

afford to allow her to continue living with them? In lands where public assistance is provided, an unwed mother may have little choice but to take advantage of it—at least initially. The Bible permits Christians to use such provisions. However, this will mean living on a very strict budget. “It seems my biggest problem is money,” says 17-year-old Sharon. “I can buy food and diapers, but that’s it.” In time it may be possible to work an outside job. Trying to juggle motherhood, work, and spiritual activities will not be easy, but others have managed to do it.

### **Using Wisdom and Discernment in Dwelling Together**

If one’s parents are agreeable, there may be real advantages to staying at home rather than trying to venture out on one’s own. Living at home is usually less expensive. Furthermore, the familiar surroundings of home may offer a sense of safety and security. Staying at home may also make it easier for a girl to continue her schooling. By graduating from secondary school, a girl greatly improves her chances of escaping a life of poverty.\*

Of course, having three generations share a home can create stress and strain for everyone concerned. The single mother may have to deal with cramped living quarters. Parents and siblings may have to get used to having their sleep interrupted by a baby’s cry. The family routine may be disrupted. But Proverbs 24:3 says: “By wisdom a household will be built up, and by discernment it will prove firmly established.” Yes, if all concerned display unselfish love and consideration, friction within the family can be minimized.

Problems will also arise if the young mother tries to evade carrying her own load of responsibility and expects the grandmother to do all the work. (Compare Galatians 6:5.)

\* Some have taken advantage of government programs that teach marketable job skills. There may even be programs that offer on-site infant care while the mother attends class.

Or it may be that the well-intentioned grandmother virtually commandeers the care of her grandchild. Notes the book *Facing Teenage Pregnancy*: “Grandparents who raise the child of an unwed daughter as if it were their own may add to family conflict and role confusion.” While a grandparent’s help and support is invaluable, the Scriptures assign the responsibility of child rearing to parents. (Ephesians 6:1, 4) Open communication and cooperation can therefore do much to prevent misunderstandings.—Proverbs 15:22.

### **You Are Not Alone**

Although having a child out of wedlock is difficult, it is not the end of one’s life. God ‘forgives in a large way’ those who repent of their wrongs. (Isaiah 55:7) Meditating on this can help a single mother overcome feelings of self-loathing that may come over her at times. When feeling discouraged, she can lean upon Jehovah and approach him in prayer. She can also implore God’s help in rearing her child.—Compare Judges 13:8.

Jehovah also provides support through the Christian congregation. Though Jehovah’s Witnesses do not condone immorality, they give consideration to those who repentantly make changes in their lives in order to please God. (Romans 15:7; Colossians 1:10) Some in the congregation may be moved to find discreet ways to render some practical assistance to a single parent. (Compare Deuteronomy 24:17-20; James 1:27.) At the very least, they can provide friendship and a hearing ear when it is needed. (Proverbs 17:17) Although the parents committed a serious sin, the child is blameless. So the congregation can help if the mother shows a right attitude.

How much better it is not to violate God’s laws in the first place! But erring ones who have repented of their wayward course, and have acted accordingly, can be assured of Jehovah’s help in making the most of their situation.