

# First WORDS

*Can our first reaction to an unplanned pregnancy save a child's life?*



Our reactions to the news of new life may be, in some instances, detrimental to the fate of the preborn child who has been conceived.

Could it be that we dehumanize the very children whom we fight to save every day? We use words like *illegitimate* to discriminate against children born to single mothers. We label preborn children *rape babies*, *crack babies*, *test-tube babies* and *products of incest*. We hold innocent children accountable for the way they were conceived. A baby should be labeled just that—a baby.

## FIGHTING PROMISCUITY

We are fighting teen pregnancy when we should be fighting teen promiscuity. Promiscuity is a sin. Pregnancy outside of marriage is the result of sinful behavior, but pregnancy itself is not a sin, nor is it a punishment. Pregnancy is a gift from God. No matter how a child is conceived we should welcome that child with open arms and open hearts. And we should welcome his or her mother too. We need to love these young women and treat them with compassion.

*... appropriate and effective programs of support for new life must be implemented, with special closeness to mothers who, even without the help of the father, are not afraid to bring their child into the world and raise it.*

*The Gospel of Life, section 87*

When we find out that a young girl is pregnant and unmarried, are we reacting the right way? How should we react? And does our reaction even matter?

In order to understand how to react, we must understand the reasons that young girls become sexually active. For many, the key reasons are universal. They have nothing to do with race, social status, or home lives. They have everything to do with low self-esteem and the desire for a love that seems unattainable without giving their bodies in return. These girls are more afraid of not being loved than they are of becoming pregnant, or contracting AIDS or any other sexually transmitted disease.

Spiritually speaking, there are probably fewer similarities, but I'm going to share with you the state that I was in. I knew God. I loved God. But God was not first in my life—I was. I was already steeped in sin before I decided to sleep with my child's father. I had

driven a wedge between God and myself by drinking excessively, partying, and surrounding myself with a group of people who saw things exactly as I did. It was like the blind trying to lead the blind, and none of

us had a clue. And I had no time for those who could see because I would never be like them. I was not good enough. So the straight and narrow path seemed to me completely unattainable. I wasn't worthy of even attempting to walk that path.

When ministering to young girls who are sexually active, you are dealing with low self images, massive confusion, a false sense of happiness in a destructive lifestyle, and chips on their shoulders that you may need a sledge hammer to remove.

When a young girl comes to you and announces that she is pregnant, you must keep the above information in mind as you choose your reaction. Also, keep in mind that every child is planned by God, including the one who is conceived out of wedlock. We do not know the reasons that God allows for so many children to be conceived by single mothers. But we do know that these children are loved by God just as much as you and I are.

## PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

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In my case, I know that my child was sent to save me. From the moment that I learned of her presence in my womb, I knew that she would change my life forever. I knew that she was a sign from God that the love I had longed for was attainable. I believe that God knew that my child might be the only way to lead me back to Him. How gracious God is. Imagine, after all the pain that I had caused Him by running from Him and ignoring His Word, He still loved me enough to entrust me with His most precious gift—LIFE. I am still learning every day, as I watch her grow, about God's abundant love for me and His forgiveness of the lifestyle that I used to lead.

## FEELINGS OF JOY

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When a young girl learns that she is pregnant she may feel many things—scared, confused, nervous, unsure, unstable, guilty, and angry. However the first thing she feels is joy. Yes, I said joy. It is a natural, God-given instinct for a mother to rejoice at the news of new life. From the first moment I learned that I was pregnant I felt a joy that is unexplainable. But it was a secret joy. I

could not even figure out why I was so happy. Here I was in an extremely unstable relationship. I was pregnant, unmarried, my parents were probably going to kill me, and I was sure to be treated as an outcast by many of my "friends." These things devastated me, but I still had an inner joy. I do not think that this secret joy is an uncommon one in unwed mothers, but the reactions that follow are often detrimental to the decision about whether or not to let this life, this secret joy, grow. For once that joy, secret as it may be, is destroyed, the child has little chance of survival.

*Behold,  
children  
are a gift  
from the Lord;  
The fruit of  
the womb is  
a reward.*

*Psalm 127:3*

Our reactions, then, are key. There are already going to be many people in a young girl's life who will react negatively to her news. As defenders of life, then, it is our duty to react in a positive way. I cannot write a script. I can only tell you this: Her lifestyle is not an issue right now. Her baby is the issue and you may be the only positive voice she hears. Do not let this chance to affirm and possibly save life be clouded by your fears. Say a prayer to God that this child living inside of her may be used as an instrument to bring her closer to Him. The time may come when you need to address her lifestyle, but now is not that time. Meet her where she is, not where you think she should be. That is compassion.



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