- ☆ What if people think I'm ill or haven't slept in days or something?
- ☆ I fancy wearing lipstick today – oh, wait . . .
- ☆ I hate this.
- ☆ I can't fail because then I'd be a hypocrite.
- ☆ I wish contouring hadn't yet been introduced.
- ☆ At least my face is relatively clear at the moment (\*touch wood\*).
- ☆ What if people treat me differently?
- ☆ Oooh I might buy this new eyebrow pencil – oh, wait . . .
- ☆ 40 days . . . that's almost two whole months . . .

Again, it was HARD! But I DID IT. And yes, I may now sound old and strange: I learned so much.

I realized that the fact that I wasn't wearing make-up didn't make me any less myself. I was still the laid-back, lacking-common-sense, funny, smiley, caring Jessie that I was with make-up. Beyond that, I realized that we are so much more than our image. And yet our image is the thing that we really strive for compliments on. Why?

There's a poem I absolutely love by rupi kaur that articulates this truth beautifully.<sup>2</sup> In it, she apologizes for having sometimes thought of women as pretty when she could have described them another way, like brave or intelligent. What a woman has done or endured says far more about her than just what she was born with. It's fine to be pretty, but there's so much more to someone than that.

I realized that I wanted to be more than just my image. I don't want to be 'just pretty'. I want to be pretty resilient, pretty wise, pretty faithful, pretty loving and pretty brave. All those things will make us extraordinary girls.

I realized that I didn't need to rely on make-up to sustain me. I became more comfortable in my own skin and proud of my natural self.

**How does this makes you feel?**

**How much time and energy do you put into making yourself look a certain way?**

You are so much more than that.

There are people around the world who have nothing. I always wonder about them. Do you think they mind what they see in the mirror? Perhaps they don't even own one! We are lucky, you and me.

Did you know that according to Meaghan Ramsey, previous Global Director of the Dove Self-Esteem Project, *10,000 people Google every month, 'Am I ugly?'* YouTube is flooded

with girls posting videos of themselves asking that exact question to an audience of strangers. To put a number on it, 850,000 girls have posted a video such as this.

Girls seem to no longer love what they see in the mirror. Scrap that. Girls seem to no longer even like what they see in the mirror. Girls seem to no longer be able to identify themselves as beautiful, but need the affirmation of other people.

### **Do you? Why is this?**

As a society, we've torn away from valuing people's character. Some of the most beautiful people I know are beautiful because they radiate such self-confidence that doesn't rely on their image. They're beautiful because they know who they are: their passions and dreams. They're beautiful because they care about other people more than themselves. They're beautiful because they're adventurous in the way they live life.

I want that kind of beauty. Not what society deems 'beautiful'. Not what social media says is 'sexy'. Not what requires other people's opinions.

Now, I must add that this is a lifelong journey. There are days when I feel I look so rubbish and therefore feel so rubbish that my whole day just goes . . . guess what . . . rubbish. Silly, huh? I find myself retracing my steps to figure out what happened along the way, and I find myself doing a lot of self-talk to steer back to making a little bit more sense.

Pause. SELF-TALK – what do I mean?

I want to be more  
than just pretty

I'm talking about those moments when we're aware that what we are thinking about ourselves (or others, for that matter) isn't quite true, and we desire to build ourselves back up again. These times are VITAL for our emotional health, girls. And, as I said, it all starts with the awareness.

Imagine I go to the bathroom in the middle of a work (or school) day and catch my reflection in the mirror and the following thoughts run through my mind: 'You look horrific, very, very bad, how did that even happen, everyone must have noticed, you can't do anything, why are you even trying?'

Do you see the spiral that twirls out of control? Positive self-talk has the same start but a drastically different ending: 'You look horrific, very, very bad, but actually you are so much more than what you look like, no one will even notice, it doesn't even matter at all, you can't look perfect that's impossible for anyone, you have a purpose, you are treasured, you are beautiful, go and smash it today.'

You may be cringing, and that's OK, I cringe at myself all the time. But the power of this is actually life-changing because if you can grab these thoughts as they arise, you can trade them for what is truth-speaking and life-fulfilling and you'll feel UNSTOPPABLE.

As I was thinking about ways we can steer away from unhealthy mentalities and lifestyles, I was reminded that we tend to compliment or encourage one another based on what we look like, i.e. 'I love your hair', 'That outfit looks fierce',

Your **value** doesn't decrease  
based on someone's inability to  
see your worth

## VALUE

'Your make-up is on-point . . .' What if, instead, we steered towards the following:

- ☆ You're so inspiring.
- ☆ I love that you're so down to earth.
- ☆ You make me want to be better.
- ☆ Chatting with you makes me feel great.
- ☆ We need more girls like you.
- ☆ There's something different about you.
- ☆ I love your passion.
- ☆ You're so brave.
- ☆ I love how adventurous you are.

I challenge you to see yourself in a new light. This challenge is a special one because it will influence the way you see the other girls in your life.

### Tips and tricks

- ☆ Go a day without wearing make-up.
- ☆ Write an anonymous letter of encouragement to a friend (without mentioning her image), or even just compliment your friends without mentioning their image.

## BE YOU

At this point of each section I want to explore the topic through a biblical lens. Don't let that put you off! Give it a go. I'm not going to get too heavy and theological but I will explore what your Creator says about YOU.

My most favourite EVER Bible verse is one that you'll hear about time and time again as we unpack it throughout this book:

**For you are God's MASTERPIECE, created anew in Christ Jesus to do the good things he planned for you long ago.**

(Ephesians 2.10)

Yes, it's a Bible verse. You might love that or it may make you feel uncomfortable, but don't let that warp the truth. I'm going to unpack exactly what this means for you! Basically,

you're a masterpiece

and that's no exaggeration. When we realize that, it changes everything! I promise you!

So, let's go back over what we've explored in this chapter but not quite the same way. Instead, let's go back over it through the lens of seeing ourselves as a masterpiece.

## **Am I who I know?**

A couple of years ago I attended a few events that were discussing the pressures and expectations of the twenty-first-century girl. What struck me most was that we have actually created and sustained a culture where it's become normal to slate and discourage other girls. Competition creeps up from every corner.

Yet Jesus entered into the culture of his time and transformed it by being an encourager. He spent time with the outcast, the lost and the alone. That didn't make *him* outcast, lost and alone. Jesus transformed culture by encouraging all those he spent time with – he totally eradicated negativity when talking to and talking about other people. If we take the Bible verse for what it says, then it means *I* am a masterpiece and it means that *you* are a masterpiece. Do you see my point? The outcast, the lost and the alone aren't excluded from being masterpieces.

We need to support and love one another. We need to be real community rather than virtual community. We need to come alongside those younger than us. We need to fight for one another.

There are countless verses in the Bible commanding us to be encouragers. Let's be countercultural in our approach to other people, knowing that our value is not determined by other people but that we can use our words to make others feel valued.

## **Am I what I achieve?**

Girls. I spent the majority of my time in school trying to achieve approval and value from others. I was addicted to the affirmation I would gain from my parents, teachers and friends and my identity was founded on it. What I didn't realize was how suffocating it was. It's something I've also journeyed through while doing my degree. A bad grade would send me spiralling into self-hatred and a good grade would sustain me for at least a couple of hours (yup, it was that fleeting).

Ephesians 2.10 says that you're a masterpiece. That means that you are a masterpiece. It doesn't mean that if you achieve and achieve and strive and strive then you'll be a masterpiece. Your value and identity aren't found in what you do but in who you are. 'I AM' comes before 'I DO'.

This doesn't mean that we can't achieve and do great things. It just means that those things don't define us. We are valuable no matter what.

## **Am I how I look?**

You'll hear me bang on about this a lot throughout the book but it's totally VITAL to get our heads around.

When I think of the image of a masterpiece I know that what makes it a masterpiece is not just what it looks like on the surface. I did a little bit of an internet search to see what people take into account when judging art across the country and I found a ton of criteria: skill, technique, creativity, originality, imagination, love, patience, time, artistic equipment and perseverance.

I spent the majority of life basing my value on what I looked like. When I realized that it was totally warped I felt pretty lost. You may be feeling lost as you read all of this, and that's OK, please don't worry! One of the main things I've learned is that a masterpiece is a masterpiece because of the skill, technique, creativity, originality, imagination, love, patience, time, artistic equipment and perseverance of its master. Our master is God.

'Master' doesn't mean controlling, dominating and rule-based in this case. It highlights the inherent worth that God places on each of us: his precious, adored, significant creations. We are valued because we are his.

## Sticks and stones

God's thoughts about you (and me) are greater, truer and more powerful than your thoughts about yourself. And they are greater, truer and more powerful than other people's thoughts about you.

We have to allow *his* words (not our own, or the words of others) to press against the wet clay of our soul and shape us. Words in the Bible are formational in the way we see God, ourselves and others around us.

## Which story?

Culture will say that who we know, what we achieve, what we look like and what others say about us is all true and justified. We live in the tension between the world saying we aren't good enough and our God saying we're enough as we are. We live in the tension between the world saying we aren't doing enough and God saying that it's who we are, not what we do, that is central to the self. We live in the tension between the world pointing out our shortcomings and God rejoicing in us moment by moment.

God's master-story enables us to FULLY embrace our call as masterpieces. Our choice to live within the worldly or master-

You KNOW me  
inside and out,  
and you know  
EVERY BONE in my body;  
You know EXACTLY how I was made,  
bit by bit, how I was  
sculpted from NOTHING  
into SOMETHING

Psalm 139.15, The Message

story will have an impact on the ordinary or extraordinary lives that we lead.

Which story do you choose to live in? After having tried to live in a certain way, I'm a believer that if we choose the worldly story, we live a life of constantly trying to keep up and never being fully satisfied. We were created to be a part of a story bigger than us; we have been called to more than this. Our value is steeped in the fact that we are a part of God's master-story.

When we decide which story we want to be a part of, we gain the authority to decide what we allow to become a part of our story or not. We gain the authority to speak life and truth into all circumstances. And that's EXCITING!

God's words about the value of who we are will never cease to amaze me! He looks at you, his daughter, and he proclaims, 'YOU ARE MY DAUGHTER WHOM I LOVE.'

If something about what this book is exploring is stirring up an excitement within you and you want to know more of it, then why not say this little prayer:

Dear God, I understand that I am your daughter. I understand that you created me and that you love me just the way I am. I want to be a part of your master-story, and I'm sorry for all the things that have got in the way. I commit my life to you and I want to have a personal relationship with you. I want to walk with you in freedom and truth for the rest of my life. Amen.