



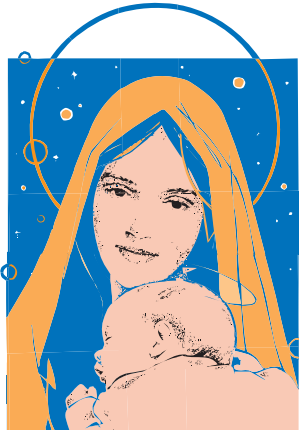
## ANSWERS TO PROBLEMS Matthew 1:19–20

### 1. GOD OFTEN LETS US WRESTLE WITH A PROBLEM BEFORE HE STEPS IN TO SOLVE IT.

Joseph had a problem: Mary was pregnant. Is she telling the truth? Should I complete the marriage process or file for divorce? Should I seek a trial for adultery? Joseph thought about the problem for awhile and decided to divorce Mary (1:19). Then an angel appeared to him at the end of his thought process—after he had come to a conclusion. He wrestled with the problem and struggled with his emotions—love, betrayal, anger, disappointment, fear—for several days before God stepped in. Why didn't God step in earlier and save Joseph all the grief?

### 2. GOD LETS US COME UP WITH OUR OWN SOLUTIONS AND THEN SHOWS US HOW WRONG WE ARE.

Joseph did the best he could in reaching a decision with the facts he had—but *he didn't have all the facts*. He didn't know Mary was telling the truth. So he made the wrong decision.



### 3. SOLUTIONS COMPATIBLE WITH SCRIPTURE MAY NOT BE GOD'S WILL.

Given the facts he had, Joseph arrived at a decision compatible with the Scriptures (cf. Deut. 24:1; Matt. 19:9)—but not God's will.

### 4. GOD MAY LET US WRESTLE WITH A PROBLEM, COME UP WITH OUR BEST SOLUTION, AND THEN SHOW US A BETTER SOLUTION.

Joseph's solution would have deprived him of the love of his life, crushed an innocent girl, and left the baby Jesus without a human father. Divine guidance keeps us humble and dependent on God.

### 5. WHILE YOU'RE THINKING A PROBLEM THROUGH, PRAY FOR GUIDANCE. IF GOD DOESN'T LIKE THE ANSWER YOU COME UP WITH, HE'LL SHOW YOU A BETTER ONE.

Being a righteous man, Joseph probably prayed for guidance. And God gave it to him—after letting him come up with the wrong answer. In time we will discover just how poor our solution would have been and how much pain it would have caused. Looking back we'll also discover how much better God's solution is.