

# The Invitation

There once was a widow who had ten children each of whom she loved very, very much. Some of the children were outgoing and friendly, others were introverted and shy. Some had professional careers, others had minimum wage jobs. Some were addicts in various stages of recovery, others had never made the bad choices that resulted in such challenges.

Some of the children called or visited her every day, some one to four times a month, and others less frequently than that. Some called only when they needed something from their mother, while others never called or wrote at all. Three of the children were always ready to do whatever tasks their mom needed done, whether it was doing a home repair, bringing by a special meal, or running errands.

But none of this mattered. The widow deeply loved every one of her children unconditionally and wanted to spend time with each of them.

One day the widow sent out an email to all of her children inviting them to a special holiday dinner party. There was no need to bring or do anything—just say yes to the invitation. Six of the children replied yes, and half of those insisted on helping the widow with work that needed to be done prior to the party. Two children thought that since they had not been in regular contact with their mom, they shouldn't go to the party. They felt uncomfortable, undeserving, and distant from her and said no. Two others said they preferred to hang out with their friends and did not want to spend any time with their mom including attending the party.

The widow and some of the siblings reached out several times to the four who said no. She knew that as much as she loved them, she could not force any of them to accept her love and her invitation. Eventually one of the four changed his mind, said yes at the last minute, and came to the celebration where he was warmly welcomed by his mother and siblings. The party was glorious, went on for a long time, and exceeded everyone's wildest expectations.

We all get an invitation to spend eternity with our heavenly Father who loves us more than we can ever comprehend. The more time we spend getting to know Him by reading the Bible and interacting with Him while we are on this earth, the more comfortable we are in accepting His invitation to be with Him for eternity. Contrary to popular belief, *heaven is not a reward for doing good* while on earth because none of us (not even Mother Teresa) can do enough good to earn a place in heaven. Jesus was the only human sinless and perfect enough to deserve heaven and He paid the price to provide free tickets for all of us to get in – we just have to say yes to the invitation. Most people who don't want to spend time with God while they are on earth won't choose to spend eternity with Him either and turn down His invitation. But some do say yes at the last minute and surprise people when they show up at the party.

Don't worry about being good. Just acknowledge and be grateful for the free ticket from Jesus, and *accept God's love into your heart*. Everything else will fall into place. You will find yourself inspired to do good, not to earn God's love but because you have opened your heart to receive the love God already has for you and that love will flow out into everything you do.

All things—not some things, not most things, but *all* things, even the bad and sad things that happen to us—work together for the good of those who love God. Say yes to God's invitation and you don't have a thing to worry about in life or in death.