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**Prime-Time Birth Control?**

'Teen Mom' Becomes a Ratings Winner for MTV

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**What Happened:**

MTV, the popular cable network, has gone from a 2009 cable afterthought to a 2010 ratings dynamo; and the network owes much of its resurgence to the second season of "Teen Mom."

"Teen Mom" documents the lives of four mothers as they try to balance their new duties with work, school and relationships. "...Its veracity is never up for debate," writes Jennifer Armstrong of *Entertainment Weekly*. "Everything else is fair game for endless dissection by audiences, who have become so attached to 'Teen Mom's' stars that they feel free to comment on the girls' every parenting decision and relationship debacle, whether in person or on their Facebook pages."

MTV says that "Teen Mom" is more than a ratings winner: It's a feel-good show, giving viewers a somber look at how difficult it can be for a teen to be a mother. It's birth control on basic cable, supporters say.

"MTV is in the entertainment business and [we] are in the need pregnancy prevention business," says Bill Albert, spokesman for the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, to ABC News. "Our two worlds have happily and effectively collided to minimize the number of teen pregnancies."

Not everyone is convinced the show is preventing teen pregnancy. Critics argue that because these teen mothers have become celebrities in their own right, "Teen Mom" may be unintentionally encouraging teenage pregnancy.

"Young girls go through pregnancies every day," Chastity Bragner, a junior at Howard University and avid "Teen Mom" fan, told ABC News. "They don't make it onto the covers of magazines."

"The show has become too 'Hollywood,' too glamorized," said Bragner's friend Dominique Ingram. "Whether subliminally or not, the show is teaching young girls that teen pregnancy is OK and that everything will be all right."

**Talk About It:**

Have you seen "Teen Mom"? Do you think the stars make good mothers? How much do

you think their real lives resemble what you see on television? Do you think the show is liable to make teen motherhood look better or worse than it really is?

Do you know anyone who got pregnant while still a teenager? What did they do? How did they deal with it? What kind of help and support did they have from their friends and families? Did it look fun?

How influential do you think television is on what people think or do? Can it be a good influence? A bad one? Do you think some people look up to celebrities—maybe even for the wrong reasons?

**What the Bible Says:**

“There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven; a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot” (Ecc. 3:1-2).

“A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come; but when her baby is born she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world” (John 16:21).

“Things that cause people to sin are bound to come, but woe to that person through whom they come. It would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied around his neck than for him to cause one of these little ones to sin” (Luke 17:1-2).