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## Etched in Memory

By Teresa Hampton

Looking back to the holidays during my childhood, there are certain times that will forever be etched in the happy part of my memory. My parents had a tradition. They invited strangers to eat with us during holiday gatherings. On one such occasion, there was a lonely lady in our community. She and her husband met in Korea, married, and came back to Tennessee. Things went well until her husband died suddenly. She knew very little English and she was alone. My parents invited her to our Thanksgiving dinner, along with another person we barely knew.

Dinner was filled with warmth and laughter. The Korean lady gradually engaged in some conversation. We laughed together when the idioms and colloquialisms of the English language seemed difficult for her to understand and difficult for us to explain. It was a memorable holiday. She is now a Christian. I can't help but believe that my parent's hospitality had at least a small measure in her conversion. They continue to welcome strangers into their home, and the grandchildren are carrying on the tradition.

Jesus spoke about inviting people to supper. He said, *When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just* (Luke 14:12-14).

Jesus' words bring some questions to mind. Was He saying that we should not fix supper for family? No. He was drawing a contrast, much like when He said if we want to be His disciple, we must hate father, mother, wife and children, brother and sister. The point is that our *focus* and *priority* should reflect the heart of Jesus. Our focus should not be entertaining those whom we love or that help us climb the ladder of success. Jesus reached out to the lonely and downtrodden, to those who could not return the favor.

Another question that comes to mind is this. When was the last time you and I invited the poor, crippled or destitute into our homes? You know, there is another holiday right around the corner. It is not too late to open our eyes to a widow or someone in need. It will please our Lord, it will influence our young, and it is sure to become an event that is forever etched as a happy memory.

**Today's Verse:** *You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.* (Leviticus 19:34).

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