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Youth Culture Lesson

Finding Teachable Moments in Culture

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The Waiting Game

The Controversy Over Abstinence-Only Education

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What Happened:

New research reveals that pregnancy rates ticked up slightly in 2006 (the most recent year for which numbers were available) – about 3 percent higher than rates in 2005. Abortion rates were up, too.

Source: Guttmacher Institute

That's disappointing news for health experts, who had watched the teen pregnancy rate decline 41 percent since 1990. Some experts laid the blame at the abstinence-only sex education programs mandated by the George W. Bush Administration.

As Barack Obama's administration pushes away from abstinence-only programs, *another* new study suggests that such classes may work pretty well after all. The study tracked 662 African-American middle school students from urban areas – kids who are statistically more likely to have sex earlier – and found that a third of them who took abstinence-centric classes had sex within two years.

Source: Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine

That sounds like a lot, but these kids were far more likely to abstain from sex than those who didn't have the classes that stressed abstinence. Of the youth who just had general health classes or "safe sex" classes, about half had sex within two years.

"This program did what it set out to do," said Bill Albert, chief program officer of the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy. "It got kids to delay sex, and did it in an honest and respectful way that didn't denigrate contraception. We need to buck up and move beyond politics to invest in things that work. While the adults are arguing about all this, teenagers are getting pregnant."

Talk About It:

Do you have any sexual education programs in your school? Do they stress abstinence? Do they talk about birth control? Do they do a little bit of both?

It can be uncomfortable to talk about sex – for kids and adults. Do you get embarrassed discussing this stuff? Have you discussed the subject with your parents? Have you gone

through a “True Love Waits” program or something similar at church? Who do you trust to talk with about intimacy?

Sex isn't as rampant in high school as it might seem. More than half of high school students are virgins; and of those who have had sex, 63 percent wish they had waited. How do your friends talk about sex? What's your philosophy? Do you think it's important to wait?

What the Bible Says:

“Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace given to you when Jesus Christ is revealed. As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do...” (1 Pet. 1:13-15).

“Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral” (Heb. 13:4).

“I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a girl. For what is man's lot from God above, his heritage from the Almighty on high?...Does He not see my ways and count my every step?” (Job 31:1-2, 4).