

# A Crucial Intersection

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The Cross stands as the universal Christian symbol. Not only does it embody a message of redemption, salvation, and transformation, but it also carries, even in its very physical depiction, a message of reconciling both the vertical and horizontal. Two pieces of wood facilitated a platform where a message of tolerance, forgiveness, and mercy triumphed over condemnation, hatred, and sin. Such a cross carries two elements; the vertical and the horizontal.

The vertical speaks to the values of God's Kingdom, while the horizontal speaks to our relationships here on earth. Accordingly, the cross is redemption and relational, conviction and compassion, ethos and pathos, covenant and community, ideology and missiology, God and my neighbors, John 3:16 and Matthew 25, Faith and Public Policy, Billy Graham and Martin Luther King Jr. That is, both vertical and horizontal are essential; one without the other is incomplete.

For too long in our nation, religious demagoguery has stood on the extremes of the Cross; either right or left, on the cusp of über-spirituality or on the bottom edge of secularism. All the while neglecting the fact that the strongest portion of the Cross exists where the vertical intersects with the horizontal, the nexus of heaven and earth, a point otherwise known as "personal responsibility." It is at this very intersection where we come to the

understanding that our actions have both vertical — spiritual and eternal — ramifications and horizontal — family, community, and relational — consequences.

Consequently, a viable and sustainable campaign to address one of the most serious issues in our society — teen and unwanted pregnancies — can only succeed when contextualized under the canopy of personal responsibility. Teen and unwanted pregnancies carry both vertical and horizontal elements. If we could only present a narrative in which our teenagers and young adults would understand that every decision they make will have both vertical and horizontal consequences.

For at the end of the day, as we build firewalls and multiple platforms to address and reduce teen and unwanted pregnancies, let us meet at the point of intersection, at the crossroad. There we will find personal responsibility surrounded by grace, mercy, and justice. All actions measured and with outcomes that cannot be denied. Let us not forget, personal responsibility is the child of “free will” and both live under the umbrella of righteousness and justice.

On what platform should we stand as we attempt to reduce teen and unwanted pregnancies? I say the platform located in the middle, at the point of convergence, where the will of God intersects with our free will; in a place we call “personal responsibility.”

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