

**ANSWER GUIDE**

---

# THE INFANCY NARRATIVES OF JESUS



*A ministry of the Diocese of Little Rock  
in partnership with Liturgical Press*

## Matthew 1–2

1. Some participants may have been unaware of the variety of beginnings found in the gospels. This discussion may begin to clarify some of the distinctive purposes of the gospel writers.
2. a) Individual responses will vary.  
b) Answers will vary.
3. The infancy account in Matthew is filled with Old Testament quotations and allusions that connect the material to Israel's hopes. There are also many indications that Jesus will go beyond expectations. The entire New Testament will illustrate the new work of God in Jesus.
4. a) The genealogy identifies Jesus as the promised Messiah from the line of David and as the fulfillment of God's plan.  
b) The women have unusual personal histories. Their appearance in the genealogy is highly nontraditional, as is the birth of Jesus himself. They foreshadow the universal and inclusive nature of the kingdom of God.
5. Betrothal and engagement were firm commitments that would require a deliberate action to dissolve. Divorce would have saved Mary the embarrassment of an adultery trial; Joseph could handle the divorce outside of court.
6. a) Jesus = God saves. Emmanuel = God is with us.  
b) Responses will vary. (E.g., "I had a strong sense of God dwelling with me when my child was ill . . . he was Emmanuel to me.")
7. References to the Old Testament would help to prove to Jewish listeners that Jesus is the Messiah. Matthew shows that Jesus is the culmination of God's unfolding plan of salvation.
8. Jewish tradition from the time of Moses associated a star with Israel's greatness. This tradition became attached to hopes for a Messiah. The star in Matthew's story identified Jesus as the Messiah and led the magi to the place of his birth.
9. a) Responses might include eagerness, cleverness, expectation, awe, wonder, praise, generosity, etc.  
b) Discuss how the above qualities can be nurtured in the holiday season. E.g., we can imitate their eagerness to find Jesus in the

midst of a busy and commercialized season. We can give generously and help our children learn what it means to be generous. We can approach the Christmas liturgy with a sense of praise that carries through other festivities.

10. Egypt was the place of refuge and of captivity for Jesus' ancestors. Jesus personifies the people of God. Coming out of Egypt, he creates a new people and will offer a new experience of liberation.
11. People may choose to focus on his personal qualities (e.g., obedience, attendance to God, care for Mary's reputation), his role in protecting his family, etc.
12. a) He had to uproot himself and his family, forsake a job to support his family and find another means of support, deal with personal doubts and possible public ridicule, etc.  
b) Allow time for those who wish to share their own struggles to be obedient. Specific examples are easier to discuss.
13. a) Examples could range from descriptions of armed conflict to domestic violence, etc.  
b) Share practical ideas, e.g., teaching our children how to handle their feelings without hurting themselves or others, working with groups who offer help to abused children or spouses, encouraging our parishes to offer support to neighborhoods where violence is common, etc.
14. Like the Joseph the patriarch, Joseph the foster father of Jesus is guided by dreams through which the will of God is fulfilled.
15. Responses will vary (e.g., prayer, the guidance and advice of others, the Scriptures, church teaching, the questions of children, etc.) Additional question: Give an example of a time when you felt very sure you were following God's direction. How did you know?
16. Both children are born in times of political turmoil. Both must rely on their parents to rescue them from slaughter. Both spent time in Egypt, etc.
17. a) There are messianic expectations associated with "Nazorean." Nazirites are consecrated to God's service as the Messiah would be. The Hebrew term *netzer* connects the term with the "branch" or "shoot" from the stump of Jesse which will produce the Messiah.  
b) All three men (Samson, Samuel, and John) were born to barren women who turned to God to hear their plea for children. All

were consecrated to the Lord because they were seen as gifts from the Lord. All three were significant to carrying out God's plan of salvation.

18. Discuss the significance of the birth of Jesus. His birth is not just about a beautiful child, nor is it just about God becoming flesh; it is about God becoming human so that salvation could be offered to all. The evangelists told the story of Jesus' birth after they understood the meaning of his life, death, and resurrection.

## LESSON 2

---

### *Luke 1*

1. Individual responses will vary.
2. a) The text indicates they were in the habit of prayer and obedience to the Lord. They must have known about God's intervention in the lives of other ancestors who were childless, and that God was capable of great things.  
b) Allow time for those who wish to share personal experiences. (Additional question: In our world today, what is the value of learning to wait?)
3. Personal responses will vary.
4. John's role is similar to the role of the prophets: he prepares people to accept Jesus' message by preaching repentance and return to God.
5. Like Elijah, John lived in the desert and was dependent on God; he challenged sinners, foretold the coming of the Messiah, and was persecuted.
6. Gabriel is associated with an earlier message of hope and justice that would accompany the Messiah. Gabriel's presence with Zechariah would have indicated the time of the Messiah was near.
7. a) Mary is favored because of God's work within her, not because of anything she had earned. Similar words were said of Judith because of God's work in and through her.  
b) Whenever God's life or work in us is apparent, we can be called "favored" in the sense used in this passage. Personal examples will vary.

8. Discussion. For Matthew, the names “Jesus” and “Emmanuel” described his coming in terms of the work of redemption God would do. Luke focuses on the title “Son of the Most High” and says he will be given the throne of David, demonstrating Jesus’ relation to Yahweh and to the promises made to Israel.
9. Mary was saying yes not only to the pregnancy but to nurturing a child whose adult life would be exciting, challenging, heart-breaking. She was making herself vulnerable to the joys and sorrows of family life, and the great challenge of discipleship.
10. This might have been a time of anticipation, fear, anxiety, or change, etc.
11. Discussion. Mary bears the divine presence just as the ark carried God’s presence among the people.
12. Mary’s belief is an act of joyful trust, in contrast to Zechariah’s earlier disbelief. Her belief is consistent throughout her life, even to the point of placing her in the upper room at the time of Pentecost. She is a model of discipleship.
13. Hannah was a mature woman, unable to bear a child, who begged God for a son whom she would dedicate to the Lord. The young Mary was approached by God’s messenger to bear a child, who would be God’s own son. Both women praise God who helps the weak and has the power and mercy to reorder the way the world works.
14. Responses will vary. The Canticle reviews God’s work in the world, a reminder to review the day and our part in it as we end the day with prayer. The humble, lowly, and hungry are the objects of God’s special care, reminding us to live by the same priorities. Mary, a young woman, realizes that God has specially cared for her.
15. a) Zechariah’s obedience to God and trust in God is signified by choosing the name commanded earlier by the angel. The choice shows that the child is a gift of God’s favor.  
b) Allow time to talk about the impact a name can have on a person.
16. Biblical prophecy describes the meaning and significance of events. In this case, John’s birth is significant because it foreshadows the birth of Jesus and prepares for the proclamation of Jesus’ message.