

SPIRITUAL PRACTICES FOR THRIVING LIFE

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FAMILY REUNION

Upon reflection, in what ways did you go beyond God's plan for you in attempting to protect yourself or a loved one in some situation?

What causes you to feel the burden to go so far to protect your loved ones?

How could you live differently today if you took seriously that God is the One responsible and accountable for gathering all His people?

Isaiah 43:5-7 – ⁵Do not fear, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you; ⁶I will say to the north, "Give them up," and to the south, "Do not withhold; bring my sons from far away and my daughters from the end of the earth—⁷everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made."

1) Do not fear...

We are in an epidemic of anxiety and depression. Outward peace and prosperity are unable to produce inner peace and contentment. So, you worry about your finances, health, social status, and those of your children, and their children. You measure your life by cultural standards and strive for a personal legacy. You fear for the reputation of your name. Yet, from the beginning God has told us, "Do not fear." If you accept the invitation to be one of His chosen people, your life bears His name first, not your own. You have nothing to fear because Almighty God has staked His reputation on you and your family.

◆ **Blessing of patriarchy:** Male dominance, abuse and neglect, total disregard for the holistic wellbeing of others...patriarchy has earned a bad name. That's because the pursuit of personal pride creates the conditions of objectification, conflict, and oppression. In the end, we

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destroy each other physically and spiritually in attempts to outshine one another. When you choose to honor Father God with your life, we open the unique blessings of ancient patriarchy, the way of the beginning. Our Creator glorifies Himself and His Son by the care He provides for us. He declares, “Do not fear, for I am with you (Isaiah 43:5).” He promises to build you up and provide for you for the sake of His name.

◆**The gathering:** That promise extends to your family. Your fears for your parents and siblings, children and grandchildren, originate from limitations you impose on your idea of God. You have developed strength of body, mind, and soul through adversity. You have decided that plan is not good enough for those you love. You need to intervene on their behalf. Your attempt to honor Jesus has shifted imperceptibly into a need to earn His approval by personally protecting the reputation of the family name. You neglect to take seriously His claim that “I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you (v5).” God will gather His people. You bring Him the greatest honor when you exhibit faith that He is the Savior. Which also means that you are *not*.

II) I will say...

Listen to me. I told you so. You believe your voice has power. You instruct, demand, plead, and negotiate with your beloved, neighbors, coworkers, adversaries, expecting to get your way. Maybe you’ve quit because it’s proven futile and you’re exhausted. Maybe you never started because you saw the impotence of the voices of those around you. You’ve replaced your voice with your force, passive resistance, or direct insolence. Maybe you’ve just given up to depression and despair. Reframe your view through the lens of faith in God’s love and power, Jesus’ salvation, and listen for His voice rather than making noise with your own. He wants to remind you of who He is.

◆**Freedom declared:** You are free to live. How much you live is up to you. That’s the nature of freedom. You decide whether to believe in a distant God who created things then got busy elsewhere. A small God getting pushed around by the bully of evil. An irrelevant God you have outgrown. A majestic God worthy of your love, devotion, and blind faith. The choice you make about your idea of God dictates your choice of how much freedom to exercise and life to live. Either way, He says that “I will say to the north, ‘Give them up,’ and to the south, ‘Do not withhold... (v6)’” The choice is yours, but the consequences fall on

Him. When you say Jesus freed you then live shackled to fear, He does not look like the Savior after whom others desperately seek.

◆**None left behind:** He will not fail. His Word will not return void. His admonition not to fear flows from His faithfulness to “bring my sons from far away and my daughters from the end of the earth (v6).” Thank God the burden of other’s fate is not yours! Yet, you have a powerful role in this. The more freely you live, the more hope and joy you express, the greater your patience during adversity, the greater the attraction others will feel toward Jesus. You can confidently live free from fear of failing God if you choose faith in His ability to gather us all from even the remotest places.

III) By my name...

Central to the exhortation to complete and blind faith in God to lead us to our best is this concept of His name. This concept can be uncomfortable because of the common way we refer to God as a sort of super human. Such intent on glorifying your name would be a form of sinful pride. But He is God, you are not. He is worthy of glory—He imagined and made everything. He did so that creation would enjoy itself and be grateful. Your gratitude honors His name. He will save all that gratefully live in His name for the sake of His glory.

◆**United in name:** You are on the way to God’s family reunion. It’s an unstoppable movement testifying to His power. You gravitate to those who know and want to know Him. It’s a magnetism He spoke into existence when He said bring “everyone who is called by my name (v7).” He will not let any—not one—who bear His name fall away. Your faith will deepen as you reflect on what it means to be called by His name, what that does to your relationship with Him and the world. It unlocks your freedom to live rather than be anxious about obedience. It is how Abraham climbed that terrible mountain and Jesus endured that terrible cross.

◆**United in cause:** Once you appreciate the significance of bearing God’s name, the purpose of your life becomes clear and joyful. Every situation, every moment is an opportunity to honor Him. Your ability to be kind to people acting poorly, peaceful in turmoil, content with little, generous to all, these are worthy of the name Jesus. He is gathering all “whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made (v7).” His glory builds throughout your life and culminates when you unite with all in the final gathering. The world is judging Jesus by your life, every moment of every day. Let’s make Him proud.