

## COMFORT

STEFANIE HENDRICKSON

Israel suffered under the power and rule of Babylon. Destruction and exile reigned over the people of God. For years the Israelites were afflicted with exile—banished from their homes. The Promised Land—that which God said would be theirs when they were freed from slavery in Egypt—was no longer their home. Pain and loneliness were surely companions of the Israelites.

Then the prophet Isaiah shared a word from the Lord: “Comfort, comfort my people, . . . Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, . . . that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for” (vv 1-2). Comfort! Can you imagine the power of that word to people tired, lonely, and homesick?

While this encouraging word does not mean there are no longer challenges to overcome, it does convey hope. God, like a mighty warrior, has come to the defense of His people. Like a mother, God gently comforts His children. They will not wander in the desert for years; He will make their paths home straight.

What situation do you find yourself in today? Are you waiting in a desert place for the Lord to bring comfort? Have hope—the Lord brings comfort and guidance to His people.

*There is One who  
loves me,  
One who is my Friend  
He is ever near me,  
ready to defend.*

“All the Way Along” by Ada Blenkhorn

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**He tends his flock  
like a shepherd: He  
gathers the lambs  
in his arms and  
carries them close  
to his heart; he  
gently leads those  
that have young  
(Isaiah 40:11).**

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### **Please pray:**

For Christians in the Eurasia region who are persecuted for their faith.

TUES.  
November  
27

Luke 1:1-13

But the angel said to him: “Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard” (Luke 1:13a).

## BREAKING THE SILENCE

STEFANIE HENDRICKSON

Zechariah and Elizabeth’s story sounds familiar to those who have heard or read Old Testament stories. Much like Abraham and Sarah before them, these two were faithful, but they were also older and childless. In a culture that highly values large families, being childless would be hard to endure. Having large families was equated with God’s blessing. Despite both of them being “righteous in the sight of God, observing all the Lord’s commands and decrees blamelessly,” this couple remained childless for years (v. 6).

God, however, had plans. In the midst of their longing, God sent an angel with a message: “your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John” (v. 13). Their joy—a baby boy—will also bring joy to the people of God.

Israel had waited to hear from God. The prophets were no more amongst the people. The Lord had been silent for years and years and years. Now, however, the silence was broken. A voice in the desert was going to be calling the people back to God: John the Baptist was to be born.

*Come, Thou long  
expected Jesus,  
Born to set Thy people  
free.*

“Come, Thou Long-expected Jesus” by Charles Wesley

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**He will bring back  
many of the people  
of Israel to the Lord  
their God  
(Luke 1:16).**

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**Please pray:**

That many people in Albania will come to know Christ and receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

WED.  
November  
28

Luke 1:14-25

And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words (Luke 1:20a).

## ARE YOU SURE?

STEFANIE HENDRICKSON

In the movie adaptation of the children's book, *Polar Express*, one of the main characters is questioned about her decisions on several occasions. When she takes the lead in a variety of situations, another character challenges her decision with the question, "Are you sure?" Despite her good leadership qualities, the child is plagued with doubt.

*Are you sure?* Can you blame Zechariah for his doubt? He and his wife were older. They have never had children. The Lord had been silent for so long. Zechariah hesitated. He had doubt about the news this angel from the Lord brought.

In the church we often equate doubt with failure. If we have doubt then somehow we aren't committed enough, or strong enough, or pious enough. God, however, understands this. He didn't punish Zechariah too harshly. God gave Zechariah space to process just what the angel said. Imagine being childless for so long and then not being able to talk about the expected baby!

God's response to Zechariah was full of grace. Instead of talking and talking and talking about this turn of events, Zechariah was forced to listen.

Where has God given you grace and space to listen and process His plans for your life? Take time to listen and learn today.

*"Give Me thy heart,"  
says the Spirit divine.  
"All that thou hast, to  
My keeping resign.  
Grace more abounding  
is Mine to impart.  
"Give Me Thy Heart" by  
Eliza E. Hewitt*

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**And of this gospel  
I was appointed  
a herald and an  
apostle and a  
teacher. That is why I  
am suffering as I am.  
Yet this is no cause  
for shame, because  
I know whom I have  
believed, and am  
convinced that he is  
able to guard what  
I have entrusted to  
him until that day  
(2 Timothy 1:11-12).**

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**Please pray:**  
For the development of  
Christian leaders in Albania.

THURS.

November

29

Luke 1:26-38

For no word from God will ever fail  
(Luke 1:37).

## YOU CAN BE SURE

STEFANIE HENDRICKSON

Like her cousin Elizabeth, Mary has had news of God's work in her life. Like her cousin, Mary had no reason to expect God to work in the way He announced. Elizabeth was older and barren: a child was the last thing she expected. Mary was young and engaged to be married: she was not expecting to be a mother. Nevertheless, the angel made his announcement to Mary: You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus" (v. 31).

Unlike Zechariah, Mary seems to be more open to God's plan in her life. While she may have been unsure of what will happen exactly, Mary listens to God's messenger. She doesn't react with an attitude of uncertainly like her cousin Zechariah. The impossibility of the situation isn't bigger than God. Mary's open to the possibility that God is beyond impossible situations.

Gabriel assures Mary that God is at work (even telling her the news about Elizabeth): no word of God ever fails. What God has said will happen in these impossible situations will happen. You can be sure.

*Standing on the  
promises that cannot  
fail! When the howling  
storms of doubt and  
fear assail, By the  
living Word of God I  
shall prevail.*

"Standing on the Promises"  
by R. Kelso Carter

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**For the word of the  
LORD is right and  
true; he is faithful  
in all he does  
(Psalm 33:4).**

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### **Please pray:**

That many people in  
Armenia will come to know  
Christ and receive the  
fullness of the Holy Spirit.

FRI.

November

30

Hebrews 13:1-8

Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith (Heb. 13:7).

## WALK THIS WAY

STEFANIE HENDRICKSON

If you ever need an example of what it means to imitate someone and be like them, spend some time with a toddler. Our daughter is just shy of being two. She plays dinosaurs along with her older brother Charlie. She sings songs on her broom “guitar” with her brother Nicholas. She also has these funny facial expressions that a friend pointed out look just like some of mine!

The author of Hebrews begins this portion of the letter instructing the readers in the ways of living as a follower of Christ: love one another, show hospitality to strangers, remember those in prison, honor marriage, and be free from greed. After this list comes a reminder we may not think of often: remember your leaders and imitate their faith.

We are not called to simply like our leaders or support them. We are called to copy their faith. Think about your leaders right now. Are you emulating their faith? Could you say that you, like our toddler, are soaking up what God is teaching you through your leaders and then imitating them?

Spend time this week considering your leaders faith and how that would look imitated in your life.

*All glory and praise  
to the Lamb that was  
slain, Who has borne  
all our sins and has  
cleansed every stain.*

“Revive Us Again” by  
William P. Mackay

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**Jesus Christ is the  
same yesterday and  
today and forever  
(Hebrews 13:8).**

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### **Please pray:**

For the development  
of Christian leaders in  
Armenia.

## BE NOT AFRAID

STEFANIE HENDRICKSON

Children and laundry are a packaged deal. In order to remove the stain, you have to deal with the stain. You can't ignore it. You can't wish it away (as much as I would like). Often you have to apply a strong soap and some elbow grease to remove the stain.

The people of God have returned from the long exile. They have rebuilt the temple. Things should be wonderful. But they are not. God assures them: "I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me . . . the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come" (3:1). God is on the move. He will address the injustices that have risen amongst the people. Will His people be ready for this?

The stains—the injustices—will be cleaned "like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap," God will clear away the impurities. Those who have lived justly have nothing to fear—stains have not marred their lives or relationship with God. Those with the stains of injustice, however, will have to face the harsh "soap" and "elbow grease" God uses to purify His people. Allow God to clear away any stains that may impede your relationship with Him and others.

*He cleansed my heart  
from all its sin—That  
reconciled my soul to  
God.*

"What a Wonderful Savior!"  
by Elisha A. Hoffman

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**I the LORD do not  
change  
(Malachi 3:6a).**

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**Please pray:**

That many people in the  
Azores will come to know  
Christ and receive the  
fullness of the Holy Spirit.

## AT JUST THE RIGHT TIME

STEFANIE HENDRICKSON

Despite studying music for most of my childhood, I'm not as comfortable with counting time as my husband, a percussionist. Getting the time right in music is as important as playing the correct notes. Imagine a percussionist who has to play a cymbal at the very end of a long piece of music. If she doesn't count out all the measures leading up to that one crash, she will miss her moment to join the song. The waiting can be hard, boring even. So many things can distract her while she counts, and waits, and counts more. But at just the right time, add in the cymbal crash and the music is as it was intended to be heard!

God's timing is more perfect than the best musician counting the measures. God's timing is just right. The problem is, it often doesn't feel like that to us. We have to trust God. We have to wait, and sometimes wait some more, for God's perfect timing to be realized in our lives.

Remember the percussionist waiting and counting through the music: at just the right time God's will can be fulfilled in your life, also. Be patient and count on God.

*Come, Thou long  
expected Jesus, Born  
to set Thy people free.  
From our fears and  
sins release us; Let us  
find our rest in Thee.*  
"Come, Thou Long-expected  
Jesus" by Charles Wesley

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**Restore us, O God;  
make your face  
shine on us, that  
we may be saved  
(Psalm 80:3).**

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**Please pray:**  
For the development of  
Christian leaders in the  
Azores.