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Remembering & Giving Thanks



DENISE & JUAN ARAGÓN



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If we remember deeply and truly, we will know whom to thank.—
Frederick Buechner

The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy. —
Psalm 126:3

Dear friends,

It's been a cloudy day in San Cristobal de las Casas with temperature in the mid 50's. I am freezing! Homes in San Cristobal don't have a heating system, so we have to cover up very well. Our house is quiet as Juancito & Ziba are in school. The house is filled with the aroma of oven-roasted barbecue ribs, which Denise's been cooking for the Thanksgiving dinner we will have at the home of another missionary family. They have two daughters with similar ages to Juancito & Ziba and we are building a friendship with them. I cherish the memories of all the Thanksgiving dinners we celebrated with our WV family.

Recently, Denise and Juancito have been teasingly and, at times, seriously reminding me that I am getting old and, consequently, suffering from memory loss. Denise goes as far as to say that I have a gifted selective memory that empowers me to exclusively retain things that are convenient for me. Somehow, I have to defend myself and refute their view: I am not as young as I used to be, but I'm still young and I have been blessed, I think, with a sharp memory.

Our memory is one of God's most fascinating and formidable adds-on to our brains. Through our memory, we remember experiences and feelings of pleasure, discomfort and fear. For instance, my memory helps me remember the exquisite smell, look and taste of my mother's seafood soup. I can picture the sparkle of delight in her eyes as I tell her how delicious her soup is. I can recall my grandfather's harsh reproofs, too. His angry face and furious voice are vividly imprinted in my mind. Also, I can recollect the excitement, fear, and awe I felt when I saw my firstborn, touched his little hands and kissed his forehead for the first time.

Unfortunately, some people carry with them traumatic memories that negatively impact their lives. Yet, the capacity to remember remains as a beautiful and marvelous gift. Scientists still don't fully understand how the complex process of remembering works. They believe that the sensations we received through our senses traveled to the part of our brain called the hippocampus. Then, the hippocampus, along with another part of the brain called the frontal cortex, analyzes these various sensory inputs and decides whether they're worth remembering. Memory is stored using the language of electricity and chemicals. To a great extent all our memories make who we are.

In the Bible, the concept of memory is not limited to the act of recalling information, people, or past experiences. Rather,

remembering something implies acting in the present in accordance with what is remembered. In other words, remembering and action go together like turkey and gravy (see Numbers 15:39-40). So, when God is said to remember, it is not as though He suffers from amnesia and needs to be reminded, but rather that He honors His promises and covenant (see Genesis 9:15; Exodus 2:24; 1 Chronicles 16:15; Psalm 119:49).

The Israelites were often exhorted to remember God (1 Chronicles 16:12) and live faithfully as His people. They also built memorials and held sacred festivals as reminders of God's faithful deeds (Exodus 12:14, Joshua 4:6-7). David poetically reminded Israel to "Praise the Lord... and forget not all His benefits" (Psalm 103:2). In fact, throughout the Psalms the call to remember God's faithfulness and steadfast love is a central theme. Memory fueled the Israelites' faithfulness to God.

As you gather around the table with friends and family to celebrate Thanksgiving, may you be blessed with a selective memory to recall all that Jesus Christ has done for you and your family (1 Peter 1:3-4). May the memories of God's goodness and steadfast love energize you to live faithfully as a child of God. May you faithfully share with the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, His power, and the wonders He has done (Psalms 78:4).

We thank God for His love, grace and faithfulness, and we thank you for your prayers and generosity which enables us to respond to God's call to make disciples in Chiapas.

With love and gratitude,

Juan & Denise Aragón