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Two Minutes to Positive

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Kendra & Marshall

Kendra Plathe and her fiancé, Marshall Chisare didn’t expect to put their life on hold as they entered their final year of college, but that’s what happened when Kendra watched two positive symbols slowly emerge on her pregnancy tests. She was overcome with shock and fear as she stared down at the two plus signs, thinking “oh shit, now what?” Kendall and Marshall had been dating for just under a year when they found out she was pregnant last April. Now they are engaged and just had their first son, Brayden, in January.

Both are taking a semester off while Marshall works two jobs and Kendra stays home with Brayden. They intend to finish college and possibly continue their education through graduate school, but the future is plagued by uncertainties as they re-organize their life to revolve around Brayden.

“Simple things aren’t so simple anymore,” Kendra says. “I’m pretty much living day to day now. Life isn’t over but [I] definitely have to put it on hold.”

Jacob & Lindsey

For Jacob Fetterer and Lindsey Ehlinger, everything changed when one thing led to another in the back of Jacob’s car on his 21st birthday—a time when the couple had been temporarily split from their three and half year relationship. Not long after returning to Ames, Jacob received a call from Lindsey revealing the news that she was pregnant.

“I hate to say it, but it was a dark few weeks,” Jacob says. “I was so overwhelmed just trying to figure out what was going to happen and how it would affect my senior year...I couldn’t focus on anything. All the time I spent going to college was crashing down around me. To have all that change in an instant was a lot to take in.”

The couple decided that although they had hit a rough patch in the relationship, they would work things out and move forward. Jacob had no doubt in his mind that he would do everything he could to be there for his daughter. “We had a foundation of a relationship and had planned on having a future together...we weren’t ‘together’ at the time but that doesn’t mean I didn’t love her or care about her,” says Fetterer. “I couldn’t imagine not being there for them.”

Jacob had plans to propose to Lindsey following the birth of their daughter, Stella, in July of 2013. Over Christmas break that year, Jacob got down on one knee and popped the question.

While Jacob finishes his final year at Iowa State, Lindsey stays in their hometown of Davenport to raise Stella. Jacob says Stella has continued to give him the motivation to keep going so he can “provide for his family,” but he’s continually challenged by the desire to be home with them.


Margaret

When Margaret Cihlar first found out she was pregnant, all she could think was “oh no.” That’s when the panic set in.

“I never expected my life would entail an unplanned pregnancy,” Margaret says. “It was a big curveball to the original plans I had—find a guy, get married, have successful careers, then kids—instead, I was waitressing, not married, trying school... it was a wake up call to what can happen in life. Everything changes in those two minutes you wait to see the positive or negative sign on a pregnancy test.”

Margaret and her boyfriend, Taza Kennaway, had just moved to Arizona where she intended to pursue an art degree. The couple had been dating for nearly one year at the time. Margaret was the only one with a job and they had no money saved up to support a family. When they found out she was pregnant, they decided it would be best to move back to Iowa to be closer to family.

Eight days after the birth of their daughter, Marlee, Margaret moved to Ames with the newborn to continue her education while Taza stayed home in Spencer to work and support them financially.

Margaret says she wishes she and Marlee could have Taza around all the time, but without his income, child-support and additional government assistance, Margaret wouldn’t be able to financially support her daughter. After all, expenses add up quick with diapers, food, clothing, rent, daycare, tuition, etc.

“It would be great to have him here all the time, but we have to pay the bills,” Margaret says. “We take what we can get right now.”

Although it’s been difficult for Margaret to raise Marlee while in college, she’s tried to make the best of the unexpected. By furthering her education, Margaret believes she’s providing Marlee with a better foundation.

“Everything I do, I do for her,” Cihlar says. “I just want her to be happy, healthy and excited for every day.”

Martha & Gabe

It’s no surprise that someone from a family of 15 would feel a natural instinct to raise a child. It may come as a surprise, however, that Martha Noll, a 22-year-old newlywed finishing her last year of college, would be having her first child not long after her summer ceremony.

According to Martha, she and her husband Gabe weren’t “trying” but weren’t “not trying” either—they were trusting God with their fate, as they always have.

The Nolls met through the Salt Company at Cornerstone Church on a mission trip to China in spring of 2010. Two years passed before they officially began dating, then they were engaged and married within the following year. They had their daughter, Isabel, on March 31, 2014.

“We preferred not to be pregnant for our first couple years of marriage, but this is clearly what He wanted,” says Martha, explaining that they prayed often, asking God to wait but trusting His decision.

Like her devout Christian parents, Martha didn’t use any kind of birth control. “I’m not saying birth control is wrong...but we didn’t want to control that part of our life out of fear instead of trusting in God,” says Martha, who planned to graduate this spring, but had to drop her intended 18-credit semester down to nine. After this semester, she’ll only have three credits left to graduate.

“I definitely want to finish college,” says Noll, who studies linguistics and international studies. “Having a degree is very valuable. I believe in education—it changes people and the world. God has been very kind to help me finish college.”

“I just want to be home with my family,” says Jacob, who’s trying to remain patient. “I know I’m close—I can see the light.”

Jacob imagined having a child would ruin his life, but he says it’s much more rewarding than you might think. “There’s nothing else like it,” says Jacob. “It’s a love you won’t find anywhere else.”