

FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT SERIES

ISAIAH 43:1–7

PEACE

We live in tense, anxious times. Stress-related illnesses have reached epidemic proportions. Nightly news reports give vivid details of the latest power struggles, illicit drug deals, terrorist activities and suicides. How can we know the peace of God when the world seems to be falling to pieces? How can we experience the calm, quiet fruit that God's Spirit offers?

Isaiah 43 reveals the love and care of the One whose Spirit lives in us. Israel had sinned greatly by going after other gods and by seeking alliances with heathen powers instead of resting quietly on God. This is why the people found themselves in exile in Babylon (about 540 B.C.). Isaiah 42:23–25 describes something of Israel's sin. Then Isaiah 43 begins: "But now...." The time of exile was almost over, and God was ready to bring his people to safety and security.

1. Imagine an anxiety scale numbered 1–10 (1=very peaceful; 10=very anxious). How would you rate your life on this scale? Explain.
2. Read Isaiah 43:1–7. What words and phrases indicate God's special relationship with Israel?
3. Twice God tells his people not to be afraid (vv. 1, 5). What dangers might they face (v. 2)?
4. If the peace of God does not depend on freedom from adversity (v. 2), on what does it depend?
5. What role then can adversity play in developing peace?
6. How do verses 3–4 foreshadow what God eventually does for his people?
7. If you knew nothing about God except what you learned from this passage, what would you find him to be like?

8. What relation do you see between knowing who God is and being able to receive the peace he offers?

9. Think of the most significant human being in your life, someone you love, trust and understand (and who understands you). How did you get to know this person so intimately?

10. In what similar ways can you get to know God?

11. Consider the things you are anxious about currently. How can knowing God intimately produce his Spirit's peace in you?

12. What steps will you take in the next week to help develop such a relationship?