

## **The Shadow of the Cross over Christmas**

### **Discussion Questions for Matthew 1:18-25**

#### **Open It**

1. What are the tabloid headlines this week?
2. Why is our society so drawn to gossip and scandal?
3. How do people typically react when facing embarrassing situations?

#### **Explore It**

1. What happened to Mary while she and Joseph were engaged? (1:18)
2. What do you think Joseph initially thought upon hearing this news about his bride-to-be? (1:18–19)
3. What positive character qualities did Joseph possess? (1:19)
4. How did Joseph plan to handle this delicate situation? (1:19)
5. How was Joseph's ancestry significant? (1:20)
6. Why did Joseph change his plans to divorce Mary? (1:20)
7. If Joseph wasn't the actual father of Christ, who was? (1:18, 20)
8. What did the angel command Joseph to name the child and why? (1:21)
9. What significant mission in life would Mary's child have? (1:21)
10. Why is Mary's virginal conception of Christ significant? (1:22–23)
11. What does Immanuel mean? (1:23)
12. How did Joseph respond to the angelic message? (1:24)

#### **Get It**

1. How might you have responded in Mary's situation?
2. What would have been your reaction had you been in Joseph's situation?
3. How do you think a typical church might have handled Mary's pre-marriage pregnancy?
4. How do you imagine the "grapevine" treated the Mary-Joseph situation?
5. How does it feel to be the victim of unsubstantiated rumors and gossip?
6. How does it feel to know that you are innocent and yet have people attacking your character and whispering behind your back?
7. How does our desire for approval or acceptance keep us from doing the right thing?

**Apply It**

1. What difficult, hard-to-swallow command of God do you need to obey today?
2. Why is it important to keep the cross in view when we celebrate Christmas?