



Mary's Story

By Dr. Linda Hancock

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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We have had quite a year! No one ever could ever have predicted the way that our whole world would change in a matter of just a few months. Each of us thinks that our circumstances are so unusual and have never happened before.

I have been thinking a lot about Mary, the mother of Jesus, and how she experienced so many parallels to us. She must have felt similar to how we are feeling. Ponder this:

1. Shock – Imagine the shock when this teenaged girl found out that she was pregnant and yet hadn't been with a man. We too were shocked to hear that a pandemic would close down the whole world for a period of time.
2. Confusion – Mary likely didn't know what to do or how she would deal with the idea of being a parent. We not only have been confused by the COVID-19 but also by the mixed messaging we have been receiving from media, health officials, and loved ones regarding how to protect ourselves and others.
3. Conspiracy – Imagine how Mary was treated when she stated that she was a virgin who was carrying God's son. Many people have stated that there are conspiracies surrounding the pandemic in its origin, risk levels, statistics, and treatment.
4. Support – Joseph was the person who became the partner for Mary and the earthly father for Jesus and he too must have experienced some stress from others. Was he the subject of rumors and pressure from people who had alternate advice for him? Where was Mary's mother and sisters? I bet she wished they were with her. During the pandemic we have had to find ways to connect with others through technology and distanced interaction. Like Mary, many of our family members were also separated.
5. Legalities – Even though Mary was nearing the end of her pregnancy, she and Joseph were required by the ruler to travel to Bethlehem. They were required to register for the census and pay their taxes. Our governments might have made some revisions to the laws surrounding taxes by deferring them, but we still needed to pay our taxes and also to follow the new laws around quarantine, travel and economics.
6. Health care – No mention is made of Mary having a doctor, midwife or other professional to help her birth her first born. In fact, because there was no room in the inn, she was housed with the animals in a barn during her labour and delivery. Many parts of the world also have health care issues. Some faced lack of protection equipment, long lines waiting for testing, and no clear information regarding whether a vaccine will be available and effective in the near future.
7. Unknown – I am sure that Mary wondered what would happen to Joseph, her son and herself. How far ahead could she see into their future? All of us have been wondering about the future also. Will our countries open up again? What will help to the economy? Will there be food shortages? Can we trust that "this too shall pass" and we will be better off in the future?
8. Faith – Mary trusted God. She followed the law by travelling to Bethlehem. She trusted Joseph to help her. Every year we faithfully celebrate Christmas which is the birthday of that little baby Mary carried. Do we have a strength of faith that is even close to that of Mary's?

We already made it through several months of uncertainty due to COVID-19. Perhaps it is good that we didn't know what was ahead of us at the beginning of this.

And now we face a future that also has many unknowns. Will we face it with the love, peace and joy that we talk about so much during the festive season?

I hope so.

Merry Christmas, everyone!