

Christmas Day

The Nativity of Our Lord · Middle School · Parent Edition

For the parent: Read each part aloud and work through the questions together. Your answers are printed in blue italics, so no preparation is needed. Your child uses the Student Edition.

Step 1 Understand the Collect

Most collects follow a five-part pattern: the **address** (the One to whom we pray), the **reason** (what God has done or promised), the **petition** (what we ask), the **purpose** (what we hope will result), and the **ending** (the closing that names the Trinity).

Almighty God, grant that the birth of Your only-begotten Son in the flesh may set us free from the bondage of sin; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

1. Mark each part of the collect. Which parts are missing?

***Answer:** Address: "Almighty God." Petition: "grant that the birth of Your only-begotten Son in the flesh may set us free from the bondage of sin." Ending: "through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord..." The reason is missing, and the purpose is folded into the petition. It is one of the shortest collects of the year.*

2. The collect calls sin "bondage." What does that picture say about sin?

***Answer:** Sin is not only wrong acts. It is a slavery we cannot escape by ourselves, and it goes back to Adam. Only Someone from outside can set us free.*

3. The collect says Jesus' *birth* sets us free. How can that be, when the price was paid on the cross?

***Answer:** The One who frees us had to be one of us. His birth begins His obedience in our place, "born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law" (Galatians 4:4-5). Christmas and Good Friday belong together.*

Step 2 Understand the Gospel

Read the Gospel on your own.

John 1:1-14

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. **2** He was in the beginning with God. **3** All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. **4** In him was life, and the life was the light of men. **5** The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. **7** He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. **8** He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.

9 The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. **10** He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. **11** He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. **12** But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, **13** who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. **14** And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

1. Verse 1 echoes Genesis 1:1. Why begin the story of Jesus "in the beginning"?

***Answer:** Jesus did not begin at Bethlehem. He is the eternal God through whom all things were made (v. 3).*

2. Verse 11 says His own people did not receive Him. According to verses 12-13, who does become a child of God?

Answer: All who receive Him and believe in His name. They are born "of God," not by family line or human effort. It is a gift.

3. "Dwelt" in verse 14 literally means "pitched His tent." Why is that fitting?

Answer: God's glory once filled the tabernacle, the tent in the wilderness (Exodus 40:34). Now God's glory lives among us in Jesus' flesh.

4. The Word came "full of grace and truth." What does that tell us about how God comes to us in Jesus?

Answer: He comes with undeserved favor and faithfulness to His promises, not with the judgment we deserve.

Step 3 Find the Collect in the Gospel

1. Find at least two places where the collect's words appear in the Gospel. Explain each one.

Answer: "Birth... in the flesh" matches "the Word became flesh" (v. 14). "Set us free" matches "the right to become children of God" (v. 12): slaves become children. "Bondage" matches the darkness (v. 5) and the world that did not know Him (v. 10). Any two, well explained, are enough.

2. Galatians 4:7 says, "So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God." How does this verse connect the collect and John 1:12?

Answer: The collect asks to be freed from slavery. John 1:12 says believers become God's children. Galatians puts both together: in Christ we move from slave to son.

Step 4 The Small Catechism

The Second Article. And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead. **What does this mean?** I believe that Jesus Christ, **true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord, who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death, that I may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true.**

Cross-reference. "Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery." (Hebrews 2:14-15)

1. Luther confesses Jesus as "true God... and also true man." Match each half to a verse in John 1.

Answer: True God: verse 1, "the Word was God." True man: verse 14, "the Word became flesh."

2. Luther says Jesus redeemed me "from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil." Which of these does Hebrews 2:14-15 name, and how does it echo the collect?

Answer: Death and the devil. Hebrews calls our condition "lifelong slavery," the same picture as the collect's "bondage of sin."

3. Why does Luther say "not with gold or silver"?

Answer: *Nothing we own could buy our freedom. It cost His holy, precious blood, which is why the Son took on flesh and blood.*

Parent note: the question they may ask. *"Why did God have to become a man? Couldn't He just forgive us?"* God is just as well as merciful. He did not wave sin away; He took it on Himself. Only a man could stand in man's place under the Law, and only God could pay for the sins of the whole world. That is why the Word became flesh (Hebrews 2:14-17).

Step 5 Wrap It All Up

1. Write a short collect of your own for this day. Use all five parts.

Answer: *Answers will vary. Example: "Almighty God, Your Son became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth. Free us from every chain of sin, that we may live as Your children and heirs; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen."*

Pray today's collect together. Then answer:

2. What does Jesus do for you by becoming flesh?

Answer: *He becomes one of us so He can take my place, set me free from sin, and make me a child of God (John 1:12).*