



get your
story
straight

*

A TEEN'S GUIDE TO LEARNING & LIVING THE GOSPEL

KRISTEN HATTON

“We are story people, created by a storytelling God. *Get Your Story Straight* is a brilliant resource designed to help students discover the beauty and power of the greatest story ever written, the story of Jesus. This guide provides a creative and clear way for students to unpack the living and breathing Word of God.”

Louie Giglio, Passion City Church/Passion Conferences

“If you’re a teenager, you should know some things about Kristen Hatton and her new book: 1) She’ll speak to you honestly; there’s no soft-peddling the big issues. 2) She’ll treat you with dignity; there’s no talking down here. 3) She’ll take you seriously; she knows what’s at stake in your life. 4) She’ll help you to maturity; she’s learned the path. Good reasons to make *Get Your Story Straight* your book of the year!”

Sinclair B. Ferguson, Professor of Systematic Theology,
Redeemer Seminary, Dallas

“After working with teenagers for decades, I am well aware of the challenges that come with adolescence. Kristen Hatton cuts to the heart of today’s ‘me-centered’ culture by placing Christ as the true hero of everyone’s story. With a heavy emphasis on how God exists for his own glory, this devotional is a humbling reminder of his transformative grace. It’s perfect for every teenager’s walk with Christ!”

Dr. Joe White, President, Kanakuk Ministries

“A highly recommended, valuable contribution to teenagers and the church. This devotional cuts against the grain of standard teen devotionals, which historically point kids to their own inner strength. This devotional points kids to Jesus and his finished work. It also offers practical instruction on spiritual disciplines in a clear, helpful, non-legalistic way.”

Cameron Cole, Chairman of Rooted: Advancing Grace-Driven Ministry; director of youth ministries, Cathedral Church of the Advent, Birmingham, AL; coeditor, *Gospel-Centered Youth Ministry*

“The Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, is not a story about us but about Jesus. The way teenagers begin to understand themselves is to get caught up in a story bigger than their own. Kristen Hatton has captured a unique, clever, and devotional way to grab the hearts and minds of young men and women. For those of us who work with college students, our plea would be: please give this book to teenagers a few years before they hit the college campus. They will come better prepared to face campus life and pressure. They will be men and women who understand that their life and story is defined by his story.”

Rod Mays, Former National Coordinator, Reformed University Fellowship

“*Get Your Story Straight* is a powerful way to introduce teenagers to God’s Word. The difference between *Get Your Story Straight* and other devotions for teens is that it goes through the Bible from beginning to end and reveals truths in stories from the Old and New Testament in a new, exciting way that they can relate to. Readers of this devotional are introduced to biblical principles like justification and sanctification—life-changing truths of what Jesus offers through the sacrifice he made for us on the cross. I would recommend *Get Your Story Straight* to any teen.”

Lauren Nelson, Miss America 2007; author

“Raising kids in today’s society to honor God and to invest in his kingdom can be a challenge. *Get Your Story Straight* is a great tool to encourage young people to find their true identity in Jesus and pursue him passionately.”

Lance Berkman, Former Major League Baseball player

“The story about Jesus and the gospel isn’t just a point in history. It is the history of thousands of years of love and hate, joy and sadness, victory and loss, all of which gets us ready for the greatest climax of the greatest story ever told. It’s also the story that becomes our story when we see ourselves written into the purposes of God in the pages of Scripture. Kristen Hatton has done us a big favor by making the

storyline clear and the applications personal and relevant. I wish my wife and I had this book when our children were teenagers.”

Dr. Joseph (Skip) Ryan

“Finally, a devotional that connects youth to the substance and story of the Bible! Kristen Hatton has given teenagers a gift in *Get Your Story Straight*—with key Scripture passages to memorize, thoughtful questions to fuel reflection, and gospel application. Take up and read!”

Brian H. Cosby, Author, *Giving Up Gimmicks: Reclaiming Youth Ministry from an Entertainment Culture*

“Kristen Hatton in her book has struck just the right balance for a teen who is a new believer or is a searcher to learn and understand God’s Word and the gospel. The readings are Bible-based and present the story in daily doses that build on content and repetition so that a solid Christian world and life view is firmly established.”

Brad Bradley, Founder, Southwest Church Planting Network

“If you view the Christian life as being about your performance, then what do you do if you are not performing well? Regrettably, many Christians never follow an inductive Bible study or develop the daily exercise of meditating on the greatest story ever told. This incredible step-by-step guide to learning and living the gospel of Jesus Christ will help not only teens to approach the Bible but adults as well. Led by this devotional, become captivated by the narrative and the characters in God’s story as you rest in the words of Jesus when he says, ‘It is finished.’”

Mark Davis, Senior Pastor, Park Cities Presbyterian Church, Dallas, TX

“What an outstanding job Kristen Hatton has done crafting a devotional that makes the Scriptures wonderfully accessible to modern teens. It invites them to study the ancient biblical narrative so they discover the life-transforming reality of the One who is at the center of that narrative. And in so doing, it encourages them to make sense of their ‘story’ in light of THE story.”

Leo R. Schuster III, Lead Pastor, City Church, Houston, TX

“Teaching the next generation to understand how their story intersects with the grand story of the Bible is mission critical for the church. Kristen Hatton offers an engaging, relevant, and Word-saturated tool for this high and holy calling.”

Karen Hodge, PCA Women’s Ministry Coordinator

“As teenagers, we make the most important decisions in our lives. We decide who we will be, where we are going, and who we are taking with us, all before we reach adulthood. That thought scares me. If we want teens to make right choices, they need to know who they are. They need to know how they fit into God’s story. Kristen Hatton’s book aims to teach them that very thing. As we learn who God is and where he plans to take this world, we begin to see the way to follow him. I am confident this book will help teenagers of all ages and I commend it to you warmly.”

Ricky Jones, Pastor, RiverOaks Presbyterian Church,
Tulsa, OK

“God’s call on my life came when I was a teenager, so teens have always been at the heart of my ministry. Following seminary, the first opportunity the Lord gave me to serve was as a youth pastor. I learned firsthand the importance of a walk with the Lord in the formative years of adolescence. Kristen Hatton speaks directly to the minds and hearts of teenagers with truth and grace. These young men and women, especially in today’s culture, need a daily reminder of God’s authority, his sovereignty, and his grace in a relatable way. This little book carries that big message!”

Ed Young, Senior Pastor, Second Baptist Church, Houston, TX

“Kristen has taken Scripture and made it accessible for teenagers in a culture that tells them to tune out and disengage. She challenges teens to take the next step beyond just reading the Bible. This study was written with them in mind; it allows them to engage Scripture in different ways throughout the week, helping Scripture come alive. Teenagers at any point in their relationship with Christ can use this book to help them grow in their faith and understanding of who Jesus is.”

Sydney Miller, Young Life Director, Edmond, OK

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A Teen's Guide to Learning
and Living the Gospel

Kristen Hatton



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Dear Rebecca,

As my only daughter and first teenager,
you were the motivation behind this book.
I love you so much and am blessed beyond measure
the Lord gave you to “Padre” and me.

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Foreword

As a father of two teenagers and a preteen, as a coach and teacher at a Christian school, as a campus minister at a Christian university, and now a church planter, one thing has become very clear to me: a large percentage of the teenagers who profess to be Christians know little about the faith they profess to believe. From my experience, students may know some Bible verses, but they don't know the story of the Bible. They don't know how they fit into the story of a redeeming King and his kingdom, so many are ill-equipped to deal with real life in this broken, sinful, fallen world.

Too many Christians view the Bible either as an instruction manual on how to get to heaven, or maybe a bunch of moral stories showing us how to live a moral, godly life, or even as an encyclopedic record of a lot of information on a host of unrelated topics. But most are not sure how, or if, it all fits together. When we approach the Bible in these ways, we miss seeing the glory of who Jesus is and all that he has done for us. When we miss seeing the worth of who Jesus is and the work he has done to save us, Christianity becomes a religion of rules and regulations focusing on our performance and ability to live a “good” Christian life.

Teenagers, if the Christian life is all about you and your performance, where do you turn when you aren't performing well? Do you know how to deal honestly with your sin? Do you know how to find comfort and hope in the gospel? Do you know how to rest in Jesus's words, “*It is finished,*” or are you running on the performance treadmill believing you must put in more effort to finish?

My wife has written this devotional book for you. It will help you find your life as you get lost in the story of Jesus. My prayer for you as you read this devotional is that the love God has for you in Christ would become real to you—that who Jesus is and all he has done for you would transform your life so much that you will begin to display Jesus in the way you live with others.

— Pete Hatton

Introduction

Did you know that we all live out of some story? Whether it's a story about our successes, our failures, who our friends are, or what we have accomplished (or not accomplished), we all have a story that helps us make sense of our lives and our world. Perhaps you have heard about the story of Jesus, but his story seems pretty disconnected from your real life—the life where friends, appearance, academics, athletics, activities, accomplishments, dating, parties, etc., take up your time and attention. At the same time, you might be wishing for a different life and a different approach to your problems. You might have already noticed that no matter how hard you try to make yourself feel happy, fulfilled, and worthwhile, you still struggle with dissatisfaction and emptiness. The solution is not to go have more fun, get out of your house, or change your situation; instead it's to get your story straight. Living out of the true story—the story of the gospel of Jesus Christ—will change your life from the inside out.

Do you know that story? Many people have a hard time answering this basic question of Christianity: What is the gospel? Perhaps that's true for you as well. This book was written to help you understand the gospel, but even more than that to introduce the hero of the story—Jesus. Getting to know Jesus will change your life right now and give you life forever.

As you go through this book, you will notice that we start the story from the beginning. That's always the best way to get your story straight! The beginning of the story will explain why our problems are much deeper than our outward behavior and why following Jesus takes more than going to church or trying to do the “right thing.” Instead, we will see that our problems start with what is going on inside of us—what we want, desire, and live for. As you understand yourself better, you will also find out how much you need Jesus every day.

The devotionals in this book will lead you through the whole Bible so that you can understand the complete unfolding story of

the gospel. Through this grid you will learn who Jesus is and why we need him, and that knowledge will shape your understanding of freedom and grace, growth in love for God and people, and how the gospel changes everything. While this yearlong study was designed for individual devotional times, a small group or parent/teen dialogue alongside it could be helpful. Either way, it would be great for you to have someone to talk with about what you are learning.

For each of the fifty-two weeks, there are devotions for five days that concentrate on the same passage of Scripture. The intent is that through repetitive reading and in-depth focused time, the unfolding truths of the lesson will go deeper into your life than if that section of the Bible was simply read once. So you will notice that you are encouraged to read the same Scripture passage several times throughout the week. Day One of each week is focused on examining the text through observations that will aid you in discovering what is being revealed in the passage. This includes exercises like identifying repetitive key words, clauses, or action verbs, as well as asking probing questions to help make inferences beyond what is simply stated in the text. An example passage with inductive study questions and answers can be found in the next section titled “Day One Aid: How to Study the Bible.”

By approaching Scripture this same way week after week, an added benefit is that you will be able to develop a Bible study method to carry you through life. You will spend the second day reading the written devotional material and the third and fourth days answering questions that unpack the passage and devotional reading. Day Five concludes in prayer after you spend time journaling. In addition, each of the three parts of the book begins with a memory verse for you to learn over the course of that section.

The lessons build on each other—so don’t skip around! You have to follow the story from the beginning to end. This devotional is meant to last a whole year, but you may go through it faster or slower. The important thing is to keep going.

As you get started, my prayer for you is that the story of God’s glory and amazing grace will take root, transforming your heart and changing your desires, thoughts, and behaviors. Along the way, you will find that your everyday life has become rich in the things that matter most—faith, hope, and love.

Day One Aid

How to Study the Bible

As discussed in the Introduction, Day One of each week uses an inductive study method to approach each passage. This method of Bible study is called *inductive* because you will make observations and notice details to help you gain greater insight into what is being communicated in the Scripture. This is a great way to look at any passage, and I hope you find it helpful beyond this book.

I have included a Day One sample here as a guide for working through the first day's instructions. The passage below is not otherwise included in the book, but the exercises here will show you the types of observations and answers you will be looking for. Don't get frustrated or hung up on getting it all "right." No one is grading your work. You will benefit more from each devotional if you spend the time slowly reading the Scripture, working through the Day One exercises, and going back to reread the passage as instructed on Days Three and Four.

To practice, read the Mark passage below and try to answer the listed questions before looking at the included responses to each instruction. Also note that not all of these instructions will be given for any one week, and there may be other questions more fitting for certain passages.

Straight from the Word

Read the Scripture and follow the instructions below.

∴ Mark 4:35–41

³⁵ On that day, when evening had come, he [Jesus] said to them [his disciples], "Let us go across to the other side."³⁶ And leaving the crowd, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. And other boats were with him.³⁷ And a great windstorm arose, and the waves were

breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling.³⁸ But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. And they woke him and said to him, “Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?”³⁹ And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, “Peace! Be still!” And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.⁴⁰ He said to them, “Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?”⁴¹ And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?”

- ∴ Make five or more observations from the passages.
 - ~ The storm is so strong the boat is filling with water.
 - ~ Seems surprising Jesus could sleep in that heavy of a storm.
 - ~ Jesus is at the stern, which means he is the one in control of the boat.
 - ~ The disciples think they are going to die in the storm.
 - ~ Like in creation, Jesus speaks and what he commands happens.
 - ~ Jesus confronts them with their fears and doubts when he is in control!

- ∴ What is the conflict?
 - ~ The storm has stirred up fear in the disciples’ hearts, and Jesus isn’t doing anything about it.

- ∴ What is the climax?
 - ~ Jesus tells the wind and sea to be still and they are.

- ∴ Summarize the main idea.
 - ~ We fear the things we can’t control, yet Jesus shows us what being calm amid the storm looks like.

- ∴ Write down any thoughts or questions.
 - ~ The disciples’ question to Jesus—doesn’t he care they are perishing?—seems to show a lack of trust; they doubt he really cares about them.
 - ~ The storm is used to reveal the fear the disciples felt.
 - ~ Based on verse 41, do the disciples really not believe he is the Messiah?

~ Are we like the disciples in thinking if God really cared he wouldn't allow storms to happen?

Making your own observations and inquiries at the beginning of each week builds a foundation for further study that will help shape and lead you to all the Lord wants you to see in his Word. As you commit yourself to discovering more of who he is and seeing his great love for you, may the “word of Christ dwell in you richly” (Colossians 3:16).

PART I

Getting the Story Straight

Scripture Memory:

“You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me.”

(John 5:39)

Week 1

Whose Story Is It?

DAY ONE

Straight from the Word

Read the Scripture and follow the instructions below.

:: Genesis 1:1–2

¹ In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. ² The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

:: John 1:1–5

¹ In the beginning was the Word [Jesus is the Word], and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. ⁴ In him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

:: Hebrews 1:1–3

¹ Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. ³ He is the radiance of the glory of God and the

exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.

:: Make five observations from the passages.

:: What connection do you see between these three passages?

:: Summarize the main idea of the passages.

:: Write down any thoughts or questions.

DAY TWO

The Word Applied

How often do you become so engrossed in a TV series that you watch multiple seasons in a matter of days or weeks? Our family had a show like that. Every possible night we were all home, without sports or other activities, we settled into our favorite seats in front of the television to jump back into the lives of these characters that had become our friends. Even in conversations I found myself relating friends' real-life situations back to the events going on in my pseudo-friends' lives!

Some shows are like that and you just can't wait for the next episode. Or it may be the book you can't put down. Why is it we become so captivated by stories?

It could be you identify with one of the characters, or perhaps it's the intensity of the drama or the emotions you feel. But I believe we become enamored because in our human DNA we were made to find our life by getting caught up in the story of another. Not just any story, but God created us to get lost in his story.

The Bible is his story. It's a storybook, not a textbook. From Genesis to Revelation it's a story about creation's King and his grand design for the world he created. The stage is set in Genesis 1:1 by immediately proclaiming who the main character of the story is: "In the beginning GOD . . ." Notice it does not say, "In the beginning man." And again in John: "In the beginning was the Word . . ." The Word who is Creator of all things, heir of all things, upholder of all things, and the One through whom God speaks to us is Jesus!

We get the story wrong when we put ourselves center stage. When we come to the Bible focused on us and not him, God becomes our "stage hand" to give us what we want, when we want it, in the way we want it. When that happens we miss rightly understanding who he is, and we never get caught up in his story.

This devotional book is designed to challenge you to look for this King and what the Bible tells you about him, instead of reading Scripture primarily for how it applies directly to you. This eternal King who breathed life into creation is the same King who gives life and meaning to all things. This means no matter your age, where you live, who your family is, or what your past includes, God wants

you to experience the freedom of being secure in his great love—the love revealed for you in the story of his Son. Allow him to occupy his rightful place on the throne of your heart.

DAY THREE ---

Straight to My Heart

Before answering the questions, reread the Scripture, being mindful of insights from the first two days.

∴ What do you see right from the start about who God is?

∴ What does it mean to get caught up in the story of the Bible?

∴ Why do you think when we study the Bible we tend to miss Jesus in the story?

DAY FOUR

Word and Deed

Reread the Scripture one more time and then take your time answering the questions below.

∴ What is the danger in not seeing the entire story of the Bible as Jesus's unfolding story?

∴ If God occupied his rightful place as the most important person in your life and the center of your world, how would that change today? Next week? This year?

∴ What opportunities do you have right now to share God's story (both in what you say and do) with others?

DAY FIVE

Journaling and Prayer

- ∴ What struck you from this week's lesson? How have you seen the Bible differently?

Spend time writing your thoughts.

Prayer

Lord, help me get caught up in your story. Help me to see that it's all about you not me, so that by seeing you I might come to understand and know you better.

Week 2

Creation's King

DAY ONE

Straight from the Word

Read the Scripture and follow the instructions below.

:: Genesis 1:3–31

³ And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. ⁴ And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. . . . ⁶ And God said, “Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters. . . .” ⁹ And God said, “Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.” And it was so. . . . ¹¹ And God said, “Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees . . . each according to its kind, on the earth. . . .”

¹⁴ And God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night. And let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years. . . .” ¹⁶ And God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. . . . ²⁰ And God said, “Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the heavens. . . .” ²⁴ And God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures . . . livestock and creeping things and beasts of the earth. . . .” And it was so. . . .

²⁶ Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” ²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. ²⁸ And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” ²⁹ And God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. . . .” ³¹ And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

∴ Circle the main action verbs.

∴ Who is doing the action?

∴ Summarize the main idea.

∴ Write down any thoughts or questions.

DAY TWO

The Word Applied

In the beginning, God is revealed as master architect and builder with all of creation his royal construction site.¹ As he gives shape, form, and light to the empty darkness, the foundation is set for a home to his people. Then in giving order and hierarchy to the realms of the sky, sea, and land, his pattern of design is imprinted on man who is called to rule as he does.

Stop and think about this: the King of the universe gave us (humans) authority over all he had made—crowned with value and worth, purpose and privilege to rule over all creation. How special must we be in his sight to be viewed as princes and princesses by the supreme King!

God made people to be over all things, yet still under his ultimate authority and sovereign purposes. This is hard for us to grasp because we desire independence and control. We think freedom comes in not being under the authority of anyone else. For example, you may want out from under your parents' rules, for teachers' assignments not to dictate your days, or for a boss not to demand you work an evening that interferes with social plans.

This is not how it was in the garden. Adam and Eve relished their special bond with God, completely satisfied by being in submission to him. They understood that dependence on God was what it meant to be human. But often we think just the opposite. We feel as if dependence restrains us, so we try to live as if we don't need God or others.

If only we could grasp that when God declared "It is good," it was supremely good. There was nothing lacking and nothing Adam

and Eve wished was different. They felt perfectly loved, cared for, and free. Free to perform and live as God designed, with no wants or unmet desires. Imagine living that way—where everything is good and operates as it was designed and where men and women perfectly reflect God’s image as holy and perfect.

DAY THREE

Straight to My Heart

Before answering the questions, reread the Scripture, being mindful of insights from the first two days.

∴ List all you learn about who God is through the creation.

∴ Why was God’s authority over Adam and Eve a good thing?

∴ What does it look like to live dependent on God?

DAY FOUR

Back to the Word

Reread the Scripture one more time and then take your time answering the questions below.

∴ What areas in your life do you seek to control, trying to be your own authority and not living under God's rule?

∴ List some reasons that you would like to control your own life instead of being under God's control.

∴ How might today be different if by God's grace you accepted his authority over your time, your relationships, your money?

DAY FIVE

Journaling and Prayer

- :: Take yourself back to the garden when all was good. How would your relationships with your family and friends look different than they do now?

Spend time writing your thoughts.

Prayer

*Lord, you are Creator King of the world and love me as your child.
Help me to see your authority over all things as your love for me.*