

PREGNANCY OUTSIDE OF MARRIAGE



The words, 'You are expecting a baby!' are music to the ears of a married couple. It marks the start of an amazing journey of discovering the miracle of life. As joyous as this experience may be for a married couple, it can become a tumultuous time for an unmarried woman who receives the exact same news. An unmarried woman might feel completely overwhelmed by the choices she needs to make that will ultimately alter her own life, as well as that of her baby. This is often accompanied by shame, fear and a sense of failure.

There are a few contributing factors to the spike in pregnancies out of wedlock over the last few decades.

1. Education

Many school systems globally, have resorted to exposing children from as early as primary school to sex education. This education involves the sharing of knowledge regarding the sexual act, as well as sexual preferences outside the biblical boundaries. The Bible refers to heterosexuality as being acceptable in the sight of God (Romans 1:22-32)

2. HIV/AIDS epidemic

The HIV/AIDS campaigns have also contributed to its promotion of 'safe sex' and practically condoned promiscuity. The only 'safe sex' is when the act is saved for the sacred covenantal relationship of marriage.

Based on the two factors mentioned above, it is evident that children and young people are exposed to sex from a young age. The above-mentioned institutions do not refer to the biblical covenant relationship in which sex is allowed.

3. Dishonouring God's institution of holy matrimony

The responsibility rests on the Church to teach children and young people about sexual purity, the sacred relationship of marriage and regarding your body as God's temple.

The Bible is very clear that premarital sex is a sin. Ephesians 5:3 says the following: *"But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints..."* The Word of God encourages us to flee from sexual immorality (1 Corinthians 6:18). This portion of Scripture is preceded by the instruction to use our bodies for God's glory.

Cohabitation is an increasing phenomenon in our society. Although it has become socially acceptable, it contradicts the authority of God's Word on the topic of marriage. We live in a world where cohabitation is promoted on television and glamourised in movies. Parents have started to accept or tolerate it. The voice of the Church and church leaders has become silent as far as this

practice is concerned.

Response of Christians pregnant outside of marriage

The responsibility of the couple is to seek God's forgiveness for having sexual relations outside the bonds of matrimony. Any person who has been guilty of premarital sex can be forgiven by God. The epistle of 1 John 1:9 says the following, *'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.'*

Another encouraging verse on the forgiveness of God is found in Isaiah 1:18, *"Come now, let us reason together, Says the LORD, "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool."*

The responsibility of the body of Christ is to **restore** the couple with a **spirit of gentleness** as stated in Galatians 6:1 – *Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.* In the event where the child is born to a cohabitating couple, the couple should consider getting married.

Children are a heritage from the Lord

Premarital sex is a **sin**, **not the child** born out of premarital sex. Children are a blessing from the Lord according to the Word of God (Psalm 127:3-5), and every perfect gift comes from Him. *Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.* (James 1:17).

God forms **every** child. The Bible verses describing how life is formed applies to every child, whether conceived in or out of wedlock (Psalm 139: 13-17). Pregnancy out of wedlock is the result of either a premarital sexual relationship or rape. In both instances, it is important to make the best choice on **behalf of the baby** – the one who is completely helpless and innocent. In none of these situations we can consider abortion.

The journey ahead

Many lessons can be learnt from the life of Hagar in the Bible. She faced many obstacles as the mother who had to fend for her and her son, Ishmael – a boy born out of wedlock (Genesis 21). As in the case of Hagar, a pregnant mother is faced with many challenges. Amid these personal challenges you have the responsibility to make the best decisions for yourself and your baby.

1. Emotional healing

Hagar and her son were cast out (Genesis 21:10). You might feel like an outcast. Take care not to pause on thoughts of rejection, failure, depression and disappointment. These thoughts will lure you away from receiving and experiencing spiritual and mental well-being in the presence of God.

Use the following Scripture verses when you feel overwhelmed by your situation: *For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.* (Jeremiah 29:11-13).

But You, O LORD, are a shield for me, My glory and the One who lifts up my head. I cried to the LORD with my voice, And He heard me from His holy hill. (Psalm 3:3-4).

God is the Helper and the Deliverer of those who are fatherless. God will be a helper of the fatherless...God delivers the fatherless and causes the widow's heart to sing for joy (Psalm 10:14,18).

2. Providence

Hagar only had provision from the father of her child for a short while. She was sure that the two of them were going to die. In her distress, she called to God and He heard her (Genesis 21:14-19). God provides. He hears us when we call upon Him. He does not allow us to be tempted beyond what we can bear. *No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able to, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. (1 Corinthians 10:13).*

Many women have completed their studies in the instance where the baby was due during their time of secondary or tertiary studies. This is possible where she is in the favourable situation to receive support from her immediate family.

3. Legal matters – financial obligations, custody issues and/or adoption

Hagar's son grew up in the wilderness (Genesis 21:20). Every child needs to be nurtured and grow up with the knowledge that he/she is loved. Please familiarise yourself with legal issues concerning custody of the child according to the law of your country. If you do plan to give the baby up for adoption, seek the assistance of your family, spiritual leaders from your local congregation and a social worker.

4. Seek God's wisdom to guide you

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. (James 1:5)