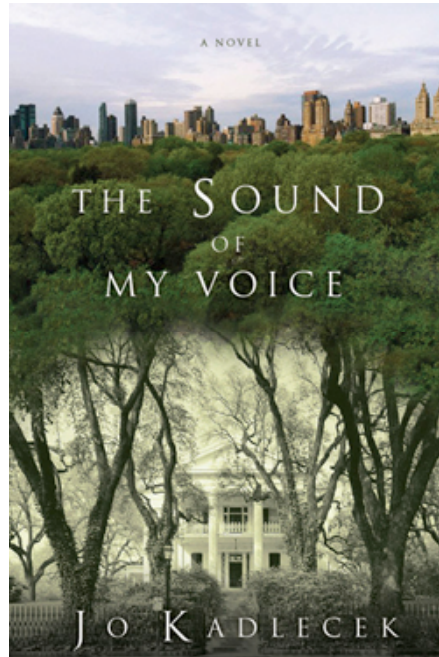


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***The Sound of My Voice,***  
***a novel***  
by  
Jo Kadlecek

**Divided by a Dream**

An aspiring playwright leaves her Southern home to pursue her art in New York City—*without* the blessing of her preacher father. As daughter and father struggle to find their unique voices, a shared grief emerges from the past and neither is prepared for what it will cost to heal the pain that separates them. . . . *A compelling story of the tensions between art and faith, parents and children, and the changes that affect both in our contemporary culture.*

***The Sound of My Voice, a novel***

by Jo Kadlecek

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For more information, a discussion guide and an interview with the author, please visit [www.waterbrookpress.com](http://www.waterbrookpress.com) or the author's site, [www.lamppostmedia.net](http://www.lamppostmedia.net).

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Discussion Guide for *The Sound of My Voice, a novel* by Jo Kadlecck

1. In chapter one, Jordan Riddle reflects on the distinction between vocation and calling. What differences, if any, do you think there are between the two? Are some callings more “acceptable” in Christian circles? Why or why not?
2. Peter Riddle is a man caught up in his Christian ministry. Talk about how you think his dreams for his own church might distract him from his obligations or how they redefine his priorities. How does he compensate for both? He believes that “a busy life is a productive life.” Do you?
3. How does Jordan create community in her New York City life? How does it differ from the life she left in Jackson? What does it reflect about her faith and her goals?
4. Why do you think Peter has so much trouble accepting Jordan’s choices about her life in New York City and the pursuit of her playwriting career? Are his choices “more” right?
5. Jordan and her father Peter actually have a lot in common but neither seems to want to acknowledge those similarities. What commonalities do you think they share? How are the two characters different? What’s keeping them apart, and what does their relationship suggest to you about parents and children?
6. Jeanie is haunted by many things in her life, and struggles to maintain her sense of reality. What’s gone awry for her? What role does Jeanie play for her husband and for her daughter? What do you think her life, and her death, symbolize?
7. Which characters in *The Sound of My Voice* (Jordan, Peter, Jeanie, Barry, Dr. Stately, Jack, Cynthia Sue, Vinnie, Miss Mary, etc.) did you most resonate with and why? Which characters did you least identify with and why? What qualities do they have that you respect, admire, or struggle with?
8. What do you the title of the novel, *The Sound of My Voice*, refers to specifically?
9. The story explores a variety of issues such as the complexities of family dynamics, parental grief, corporate racism, spiritual pretensions, traditional religion vs. postmodern beliefs, and the tensions between art and faith. Which of these—or some other issues—“spoke” the loudest to you? Why?

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10. Jordan and Peter's severed relationship can symbolize the gap between two generations, one which makes sense of life through shades of gray and mystery and one which sees life only through a black and white lens. Both are sincerely trying to live out their faith and their dreams. What does it take to reconcile these two characters, and what might that suggest about the cost of reconciliation? Many people today seem similarly polarized. What positive and creative steps do you think could be taken to bridge such gaps?

### **An Interview with the Author of *The Sound of My Voice*, Jo Kadlecek**

*Q: Where did you get the idea behind **The Sound of My Voice**?*

JK: I've worked as a journalist for many Christian and religious publications for the past fifteen years. As I covered conferences and trends, and interviewed a variety of people, I began to see the disconnect between the next generation of creative Christians who have embraced the arts, and those older leaders who have been so involved in building sincere ministries, they overlooked the essential role creativity plays in our lives. Consequently, I think many young artists don't understand how their parent's faith is relevant to them for life in our contemporary culture and many leaders haven't known how to reach these talented but postmodern young people. So, after a lot of conversations with friends, I wondered what might happen if I took this sad premise—and it is sad to see such misunderstanding—and try to carve a story out of it in hopes of inviting a healthy dialogue between the two.

*Q: How is writing fiction different from journalism?*

JK: Both are genuinely concerned with truth but obviously get at it in different forms of story telling. Fiction can be just as true as non-fiction; in fact, it's been said that fiction must be more true, more believable for the reader or he won't turn the page. I could have reported on Jordan and Peter's story in a newspaper or magazine as a symbol of the polarizing times in which we live (and I have reported on portions of such composite stories). But I think the genre of a novel allows for a writer to explore her characters—and human nature—more fully, which often leads to a more compelling glimpse into their stories and the issues they raise. I hope that's what's happened in ***The Sound of My Voice***.

*Q: So you believe this a real problem, this chasm between old school religion and emerging artists of faith?*

JK: Absolutely. And I think the Evangelical Christian subculture in the United States will have a lot to answer for. Why? Because instead of embracing artists and bringing them into worship with us, we've often been so threatened by them and the "different" way they see the world that we've ignored them altogether. If we're

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honest, though, I guess we all tend to push away people we perceive as different from us. I think that's part of our sin-nature—we avoid rather than engage.

But it doesn't have to be like this. God is patient with us, and thankfully there are a number of small efforts emerging around the country that are trying to bring the two "worlds" together, that are recognizing that art and Christian faith are enormously compatible—and biblical! After all, if we're made in God's image, we are inherently creative, aren't we?

*Q: **The Sound of My Voice** explores these rifts between parents and their children, between Christian ministers and artists, and those who might believe the same Christian truths but live out their faith in vastly different ways. Can these different groups really come together?*

JK: It's not easy and it's always costly. It requires letting go of some things maybe we've been holding onto too tightly, and being willing to be more open to how the Maker of the universe might be working. Maybe it will mean not taking ourselves so seriously that we can't learn from others or laugh at ourselves. I'm not saying we should forsake our convictions or the standards of excellence and integrity I believe we're called to pursue. But bridges can really only be built through humility, joy and a whole lot of vision and tenacity that suggests getting to the other side is worth the struggle. I think that's what the cross of Jesus Christ is all about. I think that's what the writer meant in Hebrews 12:2,3.

*Q: **What's next?***

JK: Well, even though I've always been a fan of fiction, I never imagined I'd be writing it! I'm grateful for the opportunity I have now to explore the art of storytelling with creative writing. I continue to work as a freelance journalist (and have a regular column called Art and Soul for *Prism Magazine*). But I've also just finished the first novel in a series called *The Lightfoot Trilogy*, which follows a young quirky religion reporter who's in search of good news and a good man and is having a lot of trouble finding either. My hope is that these stories bring a little helpful perspective and old-fashioned pleasure to the reader in a time when we could all use more of both. And I'll continue to work toward helping the Christian community—the Church—get back in touch with our heritage in commissioning new artists and writers as it did throughout history. Why? Because art and story helps us see each other and the world—God's masterpieces—in deeper, richer ways. They help us live the abundant life we're called to.

***For more information about Jo Kadlecek and her other writings, please visit her website at [www.lamppostmedia.net](http://www.lamppostmedia.net).***