



My Life, Unscripted

By Tricia Goyer

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Chapter 1

Lights, Camera . . . Action!

(a note about this book)

My Life, Unscripted may look a little different from other books you've seen. For one, there are actual scripts within the book. Some of them are ones I've made up. Others are true scenes from my life that I've written out in script form. I've tried to make these scripts as real-to-life as possible. I've designed these to look like they would if they were in the hands of a director.

In writing these scripts, I've used the same terminology as a scriptwriter. Here are a few terms you might come across:

TERMS

Establishing: (Establishing shot) An image or shot that indicates the location of the scene and/or story.

Ext.: (Exterior) Used in the scene heading, this indicates that the scene is taking place outdoors.

Fade In: (Fade from black) When an image slowly appears from black. This is typically used at the beginning of a film. Sometimes it is used between scenes to show time passing between points in the story.

Fade Out: (Fade to black) When an image slowly disappears into black. This is typically used at the end of a scene.

Int.: (Interior) Used in the scene heading, this indicates that the scene is taking place indoors.

CAPS: You will also note that certain words are in all CAPS. This is not a mistake!

In the beginning of each section, each NEW PERSON OR GROUP OF PEOPLE will be in ALL CAPS. This is a cue for the casting director. It tells him the number of people he will need to cast. Also, each SOUND is in ALL CAPS. This helps the soundman to know which sounds will be needed for the scene.

Pretty interesting stuff, isn't it?

And for my own personal touch, you'll see that the Scriptures are in the same font as the scripts . . . because here in the real world, these Scriptures should be the script for our lives.

1.

Not TV Land

(the real deal)

If you were to come across the script for a new (and just a bit cheesy) teen movie, the script might be written something like this:

FADE IN:

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL GAME—NIGHT— ESTABLISHING

Stadium stands filled with CHEERING FANS.

SCHOOL BAND plays SCHOOL SONG as FOOTBALL PLAYERS run onto field.

INT. CAR IN PARKING LOT—NIGHT

Soda cans and fast-food wrappers littering the floor are KICKED aside by trendy shoes belonging to MEGAN JOHNSON, 16. Light from the stadium filters through the back window over the muscled, tan body of CHRIS COOPER. He brushes Megan's hair from her cheek and turns Megan's face toward him.

CHRIS

You don't have to be shy, Meg. We've been talking about this all week.

MEGAN (wryly)

Talked about the football game, yes. I thought we were actually going to watch the game.

CHRIS (chuckling)

And why would I do that when I have the most beautiful girl in school right here? Besides, I

don't even like sports.

Megan OPENS DOOR and climbs from car.

MEGAN

Chris, I came to watch the game, not fend off your plays.

Megan slips her purse over her shoulder and steps back from the car. She SLAMS the door shut.

Chris LOWERS THE AUTOMATIC WINDOW.

CHRIS (stuttering)

But I thought . . .

MEGAN

I know exactly what you thought. Sorry, Chris, no touchdown tonight.

Chris STARTS THE ENGINE.

CHRIS

Yeah, well, you're not the only girl in this school. . . .

Megan watches Chris drive away.

MEGAN

I know. But I am the only one who has to live with the consequences. . . .

FADE OUT

A TYPICAL MOVIE?

Now that would make a typical movie, right? We'd watch as Meg goes to the football game shaken, but proud to have dumped the creep. If it were a great movie, Meg would meet a cute guy sitting in the bleachers. Of course, then there would be some conflict that keeps them apart. Maybe he's rich, and she's poor. Maybe he's a rich prince from Denmark!

Oh wait, that's been done. Maybe his parents have big plans for him, which don't include her. Maybe hers are shipping Meg to boarding school.

But no matter the conflict, in the end they confess their love. And though the movie only ends

with a kiss, we know their happiness lasts forever.

Ahhh . . .

Unfortunately, the script of my life went a little more like this:

FADE IN:

EXT. FAMILY SEDAN DRIVING DOWN ROAD IN SMALL TOWN—AFTERNOON—
ESTABLISHING

INT. CAR CARRIES MOM AND DAUGHTER—AFTERNOON

Tears run down MOM'S face. Her jaw is clenched tight. In the passenger seat, TRISH VALLEY, 17, slumps lower into the seat. She wipes away her own tears and wraps her arms around her waist almost instinctively. Her eyes widen as a car passes. Driving the beat-up Ford is a teen boy. A PRETTY GIRL rides with CHASE, 16, curled to his side. Trish sits straight and points to the car.

TRISH

There he is. Follow him.

MOM (surprised)

Are you sure? Do you want me to turn around?

TRISH (hurriedly)

Yes. Turn around.

The sedan turns and follows the Ford to the McDonald's parking lot. Trish jumps from her car, SLAMS the door, and stalks to the Ford. Her eyes refuse to meet those of the girl in the passenger's seat. She focuses her eyes on the boy.

TRISH (angrily)

We need to talk.

CHASE (annoyed)

Now?

TRISH (with quivering voice)

Yes, now.

Trish stalks toward the large trash can at the corner of the parking lot. Chase follows. She pauses and turns to him. His gaze is ice cold. Trish's hands are shaking as she crosses her arms over her chest and takes a deep breath.

TRISH

I'm pregnant.

CHASE

I don't believe you.

TRISH

It doesn't matter what you believe or don't believe. I am pregnant.

CHASE

So what are you going to do?

TRISH

I'm going to, uh, have a baby.

CHASE

What about like last time?

TRISH (hurt)

An abortion?

Trish lowers her gaze, then shakes her head.

TRISH

I'm not doing that again. I'm having this baby.

CHASE

I doubt it's even mine.

TRISH (hurt)

Whatever. I don't need you.

Trish stalks away, then she glances back over her shoulder. She watches Chase saunter to his car and to the other girl.

FADE OUT

MY SCRIPT

A little different script, don't you think? Of course, the first script is something I imagined. The second is a scene I've lived through.

Writing the scene I starred in (even a number of years after the fact) causes a surge of emotions. Anger at my former boyfriend—yes, even after all these years. Anger at myself for being sooooo stupid to get myself into that situation. (That situation and many others. As you'll read within the pages of this book, more than one scene from my life played out like a bad teen movie.)

Writing that scene also brought relief that I'm no longer that person, along with hints of joy that God has done so much with my life.

But more than anything, as I look back at my dramafilled teen years, I wonder . . . What was I thinking?

The truth? I wasn't. I lived from day to day on every wave of emotion I experienced. On some days excitement and passion partnered up, pattering wildly within my heart. Other

days, depression and anxiety were my silent friends. I lived each day as it came, with no plan for my future, for my relationships, or for my heart. I lived my life completely unscripted . . . and, well, you saw how well that went for me.

How about you? What type of script are you writing for your life?

When I say "script" I'm not talking about career goals or college plans. I'm not talking about current class schedules or finding the unique purpose for your future. While all of those are important, there are other parts of our life we need to script, too, such as:

- Dealing with peer pressure from both guys and friends.
- The search for popularity. How to find it. Or live without. Or be happy in between.
- Relationships with parents. No matter how out of touch with reality they seem to be.
- And living for God without turning your back on the world.

Scripting your life comes down to thinking through struggles—yours as well as the struggles of others—and considering the best approach. While there are dozens of teen books and magazines out there dealing with these relationship type topics, I'm going to lay it all out there by (1) sharing my past experiences (which would be easier and more comfortable to hide), (2) including input from teens just like you, and (3) showing God's POV (point of view), through God's Word—the Bible. We'll dig deep to uncover answers concerning our lives and our place in the world.

Why use the Bible? According to a recent survey, “Almost two-thirds of teens (62 percent) believe that the Bible is totally accurate in all of its teachings.”¹ If you're part of

this majority, then you'll already appreciate how God's Word can help you in everyday life. If you aren't sure how you feel about the Bible, feel free to stick around and

keep an open mind. Humor me if you will.

Scene Change

Personally, God's Word and God's people turned my life around. You see, the Trish Valley script you read earlier wasn't just partly true—it was exactly as I remember it.

After that awful scene, my boyfriend dumped me for good, and I dropped out of my senior year of high school. (It was too hard going to school—seeing him with someone else, and dealing with my own issues/mistakes/emotions too.) I decided to have my baby, especially since I was dealing with the heartache and regret of a previous abortion. And as my stomach grew, I became more and more depressed.

Unlike some mistakes, an unplanned pregnancy is not one you can hide very easily. Each day I walked around with the evidence sticking out before me like a basketball under my shirt. During that painful time, I decided to give God another chance. I'd grown up in church, but during my teen years, decided I wanted to do my own thing. And when “my own thing” left me sad and alone, my grandma's Bible study group invited me to join them. These sweet old ladies also welcomed me to church and threw me a baby shower (while my teen friends dropped out of the picture). These women showed me what the love of God is all about.

And it was during one of my depressing days, when I was six months pregnant and feeling abandoned by both my boyfriend and friends, I gave my heart to the Lord. I told Him, “God, I've completely screwed up my life this time. If You can do better, please do so.” It wasn't a fancy prayer, but it worked.

Now you might be scratching your head and wondering what type of book this is. Don't worry. It's not a book about teen pregnancy, and I'm not going to spend the next twenty chapters sharing my story. Instead, it's a book designed to help you think through some of life's hardest challenges:

Well, first of all, my life is not nearly as exciting as a TV sitcom's stars.' Second of all, my life is real. It isn't staged, and I have to deal with things without a script telling me what to do. When problems arise, I must deal with them, and unfortunately, they aren't always solved within a thirty-minute time frame.

—Melanie, Texas, age 17

Sometimes I think through situations. Sometimes I don't. I mean, life isn't going to always turn out the way you think it's going to . . . but then again, if you don't think out some things it can be a catastrophe.

—Leslie, Montana, age 14

As you've witnessed, I'm not someone who comes to you with a testimony of perfection. I hope you make different choices than I did. But maybe reading through some of my life "scripts" can help you choose better ones for yourself. And help you work with whatever scenes you've already lived out and now regret.

You see, we all mess up one time or another. Yet I have good news. If God proved to have big plans for a former pregnant, teen dropout, you can be certain He has good plans for you too!

Your life may not be anything like what you see on television or at the movies. And I hope you wouldn't want it to be. TV Land is not reality, and every situation that comes your way isn't over in thirty minutes with a happy conclusion.

Real life is different, but it's also better. Especially when we look to God to help us with life as we know it. Ready to get started?

Lights, camera . . . reality!

Although we all have many problems every day, be it Christianity, boys, school, etc., the people on TV shows don't usually face real-life situations and almost always seem to choose the option more likely to get them into trouble instead of taking responsibility for themselves.

—Jayme, Montana, age 12

On TV everything works out great, perfect. Everything. My life often doesn't.

—Hannah, Ohio, age 13

If there are times from your past—whether from five years or five minutes ago—that you regret, understand Jesus is willing to forgive you now. Romans 3:23 says, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

No one has a perfect storyboard! In the back of the book you'll find "Giving Your Life to Jesus." If you haven't already done this, check it out. If you have, then you understand how accepting the forgiveness of God is the key event in your storyboard.

The word forgiveness actually means "to send away." Give Jesus your regrets, and He'll cast them away, like someone throwing out a filthy, stinky, old pair of sweaty socks. In return, Jesus offers His purity and peace, wrapping His righteousness around you like a pure white robe. Your memories won't disappear overnight, but in God's eyes it will be as if those events never happened.

It's a good feeling. I know. I remember what it was like. At age seventeen, when I asked Jesus to cast away my sin, I was still pregnant, in need of friends, and had to face many consequences of my actions, but a new emotion overwhelmed me. Hope. It was the wonderful feeling of a real God touching down on my reality.

It wasn't TV Land. It was better.

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