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Unplanned Pregnancy: How to Love without Judgment

Maybe you're used to their stories. You know, the ones about what guy she did last night. We hear these stories from near-strangers at work and from the closest of friends.

What do you do if you disagree with that behavior? How do you respond with love and not just judgmental hypocrisy and condescension?

This is something I've been struggling with recently. Mostly, I keep my mouth shut. But sometimes, the doo doo hits the fan, and words are required.

What do you do when the result of all the pre-marital sexing and/or cohabitation is *gasp* a baby!? What do you say to your friend who is considering all the options.

The first three things that spring to my mind are:

1. The negative proscription: Abortion is wrong?
2. The positive suggestion: Consider adoption?
3. The theological explanation: the sexual act necessarily contains the biological reality of reproduction. To reject the child which is the natural product of your union is to reject your inherent nature.

Yet somehow, no matter how "correct" any of these are, I don't think it's going to buy anyone any credence or make your friend the least bit grateful that she opened up to you.

So what do you say? How, without condoning certain behavior, do you express support and love without judgment?

Here's an idea from Henri Nouwen. A Catholic priest and spiritual leader, Nouwen tells the story of the Desert Fathers (the hermit monks who lived alone in the desert in the early centuries of Christianity):

" 'Of Abba Ammonas, a disciple of Anthony, it is said that in his solitude he "advanced to

the point where his goodness was so great that he took no notice of wickedness." Thus, having become bishop, someone brought a young girl who was pregnant to him, saying, "See what this unhappy wretch has done; give her a penance." But he, having marked the young girl's womb with the sign of the cross, commanded that six pairs of fine linen sheets should be given her, saying, "It is for fear that, when she comes to give birth, she may die, she or the child, and having nothing for the burial." But her accusers resumed, "Why did you do that? Give her a punishment." But he said to them, "Look, brothers, she is near death; what am I to do?" Then he sent her away and no old man dared accuse anyone more.' " (Page 28 of *The Way of the Heart*).

The monk in the story does not condemn her right off the bat because of what she did, instead he cares for her. Caring for her well-being revealing itself in being concerned about a proper burial may seem odd to our modern ears, but he is really trying to make sure that the girl is being taken care of. This type of compassion is what we are called to. Most people already regret their actions by the time they are asking for help, what good does it do to rub it in their faces? We have to remember not to judge, lest we be judged.

While we can admonish the sinner, compassion and love for the sinner's soul is the goal of this. We must beg forgiveness for our own sins and out of that gift of mercy, forgive the sins of others. God is the judge, not us. It's not like we've never messed up.

So if your friend is pregnant and regretfully so, what should we do? Condemning abortion, extolling adoption or explaining why the act is wrong don't solve anything. The movie *Bella* actually has a pretty good lesson: what if we offer to raise the child, to become adoptive parents?

Now that's putting your money where your mouth is. In becoming the parent of a friend's child, hypocrisy is obliterated: it shows that you really think the child's life is worthwhile and that you don't think that a child is a life-ruining burden. It's so easy to say children are blessings; it's much harder to accept that "blessing" yourself when you weren't exactly planning on it.

Obviously, not everyone is in a position to take on care of child, but that's the type of radical, loving, non-judgmental response that lets compassion and truth shine through. The soccer player in *Bella* becomes a living example of forgiveness and love. He offers all he can to the child and her mother. His love reveals the healing love of Christ that releases us from sin.

Being an example in a radical way and offering to really share in what that person is going through, showing concern over judgment is the real way to reach people. How many people are going to say, "Why thank you, I do see that abortion is wrong. I will become a Christian now" when we just use words and lay down the law to indict others?

But love? Who could be repulsed by the self-giving love that Christ had for the Church (the community of believers)? And when we are able to show that love to others, that's what gets noticed. Deep love is going to reach more people than words ever can.

What do you think is the best response to someone faced with an unplanned pregnancy?
How do you witness to those dealing with suffering and sin in general?

Source:<http://www.revelife.com/730979429/unplanned-pregnancy-how-to-love-without-judgment/>