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Bad Connection (The Secret Life of Samantha McGregor, Book 1)



Synopsis

Meet Samantha McGregor She seems like your average teen, but Samantha is unusually gifted. God gives her visions and dreams that offer unconventional glimpses into other people's lives and problems. It's a powerful gift with a lot of responsibility | Bad Connection: Book One Kayla Henderson lives on the edge. She likes to break the rules, considers partying an extracurricular activity, and can't stand her parents. So, most people aren't surprised when she goes missing. Like everyone else, Samantha McGregor assumes Kayla has run away. But then she has a vision where Kayla is tied up with duct tape over her mouth. Freaked by the image, Samantha wonders, Is Kayla alive or dead? Was the vision real or just a silly dream? Most important, can Kayla be found before it's too late? Reader's Guide Included! Story Behind the Book

The secular world has become very interested in "supernatural" gifts. Take, for example, shows like *Joan of Arcadia*, *The Medium*, *Monk*, and *Dead Zone*. Yet it's God who gives every good and perfect gift. My guess is that we humans barely tap into the vast variety of gifts that He has to offer. Not only that, but our fast-paced, high-tech culture rarely relies on those good "old-fashioned" character traits like insight, intuition, wisdom, and foresight. My hope is that this series will provide a fun way for teens to explore deeper levels of spirituality and creativity while inspiring them to a greater love for God.

• " Melody Carlson

Book Information

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Fiction > Religious Fiction > Christian

Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 8 and up

Customer Reviews

It's hard to find the perfect balance in teen fiction, where there is the right amount of realism, a strong dose of God that isn't cheesy or over the top, and suspense / action to keep things going. Melody Carlson is nobody new to the world of teen books, having already put out three other wildly successful series (TrueColors, Notes From A Spinning Planet, and Diary of a Teenage Girl), and with Bad Connection, book one in The Secret Life of Samantha McGregor series, Carlson does not disappoint. In Bad Connection, we find Samantha McGregor, a high school girl whose father is dead, mother wants nothing to do with Christianity, and a brother who is constantly in and out of trouble with the law. Samantha is the only one in her family holding on to God, and that's when she receives a vision. A girl from school, Kayla, disappeared a week ago, and now Samantha thinks she's seeing clues from God about her whereabouts. Samantha has to work with her dad's old partner, Ebony Hamilton, to unravel the clues and find Kayla before it's too late. The first concern that anyone might have in reading this story is the use of the spiritual gift of receiving visions from God. I was a little nervous going in to the story, but found myself pleasantly surprised with the care and Biblical use of the gift that Carlson portrays here. She even includes an article from John Piper's Desiring God talking about visions, how it was used in the Bible, and to be careful about just trusting a dream or feelings, but to turn to the Bible to find guidance from God. Parents who are extremely concerned may want to read the book for themselves first to see what they might think. As this is a series for teens, there are some rather dark moments in the story.

Samantha McGregor is a teenage (sixteen, soon to be seventeen) Christian who has dreams and visions given to her by God. Her father understood her gift and tried to help her understand it, but now he's gone; the parent who took her gift seriously died when she was twelve. Her mother isn't comfortable with this gift from God. In fact, she's not sure Samantha's ability to see visions is something God has anything to do with. Is Samantha weird or crazy or simply a vessel God is using? There was quite a bit I liked about Samantha: She wasn't ashamed to carry her Bible to school and she even pulled it out of her backpack, opened it and read from it not caring what anyone thought. She did not hesitate to go to God in prayer when she needed help or someone else needed help or she had questions. She had no problem praying in front of peers who weren't Christians. Even though she wasn't sure she wanted this gift that she wasn't always sure how to use, she cared more about what her heavenly Father wanted. And finding a boyfriend wasn't her main focus. It was nice to see teen characters praying with and for each other and the author did a good job showing the life of a young Christian learning how to develop her spiritual gift and how to

trust God whenever she began to have doubts. There was something that disappointed me. Like other Christian novels I have read, this one contradicts God's Word at one point: On page 36 is the sentence - Kayla actually used to be a Christian. There is no "used to be" in Christianity... And do not bring sorrow to God's Holy Spirit by the way you live. Remember, He has identified you as His own, guaranteeing that you will be saved on the day of redemption (Ephesians 4:30 New Living Translation). Once saved, always saved.

Storyline - Since she was young, Samantha has had a gift. A gift for seeing things in dreams and visions. A gift she never really understood but her father seemed to. He also told her it was from God. Its been hard dealing with the gift since he died and with her mom not understanding it but when a class mate runs away and God starts giving Samantha hints as to what is happening to her, she has to make a decision on what to do with them. Are all the dreams from God? Should she listen to them? Or are they all messed up when she starts having dreams about this other girl? What should she do? Positive - The main character really relies on God and always prays and asks for His help when she is unsure of what to do. She has friends who support and help her. She also makes clear what her gift is and isn't when people talk about it. Unlike some of the people she knows, Sam is not willing to go on a date with just anyone and sets a good example on how to date. Negative - Nothing really negative except some girls are suggested that they have done things with boys that should be saved for marriage but it is made clear that it was wrong even though the girls don't believe that. The brother of the main character is also a druggie but it is shown what kind of mess one gets into with that sort of stuff. It has some grown up situations and hints that just makes this book more appropriate for a 'teen' age group. Writing - The story was a little slow and it using words that make it in the present tense, like it is happening right at this moment, was a little irritating for me. It had a good storyline but the way it was put together and some of the word choices was not very smooth. Also, the characters continually using the same words like 'weird' got a little old.

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