



Ramah's Voice

a ministry of Ramah International, Inc.

The End of Innocence: Helping Wounded Teenagers

By Sydna A. Massé

Abstinence education is a critical element of the pregnancy care movement today. The majesty of innocence is wonderful -- especially if we can prevent teens from becoming clients. Preventing sexually transmitted diseases, abortion, and drug abuse is a great ministry! Abstinence is a hard sell to the teens that have already lost their virginity and are struggling with past abortions, broken relationships, etc.

These are the deeply wounded and sometimes disturbed kids who are all around us. They are cheerleaders and prom queens as well as teens living on the streets. Many "cut" themselves to the point of bleeding just to jolt them back to reality and prove they are still alive. They could have experienced early sexual abuse at and have been rejected by their parents. Many believe street drugs and alcohol will keep them sane from their horrible memories and God is someone who wants to punish them.

Can we show them the unconditional love of God in spite of the fact that they might not be able to remain abstinent? Is it possible to continue to work with them after the seventh abortion? It could take a while to reach their hearts but it will be well worth your time.

Traumatized Teens of the Bible

The bible is full of traumatized teenagers who changed their worlds. Here are a few:

David — Before he became King, David was a Shepard boy who was left alone to tend the

sheep. Calling upon the Lord's strength, he was able to defeat the bear and lion that threatened his flock. Perhaps he had nightmares as he slept alone on the hillside and could have experienced post-traumatic stress in spite of God's victory. It's amazing that David didn't look to his family to protect him but to God.

Esther — Esther was not only an orphan, she was living in exile in a country that didn't recognize her God. Imagine the trauma and horror she could have endured the day the guards came to take her to the King's harem. In spite of the love of the King, I wonder if she even liked him! This young girl certainly knew trauma and was willing to risk her own life to save her people from certain death.

Joseph — While his father loved him, Joseph's brothers hated him. They sold him into slavery after a huge scene of violence. He landed in Egypt where he would be falsely accused of rape and spent many years in prison. God recognized his heart and would eventually reward him with a royal position and wealth that allowed him to save his entire family from a famine.

None of these biblical characters had the benefit of psychological counseling. Their strength came from the Lord and a few Godly mentors. God is rarely the answer given to adolescents struggling with the traumas of life today. Without God our injured youth can become poor parents themselves. With a little Godly love, their futures can change miraculously! More needs to be done to reach their souls with God's love and healing power.

continued on page 2

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continued from page 1

Tips to Working With Troubled Teens

Respect them as Equals — In II Timothy 4:12, this disciple talked directly to young people when he said, *“Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity.”* Especially in biblical times, there was little respect for the young. It’s important for all of us to remember not to disrespect today’s youth because they can have more Godly wisdom than we can imagine. **Respect means that we honor these individuals as important, essential, and equal.** When this is accomplished, we earn their esteem as well.

Don’t Expect Them to Be Adults — The young David had a faith that was untarnished by human doubt. How ridiculous for Saul to dress him in his adult armor in going to battle with Goliath! The result was an overweighed young man who preferred a slingshot to a sword. While teens want our respect, adult roles/expectations won’t fit their emotional hearts. Don’t try to push them into an established program unless you know they can survive there. *It could be that they just can’t commit to such programs or give emotional support to other group members.* Give them plenty of room for error and show unconditional love — especially when they fail your expectations.

They May be Unable to go Against Their Family – Many teenagers are abused. Incestuous situations are very real and abortion can be a forced option. They go back into homes each night where they have no control and are unable to make their own decisions. In these instances, it’s essential to believe them, help them cope and learn about God’s love. On another note, be aware of your legal responsibility to report their situation to local authorities.

Tell Them They Aren’t a “Bother” — Many times teens write to me and then apologize for bothering me. It takes several times for them to understand that I want to be bothered. It’s an honor to be able to speak to them. They have never had anyone take time to listen and/or care about their pain so your attention is unique. At first they are not trusting, believing you must have some hidden agenda. After a few communications, they will drop their reserve and be more open. Be patient! It may take 20 times before they realize that you really want to be their friend and begin to trust you.

Be Their Advocate — God gave me a new perspective with teens by allowing me to be part of my teenage stepdaughter’s pregnancy. Tyline begged me to go with her to appointments because, as she said, “they treat me nicer when you’re around.” People in stores would give her scornful glances because she was obviously a pregnant teen. Then one man approached her to say, “thank you for not having an abortion.” She said he made up for all the rest. Obtaining insurance information over the phone was difficult because she sounded young and would often be ignored or put off. Yet I could follow her call to the same organization and hang up with all the required information. It’s easy to see why teens turn only to their friends for support when adults let them down so often.

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Listen to Them — When Tylina was pushed into the operating room for a c-section, she panicked and cried, “I’m just a little girl, Sydna. Take me home!” Holding her hand and trying to calm her down was all I could do to help. When she tried to ask a question, the hospital staff ignored her. Angrily, I yelled, “Everyone, listen to her!” The whole operating room staff stopped and listened to her. When her question was answered she miraculously calmed down. **Just being able to hear their pleas for help and stop and listen is a great service to these future adults.** You might not be able to help ease their pain but you can pay attention and actively listen when they speak.

They Might Not Allow You to Love Them — While I wanted to love Tylina with a motherly kind of love, she simply couldn’t receive that from me. I wasn’t her mother and therefore didn’t enjoy the history required to be able to love her in that manner. So I settled with just being her friend. God told me not to try to change her but accept her as she was. He is the only author of change and it would be according to His timetable and not mine!

Hug Only With Permission — There were many bonding times between Tylina and I during her pregnancy. We would laugh together and even shed a few tears as she shared about her past pain. Yet she rarely allowed me to hug her. If the teen has been sexually abused, hugging can make them extremely uncomfortable and/or trigger painful memories. Always ask their permission before you try to embrace them. If they say, “no,” don’t take it personal. You have just gone a great way to earn their trust by not trying to force your affections upon them.

Finding God’s Grace

Our main goal should be to help lead these teens to the Lord. There is no better way to doing this than through scripture. My favorite comes from Titus 2:3-6 (NIV):

“Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God...”

Helping them to begin to reach out to the Lord by reading the Bible is an important first step. An easy Bible reading plan is to suggest that they read one chapter in John each day. If possible, suggest one chapter in Psalm and Proverbs also. If you can get them to commit to this for thirty days, you will see the Lord becoming a real presence in their hearts. This fact alone will hold the key to their future peace!

How to Show Your Love to A Teen

Here are some easy ways that you can help show your love for the teens that the Lord brings into your life:

- Write them cards on their birthdays and say that you are praying for them
- Send them flowers with a card that reads, “Jesus loves you and so do I!”
- Ask them their opinion about an issue without responding to the contrary
- When they don’t want to share about their pain, ask them to tell you about the best time in their lives
- Whenever possible, honor them by asking for their opinion and input when you are making an important decision
- Thank them for being your friend
- Sending them cards on holidays
- Asking them to have lunch with you on a regular basis
- Make them laugh often
- Ask them about their musical interests and listen to their music with them
- Call them during the week or drop them an e-mail just to “chat”

In other words, treat them like you would any other friend. Regardless of their condition, remember Matthew 25: 40b (NJKV), *“inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.”* No matter what the situation may be, God can use you to turn a troubled teen into a future David, Esther or Joseph!





Riding the Storm Out!

Proverbs 10:25 (NIV) shares, *“When the storm has swept by, the wicked are gone, but the righteous stand firm forever. Jesus was clear that our lives on Earth wouldn’t be easy and we should expect storms. In John 15:33 (NIV), he said, “These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world”*

A particularly stormy period for our family occurred in July of 1995. It began as I dashed out to a friend’s car during a thunderstorm. Bystanders witnessed a lightening bolt that hit over my head. It came within a foot of my head and then ricocheted away as if it hit a wall surrounding my body. I was jolted off my feet and fell into the car unhurt. As I calmed down, I asked the Lord, “What was that about?” I was reminded of Psalms 46:10, *“Be still and know that I am God.”* This gale period was just beginning.

The next day my husband’s stepfather passed away and we had to travel to attend a very emotional funeral. The salvation message was even presented! Despite the emotions of losing Jack, everything went smoothly and we made the 18-hour trip without incident. I thought the storm had passed but we were only in the eye of the hurricane.

By that weekend my two-year old son became gravely ill. On Tuesday morning he was in the hospital battling a strong virus. Our doctor said this infection normally meant a 14-day hospital stay. Thankfully God healing touch made him well in just two days. We had persevered and came out with an increased faith in God’s provision and care.

God is close to our hearts during stormy periods. Nahum 1:3a (NIV) relays, *“His way is in the whirlwind and the storm.”* Every squall is part of His plan. When the storm clouds gather around you, remember to be still and know God is especially near.

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Ramah’s Resource Corner:

Ramah now offers seven booklets designed to provide with additional detail on some of the topics covered in Ramah’s Voice. These are as follows:

- Sharing the Secret of Abortion
- Help Wanted: Non-PAS for Post-Abortion Ministry
- The End of the Innocence: Ministering to Teens
- Ministry Solitaire—Handling the “Aloneness” of Ministry Life
- The Cross of Leadership—Survival Tips!
- When They Abort Anyway
- The Tie that Binds—Shattering Sexual Soul Ties

Suggested donation: \$5 each or \$30 for the set. An order card is enclosed for your use or call Ramah at 866-807-2624 (1-866-80-RAMAH).

From the Word of God:

“Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. Don’t have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels. And the Lord’s servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful.”

II Timothy 2:22-24