

An Excerpt from **WHY WAIT?**
by Josh McDowell and Dick Day
Author Anonymous

Over the last 20 years, the percentage of illegitimate births to girls 19 and under has increased from 15% to 51%. In 1987, more than 1,100,000 teenage girls became pregnant, and 60% of these girls became pregnant again in the next two years. Do these statistics alarm you? No wonder the problem of teen pregnancy is considered epidemic and has been called by some "the most important issue of the remaining years of the 20th century."

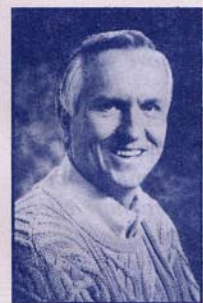
describe here. God certainly knew what was best when He commanded against premarital sex. Our entire ordeal causes us to praise God for His specific moral commands of love. They are commands designed for the protection and provision of young people.

But, perhaps even more than that, we praise God for being the gracious forgiver and loving friend who lifts the fallen and restores a broken life. He was there through every moment of every day, drawing my daughter to His soothing breast. In the lonely night hours of pain and regret, He was there; during the time of indecision and confusion, He was there; and He'll be there for you, too, if you find yourself in a similar situation. His "grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." (2 Cor. 12:9)

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For local help or information:



Josh McDowell, author of over 30 books, is a well-known speaker and traveling representative for Campus Crusade For Christ. His latest book on the teen sexuality crisis, **The Myths Of Sex Education**, is scheduled for release in Fall 1990.

Dick Day, a licensed Marriage, Family, and Child Counselor, is director of **The Julian Center** and an internationally known lecturer.

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It seemed only yesterday that I was holding little Amy on my lap reading her bedtime stories. Now, with college classes and extracurricular activities, she had little time for Dad. But this morning was different. She wanted to talk and I figured it must be about school, her job, or needing a loan.

She toyed with her food as my wife and I gave her time to gather her thoughts. Finally, she took a deep breath and said two words I thought I would never hear my unmarried teenage daughter say: "I'm pregnant."

It was as though an instant in time stood still. I was numb. Kay, my wife, picked up the conversation. "Are you sure?" Other such questions were asked, but I couldn't get my thoughts together to discuss it further. I've always had a subconscious fear that my children might engage in premarital sex. My fear had become a reality. What was I to say? How should I respond and counsel my daughter?

Perhaps every parent struggles with that fear. Oh, there are those who court the idea that "My kids are above average. I've taught them better and they're not really involved." They resist the thought that it may happen to them. But, down deep, most parents are concerned that their children will become sexually active. It's tragic, but the fact is that your own son or daughter, your grandchild, your friend's child, or some of the kids at your church are sexually active. If one of them becomes pregnant, what will be your attitude? What will you say? What action will you take?

I would like to share here the help I received - from books, friends, and God's Word - which guided my wife and me through this difficult period of our lives. My hope is that it can help youth directors, pastors, anyone with a friend in this situation, and especially you parents who find yourselves struggling through the ordeal of an unmarried child's pregnancy.

A Sense Of Loss

Becoming pregnant is perhaps the most traumatic experience an unmarried girl will ever endure. If she is a Christian, she will probably feel she has lost everything she holds dear. She will be tempted to give in to such feelings as:

The Emotional Response

Such thoughts and emotions pouring down on her could cause some of these responses:

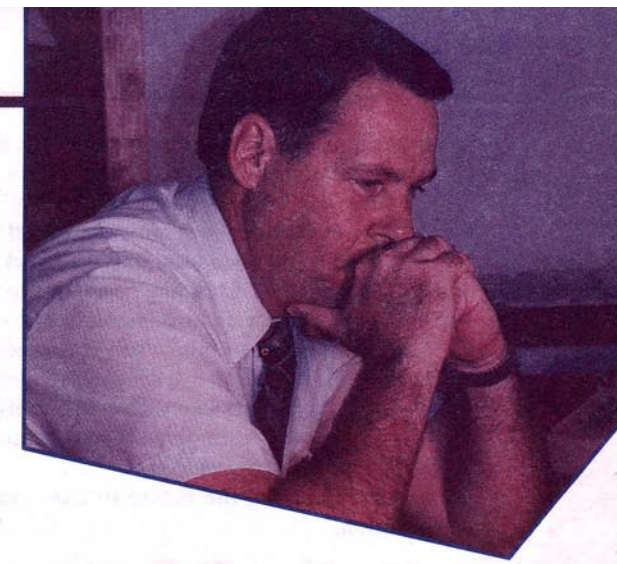
Grief. When a girl contemplates these losses, she will undoubtedly experience pain and suffering. She may grieve over losing control of the life she had planned out.

Depression. If she doesn't obtain relief from her grief and suffering, she will go into depression and if depression is allowed to take over, she'll face despair and feel there is no hope - no light at the end of the tunnel.

Shame. Except for the grace of God, feelings of shame will affect her attitude toward herself, her friends, her closest loved ones, and even the baby. Accepting feelings of shame is a devastating blow to her self-image and outlook on life. Shame can cloud every aspect of her life: work, school, caring for her child, working in the church, counseling and helping others, etc.

Two Important Principles

If there is any time a girl needs the love, support, and wise counsel of her parents, it is during an unplanned pregnancy. But because parents also are experiencing



tremendous emotional turmoil, they run the danger of reacting negatively rather than responding positively.

The next few days after learning of my daughter's pregnancy were some of the most emotional and confusing of my life. Rarely do I shed tears, but that week I wept bitterly every day. I found myself reacting negatively to the entire situation. If it hadn't been for dedicated counselors at a Crisis Pregnancy Center urging me to follow two very crucial principles, I would have probably driven my daughter to despair. Those principles are what I'd like to share with you. Simply stated they are:

- The power of forgiveness can untangle the emotions and clarify the thinking; and
- committing the future to God can provide a sense of direction.

My Need To Forgive

I sat in the counselor's office pouring out the hurt raging inside me. The counselor asked, "Why do you think you are hurting so?" "Well," I responded, "this whole ordeal is so painful. My little girl is hurting so much now and it's going to get a lot worse before it gets better. She'll suffer shame; may have to drop out of school; will bear a child she can't provide for; and may face other consequences I haven't even thought of."

The counselor nodded slowly. I went on, "Amy has all these tough decisions to make. She'll have to decide whether to marry the father of the child. Should she keep the baby or should the child be put up for adoption? Then there's her schooling. Should she go away to live with another family until the baby is born? There are so many variables within those questions that it boggles the mind, let alone the emotions. No matter what is done, everyone involved will feel the pain."

The wise counselor allowed me to wind down. After I finished, she leaned forward and said softly, "You say you have accepted Amy and aren't angry with her, but is the pain you feel all for your daughter?"

I wasn't sure what she was driving at. "What do you mean?" I questioned.

She continued, "I really encourage you to examine the reason for your personal hurt. Do you feel you have lost some of the things you wanted to share with your daughter?"

Yes, I had. Down deep I, too, suffered a loss. I wanted to give my lovely daughter as a virgin to a Christian young man. But now I had lost that possibility. I wanted to experience the joy of my daughter's first child, but I couldn't have that either. I wanted to be a part of my first grandchild's life, but it appeared I had lost that opportunity too. My tears weren't just for Amy — they were for me as well. I would also feel the shame and pain of her mistake.

Love Can Cover

I prayed for a spirit of forgiveness. Now more than ever, Amy needed my support, love, and acceptance. As I confessed my resentment and selfishness to God, He filled me with a supportive love for my daughter that I never thought possible. God's power of forgiveness took away the resentment. But there was more. My emotional confusion began to fade. The act of forgiving put the choices that would have to be made into perspective.



You see, the consequences of a few fleeting moments of uncontrolled passion seem endless. No matter which alternatives are considered — premature marriage, single parenting, or adoption — they are all painful and appear unacceptable. Confusion becomes the order of the day. Yet when I found the power to forgive, I gained not only a supernatural supportive love for Amy, but a clarity of heart and mind to understand the alternatives. As my emotions untangled, I sat down and wrote her a long letter. Here are some excerpts from that letter:

Dear Amy,

I know that during this past week you have suffered pain as never before; the burden that you bear is perhaps the heaviest you've ever carried. Yet through it all God assures us: "My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is perfected in weakness." (2 Cor. 12:9)

And one thing I've come to realize is that God has not declared that life is over because of an unplanned pregnancy. God has great plans for your future. You have not been disqualified from the race. In fact, He plans to draw you closer to Him and teach you to know Him better than you have ever known Him before. Once we realize that our main purpose in life is to know God and glorify Him, life comes into proper perspective. And I believe, Amy, the more you and I know Him and see life from His perspective, the more life and all its struggles and problems begin to be resolved.

God has an answer for this situation. He has a solution. One without pain and suffering? Probably not. Yet, He has plenty of grace, that when appropriated to our lives, will be for our good and His glory. But, I've learned I can't appropriate His grace while responding to life in an un-Christlike manner. So, I strive to "stay always within the boundaries where God's love can reach and bless (me) you." (Jude 1:21 LB) Once we begin to respond according to God's Word, we are then able to move on and clearly understand the choices we have to make.

I know you are struggling, even more than Mom and I are, with a flood of emotions; it's difficult to think straight. I sense that this pregnancy represents the loss of everything you were holding dear. And while it may appear to be that way on the surface, you have not lost everything when you have God as your Savior and Friend. In fact, by properly responding to God and His Word, you will gain far more than you ever imagined.

Remember, Amy, you have sought God's forgiveness and that means your slate is clean — as far as God is concerned, you've committed no sin, ever! Mom and I, too, have forgiven you. We can walk down the street with our daughter as proud as we've ever been. What makes us proud, and God, too, is the fact

that you've acknowledged your error, sought God's forgiveness, and committed your life to Him.

But what about the rest of your life? You have many difficult decisions to make. You have your life and the life of your baby to consider. There are no "perfect" answers. One of the things that makes this so difficult is that there are so many alternatives, and none of them is pleasant. But as you align your responses to the instructions of God's Word, the clouds will clear and He will make His will known.

I can't tell you what to do. You have engaged in an adult act and you have an adult decision to make. However, I want to point you to the context in which to make your decision. When you consider your options, do so with one central purpose in mind: What will bring the most honor to God?

Right choices become clear as you:

1. Maintain right attitudes (align yourself with God's Word during trying times, love those who mistreat you, and accept your humbling position with grace);

2. Continue to consider only those options that would bring honor to God; and

3. Obtain wise counsel from mature Christians to confirm the leading you have.

If you decide to keep the baby, you can rest assured we will do all in our power to be the best grandparents possible. We will fill our responsibility in being a godly influence as best we can under God.

If you decide to make a placement plan for your baby, you can rest assured we will be there to support you, love you, weep with you, and heal together with you.

I love you dearly, Amy, more than you can know. You will always be my little girl. There are brighter and more beautiful days ahead for all of us. God will use this as a stepping stone in all our lives. We will learn much together. We can more effectively minister to others because of how we allow God to use this in our lives.

Through this we can all become even closer as a family than before. Mom and I felt honored and want to thank you for sharing this with us on the very day you found out. We thank you for the opportunity to be a part of the decisions that affect the life of our first grandchild. No matter what, this will always be a special child to both of us; we have lots of love to share with you and your first child — in whatever way God chooses to let us be a part.

The road may seem dark and lonely at times, but remember we're always here and want to help. And, more importantly, Christ is with you always, your dearest friend, your closest companion, the One who knows you most and loves you best. Mom and I pray for you daily. I love you, I love you, I love you.

Your Dad

Commit The Future To God

Amy had more than seven months to make the biggest decision of her life. She was confident that marrying Mark would further complicate matters. We agreed. But was she to raise her child as a single parent? Or were we to assume the responsibility of raising our first grandchild? Or did God have a Christian couple prepared to raise our daughter's baby? Weeks

turned into months and still no clear direction. We prayed daily that God would provide clear direction to Amy.

One afternoon while discussing the options with her, she became frustrated. "Dad," she said in tears, "I've got to know what's right to do. Why won't you tell me what I should do?"

My eyes blurred as I tried to explain, "Amy, you know that I love you. And I want what is best for you and the baby." My voice choked with emotion. "I could tell you what was right if I could only see some 20 years into the future, but I can't. Honey, I don't know exactly what to do either, but I do know how you can find out."

She sobbed quietly as I went on. "Commit your future into God's hands; He *does* know the future. Give *Him* your baby; relinquish that life within you into His care. Once you're so committed, ask *Him* what *He* wants to do with *His* little unborn child. Tell God you are gladly willing to raise your baby if He so desires, and you are equally willing for Him to hand your child to some other family to raise."

As weeks went by, God gave Amy the ability to relinquish her child and her own future into God's hands. Slowly pieces of the puzzle came together. One confirmation after another made it clear to her, and eventually to all of us, what she was to do. I hesitate to share her decision simply because I would not want it to be considered a determining factor for anyone else. Each family situation is unique and must be considered separately before God. However, I believe the principle is applicable to all: *Commit your future and the life of the baby to God and He will direct you.*

Seek God's Grace

As I look back over the year, I see that actually I offered very little advice to my daughter, but did give lots of love and support. And it was that love and support from both Kay and me that allowed what little counsel we did offer to be of help.

If you find yourself in a similar situation, I urge you to seek God's grace early along with the support of wise Biblical counselors. Transparently confess the pain and hurt you feel. Allow God to fill you with the power of His forgiveness and then commit the future of your daughter and her baby into His hands. I'm confident that God makes His will known to those who honestly and unselfishly seek His leadership.

The bitter consequences of an unplanned pregnancy in the life of an unmarried girl and her family is beyond my ability to

