



99 THINGS



every
girl
should
know

practical insights for
loving God, yourself,
and others

by neely mcqueen

99 Things Every Girl Should Know

Practical Insights for Loving God, Yourself, and Others

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Dedication

*To my small group girls (both past and present), who have
allowed me into their lives.*

To my daughter, who is my favorite girl in the world.



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Introduction

You are beautiful, and you are of great worth!

I've made the beginning and end of this book similar, because I am convinced it is a simple truth every girl needs to know but very few really do.

A few years back I saw an article in a fashion magazine featuring women in their 30s and 40s who had written letters to their 16-year-old selves. In these letters they told themselves the things they wished they had known when they were younger, and they wrote of the heartache that it might have saved them from had they known these things. This little book is comprised of 99 things I wish I had understood when I was a teenager—things that would have helped me better understand my beauty, my worth, and my world. I've also invited some of my friends to share their stories. I find that when we hear the stories of others, we are reminded that we are not alone in this journey.

My hope for this book is that it will provide you insight and give you new confidence in who you are as a girl. As you read this book, you may find yourself with one of these possible responses:

“Nothing new here—I've heard that before.” If that's your response, I would ask you to think about how that particular truth has impacted the way you live every day.

“I knew that, but I've never thought of it in that way.” Ask yourself how this new understanding of that truth impacts your view of yourself and the world.

“Are you serious? I'm not sure I believe it.” If you find yourself with that response, I would ask and hope that you would consider allowing it to become a good conversation starter with a friend, a parent, or a youth leader.

Don't feel like you have to read the 99 things in order. If you find yourself wanting to read about a certain topic one day and a completely different one on another day, go for it. Feel free to mark up the book and use the spaces provided to write about what you are learning.

I love being a girl, and every day I am learning more how to love the girl that I am. My prayer is that God would use this book to help you feel the same way.

Girls Rule,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Neely". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'N' and a long, sweeping tail.

Neely McQueen



BEING BFFS

1 - 5





1. The Test

Real friends don't let friends walk around school, the mall, or anywhere for that matter with stuff in their teeth, stuff hanging from their noses, or their zippers down. It might be uncomfortable to point out these "issues," but trust me, your friends will thank you! And you'll pass the real-friend test with flying colors.

STUDENT

The greatest gift of life is that we are able to share it with others. I have been blessed beyond belief with the friendships that I have. They have been my family, my support, my laughter, and a true source of happiness. I've also learned a lot of lessons about friendships throughout the years—what to do to be a good friend (and what not to do). Also, I've been learning how to deal with the fact that friends are just people and that we all make mistakes. We are always growing, always becoming, and it is a beautiful thing to do that in the company and community of others, faults and all. As more time is invested in our friendships, we become more dependent on each other. The downside of this is that we set these expectations and standards about how and when friends should be there for us and how they should act. People disappoint us, they hurt us, and they let us down. I have chosen to look at my friends and see the expectancy of our relationship. I rely on the hope of it being something long-lasting and able to endure many things. In the end, God doesn't let us down. Ever. God is the ultimate friend. I am a good friend because God has given me good friends. Having a good friendship just comes naturally when you simply enjoy one another and love the things that make you similar and different. That's what it's all about—doing life together.

—Deandra, 20

2. Friends Before Boys

At your age, to experience life and to enjoy your teenage years, friendships *must* be more important to you than having boyfriends. The truth is, boyfriends can oftentimes keep you from having a life and enjoying it. The memories from high school that still make me smile are the adventures that my friends and I had together. On the other hand, the moments that make me cringe or blush are those that I created in order to get attention from the opposite sex. Right now, it's best to live by the "friends before boys" principle.

3. It Takes One to Know One

Be the kind of friend you want to have. Are you struggling with friendships? Before you start pointing fingers at the girls around you, ask yourself, "What kind of friend am I?" and "What impact am I having on my relationships?" Being a good friend can be hard at times and require work, but the friendships that you are willing to work at will likely end up being the best friendships that you'll ever have.

Scripture:

Wounds from a sincere friend are better than many kisses from an enemy (Proverbs 27:6).

4. The Downside of Friendships

Friends can form a circle of protection from the dangers in this world. That's a good thing. On the other hand, when your circle becomes one that excludes other girls because they don't fit in, your circle has become an unhealthy clique. That's a bad thing. Cliques are dangerous when they turn girls against other girls only on the basis of petty differences. They can rob us of meeting other

potential friends simply because they don't look or act the same as us. Has your circle of friendships turned ugly? Find out by asking yourself when was the last time your friends hung out with others. Or if you would lose all of your friends if one became unhappy with you? If you have a hard time answering these questions, you might want to evaluate your circle to make sure it hasn't turned into an unhealthy clique.

5. A Friend or Two

It's impossible to be best friends with everyone. Most of us work hard to have a lot of friends out of fear of being alone. A better antidote for loneliness is to simply focus on fewer friendships. Friendships that are built over time with a foundation of outrageously fun memories and truly meaningful conversations are only possible when you aren't spread thin with too many shallow friendships. I will take meaningful over shallow any day—how about you?

“Truly great friends are hard to find, difficult to leave, and impossible to forget.”

— G. Randolph

Challenge

Reflect on the friendships you currently have in your life right now and the type of friend you are in those relationships. Are you fulfilled, or are your relationships lacking something?

Talk with a friend this week about your friendship. Consider taking a minute to write a thank-you note to one of your friends.

Pray for your friends. By praying for your friends, you become a better friend.



SHH...IT'S A SECRET

6 - 10





6. Three Keys to Keeping Secrets

The tricks to keeping a secret are pretty easy. First, don't tell anyone else the secret. (Wow, mind-blowing, right?) Second, don't tell anyone that you have a secret that you can't share. Third, if the secret is something that could cause harm to your friend or someone else, you are a better friend for taking the secret to a parent or another trusted adult.

7. Wisdom From Spain

Never forget this famous Spanish saying: “Si alguien te dice algo de otra persona, tambien va a hablar de ti.” Translation: “Whoever gossips to you will gossip about you.” I think what the Spanish are trying to tell us is that gossip is a habit—one that is hard to break and one that hurts people. Listen to the Spanish, and break the habit in your life. Here's a good rule: If you haven't said it already or if you can't say it to that person's face, don't say it to anyone else.

8. Mean Isn't Cool

Hurting other people's feelings isn't cool. Kindness always wins, even when it feels like it doesn't. I should be clear: Kindness doesn't mean that you let people walk all over you or that you lie to avoid hurting people's feelings. Kindness speaks from an attitude of gentleness and genuine concern for others regardless of what they can or can't do for you. I'll never forget Joanne, a girl I knew in high school. She was the kindest person I had ever met. Everyone wanted to be around her and be her friend. She was a few years older than me, and I remember when she was voted homecoming queen her senior year. She wasn't the prettiest or the most popular, but she was kind to *everyone*. And kindness

matters to people. No one regrets being too kind, but most of us have regrets about words and actions that have hurt others. When given the option, always chose kindness.

9. Is It in Our DNA?

I've often felt as if I were born gossiping. It sometimes seems like every time I open my mouth, I speak words of gossip. It's an issue that's as old as time. We see that even the women of the Bible were challenged to guard their mouths from slander and gossip. And for whatever reason, we girls in particular struggle with our words. The good news is that God has given us the ability to overcome sin, even in those areas that feel like they are part of our DNA.

“To find out a girl’s faults, praise her to her girl friends.”

—Benjamin Franklin

Scripture:

A gossip goes around telling secrets, but those who are trustworthy can keep a confidence (Proverbs 11:13).

10. Sticks and Stones...

“...may break my bones, but words will never hurt me”—this is a lie, and we all know it. If I were sitting with you now, and I asked you if you had ever been hurt by gossip, I am certain that you would answer just like I would: *Yes!* Many of us have felt the pain of words spoken to us or about us. I still remember when I was in seventh grade and one of the “cool kids” made a comment about

my appearance to another kid—and he said it loud enough for me to hear. While the pain is gone now, that comment hurt enough in that moment that I can still remember how I felt more than 20 years later. What I have discovered is that the people who usually hurt us are actually the ones who have been hurt. The best, and maybe the hardest, thing we can do when someone hurts us with words is to slow down for a moment and consider why that person feels the need to hurt others. If you can stop and see their pain, even for just a moment, you may be able to respond in a couple different ways. First, you might not feel so bad about what was said because you don't take it personally. You know those harsh words have little to do with you and much more to do with that person's brokenness. Second, you may be surprised to find that you are able to show compassion toward your offender. This may take a lot of practice, but I promise you that it will be worth it.

Challenge

Reflect on the times you have used your words to hurt others and the times that you have been hurt by someone else's words. Is there anyone that you need to apologize to, or is there someone that you may need to offer forgiveness?

Talk with a friend about the Spanish proverb (see page 11), and decide together if you agree or disagree with it. Commit to each other to be accountable for saying no to gossip.

Pray that God would protect your heart from the words of others and give you the discernment and strength to overcome the allure of gossip.