



Discussion Questions for Val Emmich's THE REMINDERS

1. Joan is born with the incredible ability to remember small details from every single day of her life. But she seems conflicted about this ability, referring to it as, "my gift or condition or disease or whatever you want to call it." Do you see Joan's memory as more of a blessing or a curse? If you had the choice, would you want to remember everything? Is there a particular person or event you wish you remembered better?
2. Val Emmich used real-life experience for inspiration. His daughter fell out of a shopping cart at Home Depot and he was worried she may have suffered permanent brain damage. Yet Emmich does not choose to write from Ollie or Paige's perspective. How do you think Joan's parents feel about Joan? What are the challenges of parenting an extraordinary child?
3. On page 19 Joan says "When people dance they forget and when they cry they remember." What's a song that makes you cry? What's a song that makes you dance? Do you remember where you were when you first heard those songs?

4. Emmich chose to make Gavin an up-and-coming television actor. How did this effect your perception of Gavin throughout the story? Did his personality correspond with expectations you may have had for celebrities and people in the public eye?
5. Paige neglected to tell Gavin about Mara for a long time after Sydney's passing. Why do you think she kept this information a secret for so long? Both Paige and Mara were considering giving up their own eggs for Sydney. What factors would you consider when making such a decision?
6. Grief and mourning are major themes in this novel. On her television show, Mindy Love asks Gavin, "Those of us who have lost loved ones can certainly appreciate the pain you were in, but what made you take that next step and just all of a sudden want to burn everything?" Gavin believes that ridding himself of material items might help Sydney's lingering memory disappear. Are there particular items that carry this weight in your life? Gavin ultimately finds this strategy futile. Discuss.
7. THE REMINDERS is Emmich's first novel, but he's been writing songs for decades. Do written stories on the page impact audiences in the same way as songs? Should fiction make you dance or cry in the same way as Joan's song?
8. The Beatles continue to have a devoted fan-base, decades after they released their last album. What about their music has the power to transcend time? Are there bands or albums you feel are important to share with younger generations?
9. Joan was so excited for the "Next Great Songwriter" contest, but the outcome wasn't what she had hoped for or was expecting. Were you satisfied with the results of the contest? What lesson did it teach Joan that she may not have understood otherwise?
10. Joan's primary goal is to be remembered. However, actress Susan Hayward once said, "When you're dead, you're dead....Being remembered isn't the most important thing, anyhow. It's what you do when you are here that's important." Which side do you fall on? Is the idea of being remembered something you spend time thinking about? Or are you more focused on the here and now?