

Is It Possible...to Transform the Lives and Legacies of Single Teen Moms?

YES, it is...and Here's How!

by Gwen Diaz

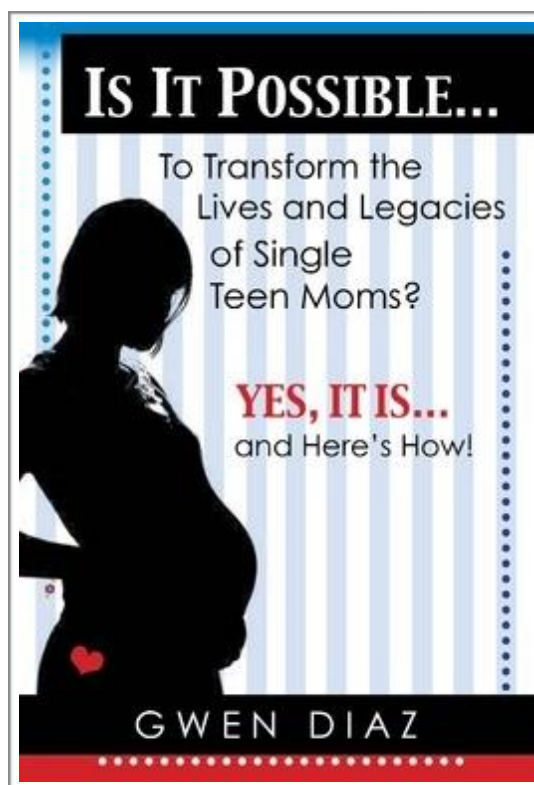
More than two thousand teenage girls in the US will discover they are pregnant today! Of these pregnancies, 14% will end in miscarriage; almost one third will be terminated by abortion; only 1% will result in adoption.

Most often, a pregnant teen decides to raise her own child—finding her life forever altered and her identity completely changed. She is no longer simply a daughter, a sister, a friend, or a student. She is a mom. And as her responsibilities and relationships change, she will find herself overwhelmed, exhausted, and lonely.

At a time when teen moms are most vulnerable, few churches are equipped to provide the refuge so desperately needed. Many become pregnant again in less than two years, caught in a vicious cycle that destines their children to grow up and become teenage parents themselves.

Here, author and teen advocate Gwen Diaz shares true stories of heartbreak and triumph. She presents disturbing facts, provides practical solutions, and challenges believers to take a new course of action.

Diaz highlights the lives of three women who are doing just that. By following their examples, we can transform the lives and legacies of teenage moms. And we can reach our whole community with the love of Jesus Christ!



Deep River
B O O K S

For more information please contact media@deepriverbooks.com



Gwen Diaz - Central Florida

Gwen Diaz grew up as a missionary kid in West Africa before moving to the US and graduating from the University of Pennsylvania with a BS in nursing. There she met Ed Diaz, and together they raised four sons, all of whom are grown, married, and following Jesus. Ten grandchildren help keep their house chaotic and filled with fun.

When she isn't writing, Gwen stays busy packing diaper bags. As founder of the charity OH MY Baby, she desires that no new mother will leave the hospital without the items necessary to nurture her baby through the first few weeks of life. Gwen is passionate about teaching God's truths to the next generation and often speaks at Bible

conferences. Gwen and Ed reside in Central Florida.

Previously Published Titles from Gwen Diaz:

(Originally Published by NavPress)

- [Sticking Up for What I Believe - Answers to the Spiritual Questions Teenagers Ask](#)
- [Sticking Up for What Is Right - Answers to the Moral Dilemmas Teenagers Face](#)
- [Sticking Up for Who I Am - Answers to the Emotional Issues Teenagers Raise](#)

(From Harrison House)

- [More Beautiful You - A Study in "True Beauty" with her son, Jonny Diaz](#)

Endorsements for Gwen Diaz's book:

“Most churches hurt deeply for the people around them and genuinely want to step into their lives with substantive help and hope, but they often simply don't know what to do. Case in point: what do you do with a teenage girl who finds herself pregnant and then a young mom—especially one who has no extended family structure prepared to walk her through this radical life adjustment? In her timely book, *Is It Possible...*, Gwen Diaz uses real-life stories to help churches move from having good intentions to actually becoming Jesus' hands and heart to these fragile and often desperate young women.”

—**Dr. Tim Kimmel**, author of *Grace-Based Parenting* and *Grace-Filled Marriage*

For more information please contact media@deeprieverbooks.com

“Despite great efforts to address the issue of teen pregnancy, the statistics remain alarming. Two thousand unwed teenage girls in the United States will find out they are pregnant *today*—and that blows my mind. Gwen Diaz does an incredible job of sharing the startling statistics and substantiating them with true-life stories. In her book *Is It Possible . . . To Transform the Lives and Legacies of Single Teen Moms?* Gwen provides us with practical methods and positive solutions. She challenges us to take a new course of action and follow the examples of three women who are impacting an entire community through their ministry to teen moms. This is a challenge we can't afford to ignore. “

—**Dr. Tony Evans**, founder and president of The Urban Alternative;
senior pastor of Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship

“Two thousand teenage girls face an unexpected pregnancy each day. Statistics like that can seem irrelevant or distant until you hear the stories behind them. Every number represents a girl in need of something only our Savior can give. So how do we, and how does the church, reach out and offer it? How can we embrace sinners without condoning sin? This book is a touching but equally practical tool that will equip, motivate, and empower you to get involved in something life-changing. If you are pro-life, this is a must read.”

—**Lauren Beccue**, speaker & certified sex ed instructor; author of *UN-Expecting*

Suggested Interview Questions for Gwen Diaz, Author of *Is It Possible...*

1. Growing up as a missionary kid, did you always presume you would go into some kind of ministry?

No — when I entered high school, I began questioning my faith, and no one seemed to have the answers to the questions I had. Then I attended an Ivy League college where I declared myself an “atheist.” I had come to the conclusion that all religions are merely psychological crutches.

But God has a sense of humor. At college I met and married a brand new believer who later decided he wanted to go to seminary. The seminary was in Dallas — a place I had always wanted to live — so I agreed as long as he promised not to ever go into ministry. Over the course of our 4 years there, I was loved back to the Lord.

2. Now you and your husband lead a ministry called 71:17 Ministries: What's that all about?

We are committed to the plea of the psalmist made in Psalm 71:17 AND 18:

- 17** Since my youth, God, you have taught me,
and to this day I declare your marvelous deeds.
- 18** Even when I am old and gray,
do not forsake me, my God,
till I declare your power to the next generation,
your mighty acts to all who are to come.

So our focus is on reaching the next generation with the good news of Jesus.

3. You have four sons - are any of them in the ministry?

All of them are married and in the ministry in one way or another. They are committed to reaching the part of the world God allows them to touch with His message of love and forgiveness and salvation.

- Our oldest son is a builder and is very respected for his role in local community and church events
- Our second son just retired from Major League Baseball. (He played in the majors for 11 years – 7 of them with the Atlanta Braves.) He is now a TV analyst for the Braves and hosts a radio program on MLB Sirius xm radio. He is often a speaker at church events
- Our third son is a 2nd year student at Dallas Theological Seminary
- Our fourth son is a Christian Musician best known for the #1 Christian hit song “More Beautiful You”

4. What is “OH MY Baby?”

OMB is a charity I started several years ago to meet the needs of the many new moms who leave our local hospital each week with none of the essentials to help them care for their new babies. None of these new moms have had baby showers — so I raise donations to fill diaper bags and give them “a baby shower in a bag.” (We provide diapers; bottles; blankets; clothing; towels; baby wash; etc – basically everything they need for the first 2 weeks of life.)

We also include a toddler Bible and a note telling them that we are praying for them and how they can contact us through Facebook. We also partner with other organizations to meet additional needs: pack 'n plays; car seats, etc.

5. What led you to focus so much on teen moms?

It came about partly through my work with OH MY Baby — but also through my work with MOPS (an international program for Mothers of Pre-Schoolers). I taught the Bible study for a large MOPS group in Lakeland, FL for 7 years. It was through this involvement that I first learned about a local Teen MOPS program. I visited on occasion and one of leaders of Teen MOPS asked if I would write a book about the program. She and her husband wanted a vehicle that would help them share their tremendous success with other churches and community organizations.

At first I declined. This was not an area of life I was familiar with. But they insisted. I began to research a little, and my research grabbed me. I discovered that:

- More than 2,000 teenage girls in the United States will find out they are pregnant today! (750,000 this year!)
- 14% of these pregnancies will end in miscarriage;
- Almost 1/3 will be terminated by abortion (32%). [That means that 240,000 teenage girls will abort their babies this year!]
- Only 1% of these pregnancies will result in adoption.

The stats are staggering!!

Meanwhile, while I was investigating all this, a young girl in our town went to prison for murdering a baby she birthed alone in her family bathroom! She was desperate to keep her life and relationships from changing so radically!

I realized that if a teenager chooses to raise her own child, her life will be forever altered and her identity will be completely changed. She will no longer simply be a daughter, a sister, a friend or a student. She will be a mom. As her responsibilities and relationships change, she will find herself overwhelmed, exhausted and lonely.

And at a time when these teen girls are most vulnerable, few churches are equipped to meet their needs. No longer do they fit in a traditional youth program doing scavenger hunts and preparing for missions trips; they cannot relate to the singles' scene; they certainly don't fit in a young adult class. So, they end up dropping out. They need a program designed just for them.

6. In the Introduction, you mention that you did a random survey of mega-churches in the United States to see how they are ministering to teen moms: Tell us about that – what were the results?

I found a website that lists all the Mega-churches in the United States. It defines them as having “a sustained average weekly attendance of 2000 persons or more in its worship services.” Given the size of the churches and the variety of programs offered on their websites, I was certain that a majority of them would already have some kind of program in place to meet the needs of teen moms. So I decided to randomly check out 100 of the websites. (I selected a variety of denominations that were located all across the United States: from Alaska to Florida; from California to New Jersey; from New Hampshire to Arizona. I made sure that their congregations were ethnically and economically diverse.)

I found only one church that mentioned a program for teen moms. So, I decided to contact these churches directly via email. Each time I simply typed the following statement: “I was wondering if you have any special programs or resources available for teen moms.”

For more information please contact media@deeperiverbooks.com

To say I was disappointed and discouraged by the response I received is an understatement. Of the one hundred churches I emailed, only forty-six replied. *Only two of those 46 had addressed the issue at all.* One had implemented a once-a-month program for teen moms and the other offered separate programs for both teen moms and teen dads that each met twice a month.

Most responses extended invitations to their youth programs; several referred me to nearby crisis pregnancy centers; a few offered phone numbers for Help Lines. I was directed to agencies that housed clothing closets; offered a chance to look through a Care Closet to see if there were any baby items; and was encouraged to take a counseling course on decision-making. One church actually informed me that their receptionist had received my email but was too busy to respond due to the volume of contacts!

This exercise convinced me that we are missing out on a tremendous opportunity to join God in transforming lives and impacting legacies. Unless there is intervention in their lives, the majority of teen moms are pregnant again in less than 2 years.

7. In the book you talk about three women from very different backgrounds who God brought together to minister to teen moms: Can you tell us a little about these women?

To call them a diverse trio would be an understatement!:

a) Alice* was the mother of a teenage son who got his new, much younger girlfriend pregnant early in their relationship. She quickly realized how little help was available for teen moms – especially from people who had been their friends for years through their church. Alice and her husband ended up taking the young girl into their home, but it was a very difficult time and eventually the young mom left – taking the grandbaby with her.

Later, when Alice was asked to help with the Teen MOPS program she was very reluctant because of her pain. But her own daughter and husband convinced her that God had uniquely prepared her. When the leader of the group moved, she was ready to be the person in charge.

b) Carolyn* describes herself as a “hot mess” as a teenager. She lived the street life and survived. In her early twenties, she gave her heart to Christ and her life changed completely. She married and became pregnant. When she was asked to help with Teen MOPS program she said, “No – I know just about every other aspect of living a teen life away from God, but I was never a Teen Mom.” But God (and Alice) prevailed and soon she was helping out.

c) Deborah* was the wife of a PGA golfer. Both wanted children very badly. So the disappointment of month after month of not becoming pregnant was very difficult. Finally they decided to adopt and soon they had a beautiful baby boy – and a few months later she discovered that she was pregnant.

Deborah began to be very upset whenever she heard or read about an abortion – especially in her community. So she began to work in a local pregnancy clinic convincing girls to keep their babies. Initially she hoped they would allow the child to be adopted, but soon she realized that, after seeing ultrasounds of their babies, many of the teenage girls decided to keep

them and raise them themselves. Deborah knew they needed help so she searched for ways! She discovered the Teen MOPS program at her church and gradually became very involved.

God brought these three totally different women from totally different backgrounds together to form a unique team to minister to teen moms and change their lives and legacies.

8. What evidence have you seen that developing a special program for teen moms will impact their lives and change their legacies?

Most of the girls initially come to such a program for the “things” it has to offer for them and their babies. But eventually many of them come to know Christ personally and begin to raise their babies in the church where they are loved. Gradually their lives and their goals are completely changed – and so are their legacies!

Besides helping them find and live for Christ, such a program helps them stay or get back in school, (some even go on to college); it helps them find jobs – by providing simple things like information on how to fill out resumes and handle themselves in a job interview. It gives them hope for themselves and their babies.

9. In what other ways have you seen a program for teen moms change a community?

- It transforms the church members as they become involved in the girls’ lives: by offering transportation; dinners; photography; showers; hospital visits etc. It provides a way for them to reach out to their community and make a difference.
- It changes community organizations – who begin to see the benefits of encouraging girls to attend Teen MOPS
- It can even become a tool of Law enforcement which is looking for a ways to help the girls. (Some girls have been mandated to attend the program as part of their probation.)
- The community has even started a new program for teen Dads.

10. In what other ways have you seen a program for teen moms change a community?

Here are some steps I delineate in the book:

- 1) Start with prayer. Then continue to prioritize prayer in every facet of this amazing journey. We cannot achieve anything significant without God’s presence and power controlling the process.
- 2) When you feel God’s prompting, share your feelings with others who may be willing to walk beside you. If you are in a church setting, don’t hesitate to communicate with the staff. Share with them how God is leading you. Ask them to pray with you. From the very beginning you must make it clear that you are not interested in a patronizing program that will allow the girls to sit around and be victims. People must understand that your ultimate goal is to lead young moms into a relationship with Jesus Christ.

- 3) All the while, keep your eyes open for teen moms who need God's love. It may seem like a slow process at first, but remember, it only takes one girl to experience God's life-changing power and suddenly dozens more will be eager to participate.
- 4) Seek support from an organization that is already reaching out to teen moms. I know that MOPS (Mothers of Preschoolers, International) provides a supporting staff, resource materials, and training for groups who apply to become a part of their Teen MOPS program. So does Young Life through their program called Young Lives. These, and other programs, are ready to assist you in a way they can. Don't waste the wisdom God has already given them.
- 5) Begin to network in order to take advantage of the assets that are already available in your community. Don't be shy about asking local businessmen and women to invest their resources and time. Invite various health professionals to share at your meetings. Communicate with high school counselors. Contact local law enforcement agencies. You will be amazed at how many individuals and organizations are eager to help when you present them with an opportunity.
- 6) Don't get discouraged! Satan isn't going to want you to succeed, but remember that God is the One who is in control, and He is the One you report to.
- 7) The next time someone (like me) randomly surveys your church or organization to discover what programs and resources are available for teen moms, share with them all the awesome things that God is doing!