

50 Years of Feast Keeping

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the Philadelphia era of God's one true Church. 1983 is, in the words of Pastor General Herbert W. Armstrong, our "jubilee year." Throughout the years God's Church has faithfully kept God's annual festivals, including the Feast of Tabernacles.

This will actually be Mr. Armstrong's 57th Feast of Tabernacles. He and his wife Loma observed the annual Holy Days alone beginning in 1927. The Philadelphia era of God's Church (Rev. 3:7-13), which began in the autumn of 1933, began keeping the Feast of Tabernacles in 1934.

From the smallest of beginnings, with just a few brethren meeting at one site in Oregon, the annual Feast of Tabernacles has become the largest convention on earth, attended by more than 100,000 people at more than 80 sites around the world.

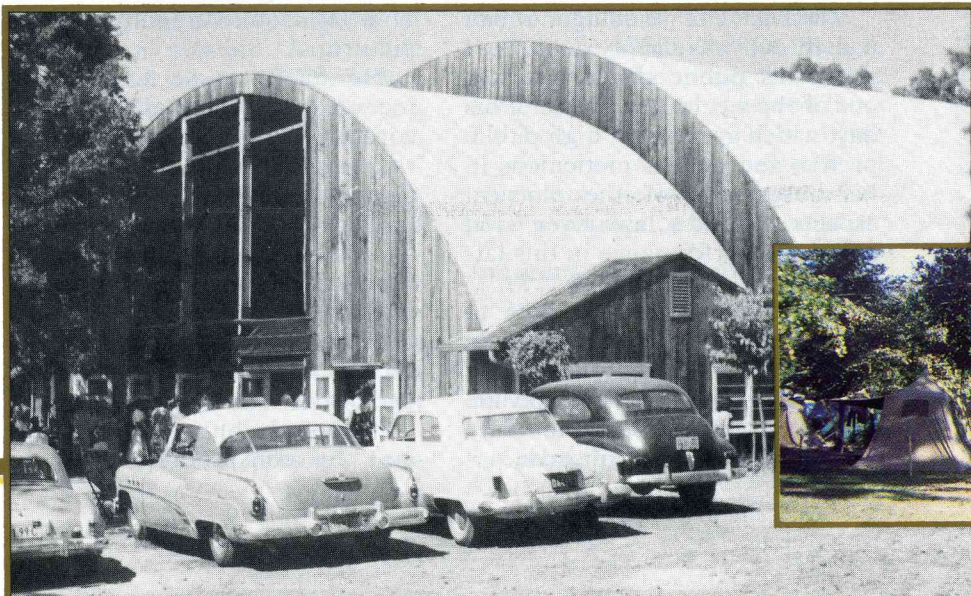
Here, in pictures, we trace the development of Feast keeping in God's Philadelphia Church during the past 50 years.

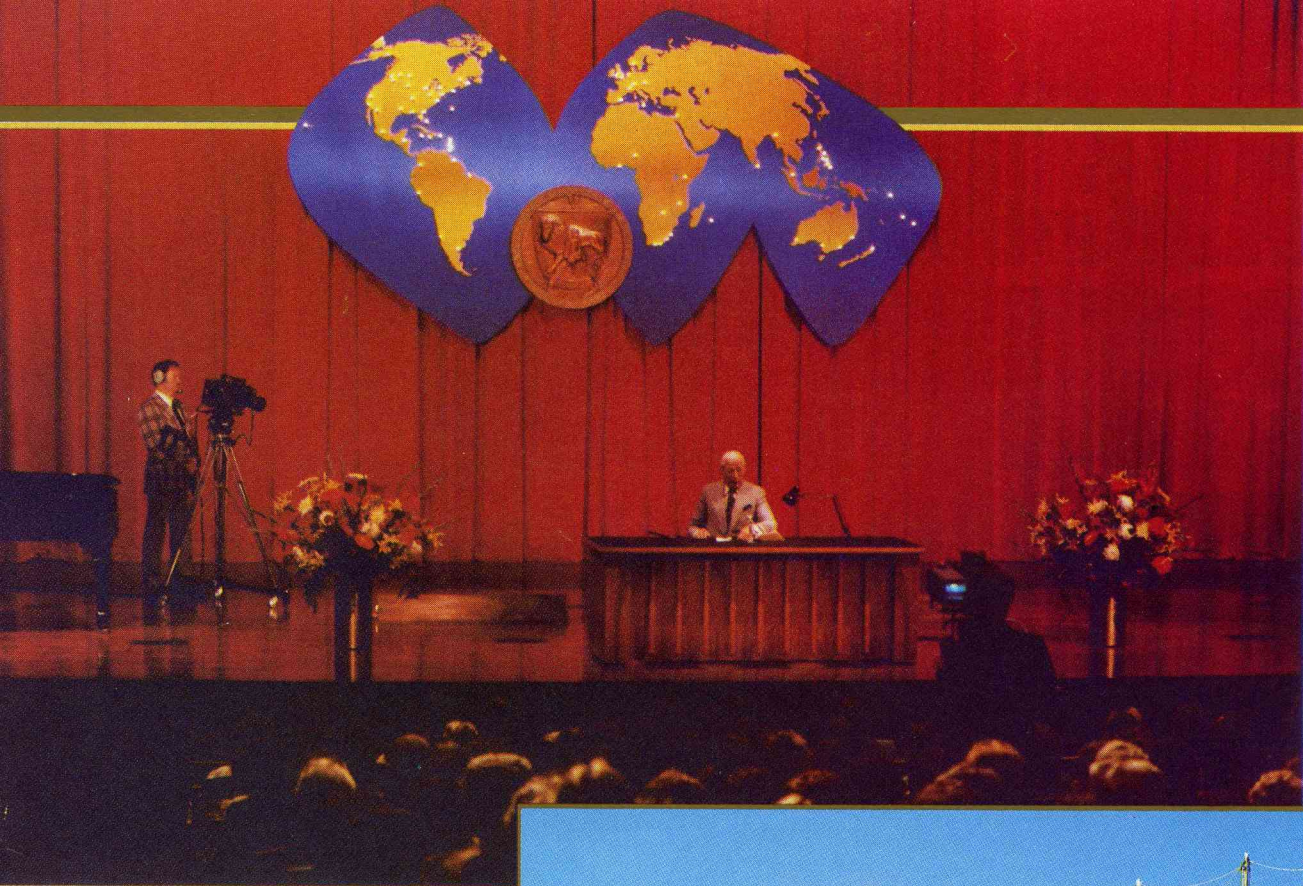


When Mr. Armstrong proclaimed God's Holy Days to the Sardis era of God's Church (Rev. 3:1-6), they laughed him to scorn. Above, the Armstrongs during the 1920s. Right, Belknap Springs, Ore., an early festival site; God's Church first met here in 1945. Below, the Ambassador College student body at Belknap Springs in 1950.



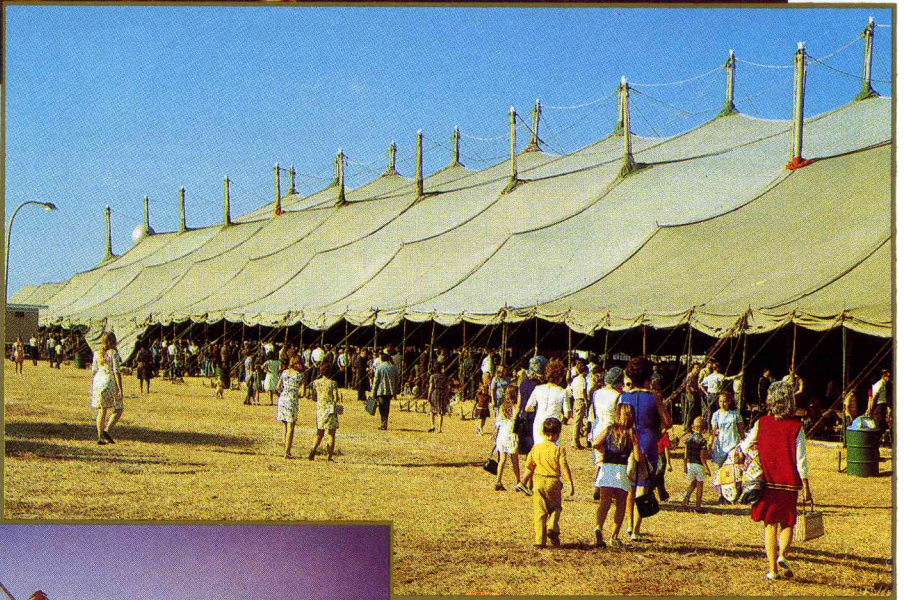
Big Sandy, Tex., is the oldest festival site in use today; the first Feast was held here in 1953. God's Church quickly outgrew the Redwood Building (right, pictured during the 1950s); a permanent convention complex was constructed in 1969. Camping at Big Sandy (inset) is popular with feastgoers there.



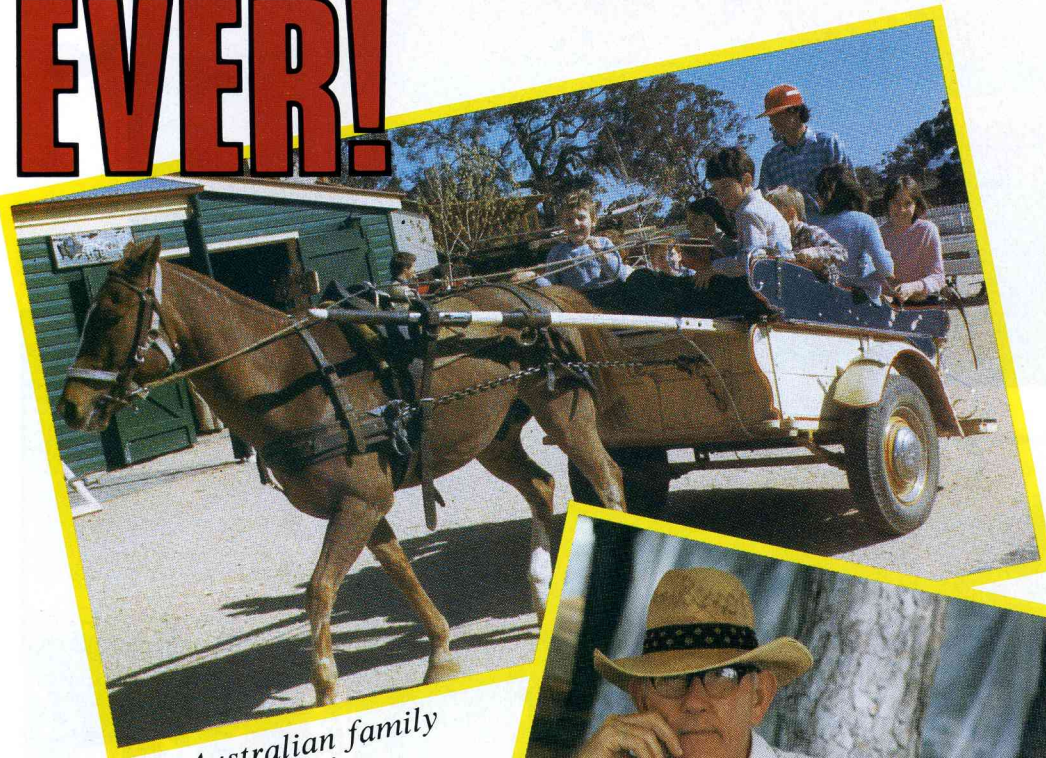


Good News photos

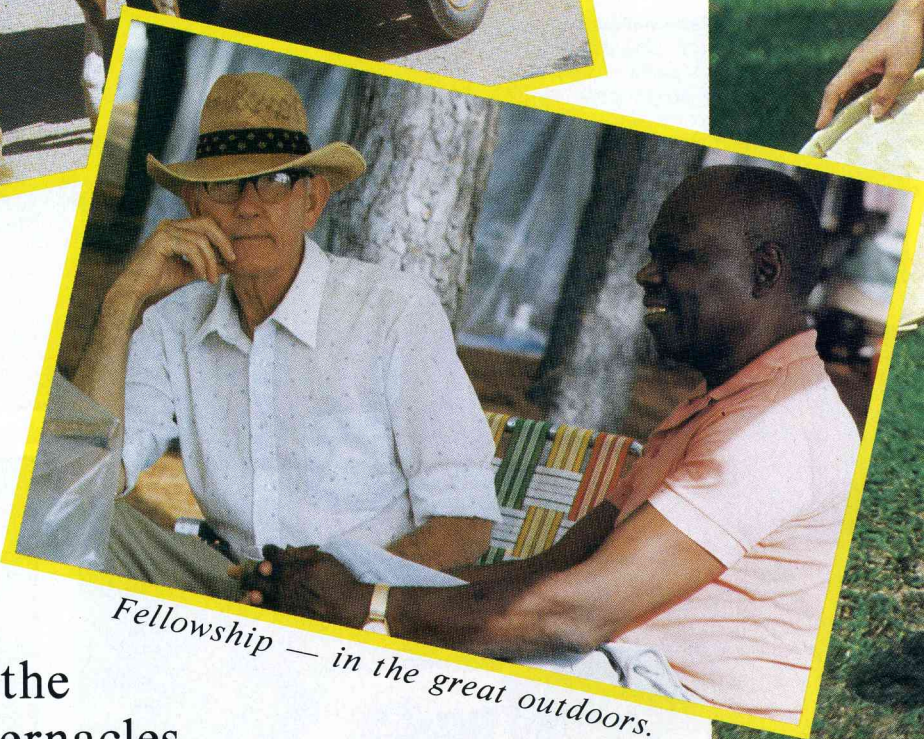
The Feast of Tabernacles has grown to be the largest convention on earth. Counterclockwise from below: Squaw Valley, California's Blythe Arena, built for the 1960 Winter Olympics and used thereafter for festival services; Bricket Wood, England, in 1960; Jekyll Island, Ga., in 1971; and Mr. Armstrong broadcasting, by way of microwave and satellite hookup, a festival message to all U.S. and several overseas sites from Pasadena in 1982. The Feast features spiritual instruction, fellowship and recreation for God's people.



MAKE THIS YOUR BEST FEAST EVER!



*An Australian family
enjoys some fun.*



Fellowship — in the great outdoors.

Here's how to
rejoice, physically
and spiritually, at the
1983 Feast of Tabernacles.

By David C. Pack



Malaysian brethren perform a harvest dance.

"Good evening, everyone, and welcome to the 1983 Feast of Tabernacles!

"It's time to begin the song service, so would you all please take up your hymnals and rise?"

With words like those from song leaders, the 1983 Feast of Tabernacles will begin for God's people at more than 80 sites in 46 countries around the world — Pasadena, Calif; Eastbourne, England; Baguio City, Philippines; Rotorua, New Zealand; Melgar, Colombia; Jerusalem, Israel; Kogalia, Sri Lanka; and Naro Moru, Kenya; to name only a few.

When that moment comes and the Feast begins, will you be ready for it?

I have a confession to make. There have been times I *was* ready and there have been times I knew I *was not* ready to appreciate the meaning of what the above words really signaled.

The Feast is an exciting time. It can be so exciting, rewarding and fun filled that some few of God's people approach it riding on emotional energy alone. They have no real plan to be sure the Feast is a success, so they can honestly say, "That was the best Feast ever."

The one year I could not sincerely say that taught me a lesson. It made me determine to not let it happen again — to not again leave with a sick feeling in my stomach — to not again have to repent of missing some of the lessons I knew I was there to rehearse and learn.

How, then, can you avoid such a situation — how can you make the most of the Feast? Can you really be properly up for the Feast, mentally and spiritually, if you're reading this article just a few days before you leave? Is that

Photos: Brian Hose; Hassel White; Good News

enough time to get ready? I think so, but only if you have a plan and, more important, are determined, no matter what, to use that plan.

Here, then, is a plan. It includes information in four categories, with three points in each category: things you should not do at the Feast, things you should do, attitudes you must not have at the Feast and attitudes you should have while there.

If you will incorporate this information into your keeping of the 1983 Feast of Tabernacles, you will truly be able to say that this is your "best Feast ever"!

Things you should not do

- *Don't try to do everything.*

This is a common mistake, because everything at the Feast looks like fun!

After all, there are services (which, of course, are commanded assemblies) and Bible studies. Most sites are loaded with good restaurants of all sorts.

Then there are special dinners, dances, choir banquets and practices, youth activities, singles gatherings and senior citizens activities.

And what about golfing, bowling, fishing, softball, bicycling, basketball, volleyball and horseback riding? Or amusement parks, historical sights and other sight-seeing, chess tournaments, family day, reunions and more?

Truly, there is something for everyone. Nobody can do it all. Nobody should feel that God expects it. God expects you to make wise, balanced decisions based on the feelings of your whole family.

Pick things that will be both enjoyable and present opportunities to learn. Don't try to put extra hours into a day — it can't be done. At some point you or someone else in your family will not be able to keep up and you'll burn out by the end of the Feast.

- *Don't spend your second tithe without a planned budget.*

God commands us: "You shall truly tithe all the increase of your

grain that the field produces year by year. And you shall eat before the Lord your God, in the place where He chooses to make His name abide, the tithe . . . And you shall spend that money for whatever your heart desires: for oxen or sheep, for wine or similar drink, for whatever your heart desires; you shall eat there before the Lord your God, and you shall rejoice, you and your household" (Deut. 14:22-23, 26).

This is a positive command, not a negative one. It says, "You shall truly tithe . . . you shall eat . . . you shall spend . . . you shall rejoice."

It is always a happy realization for those who have not previously understood the doctrine of second tithe that God wants them to use the second tithe for themselves. God commands us to save it, but then commands that we spend it all to keep the Feasts.

(Of course, the tithe of the tithe must be sent to headquarters in Pasadena to pay for hall rentals and the Church's other Festival-related expenses.)

However, when someone has 10 percent of his gross income for the entire year to spend in eight to 10 days, the effect can be intoxicating. It can even leave the person feeling that the second tithe could not possibly run out too early.

To ensure that doesn't happen, sit down before the Feast of Trumpets, the first festival during this season of the year, and carefully prepare a budget. Be flexible, but be sure to include all of the following items: gasoline and road tolls, food, lodging, recreation, gifts for the children, alcohol and wine (God's command includes strong drink) and miscellaneous expenses, including an emergency fund.

No matter how much God's people are cautioned, some still come, broke, to the business office before the Feast is over, in need of help to even get home. For some this can happen even as early as the second or third day. I've seen it.



Quiet times with Dad on the lake.

Better planning can help you avoid this disappointing and embarrassing experience. Don't be one of the few who might have to go home early. Periodically review what's left and you'll feel in better control when unforeseen expenses arise.

- *Don't get sick — watch your health.*

The time to start watching your health is long before the Feast begins. Don't burn the midnight oil preparing for the Feast only to arrive eager and prepared but exhausted and irritated from the long trip and prone to getting a cold or other common malady.

God's wish is that "you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers" (III John 2). That means He wants us as healthy physically as we are spiritually. To God, sickness is unnecessary, not something we should be willing to live with as normal or acceptable. The Feast pictures a world free of disease and crippling injuries.

Unfortunately, some people have actually spent the entire Festival in a motel room, sick. Ministers on anointing duty regu-

larly see this or lesser situations. Proverbs 13:12, "Hope deferred makes the heart sick," is so true for these people. All hopes, dreams and well-laid plans can be smashed.

People at colder Feast sites need warm clothing. Everybody needs enough sleep, a little exercise and a sensible diet. The command in Deuteronomy does not mean that you should stuff down a whole steak every day, even after steak doesn't taste as good anymore.



Running for fun in the Philippines.

Also, think of this: If your children get sick, it might as well be you, because one or the other parent will have to miss services to be with them at the accommodations. So be sure to watch their health, as well.

Things you should do

• Fellowship all you can.

In the Millennium, the world will be free of all the barriers that divide people today. There will be only one religion, one government, one form of education. Race, nationality and sex won't be barriers, because, throughout the world, we'll all be one. The problems of old age and disease will disappear.

Therefore, if we at every Feast site are typifying this coming world tomorrow, we should want to take advantage of the only time of the year when we are gathered by the thousands as people who

think, believe, live, talk about, understand and suffer the same things.

I get nostalgic just thinking about the closing service, after which old friends return to their far-flung homes and it's all over for another year. One year I was on crutches, nursing a painful, injured foot. I remember that pain was nothing compared to the pain of being unable to move among the brethren and just talk with people.

It's even worth noting here that you should especially look for the infirm, elderly and those in wheelchairs because, as I can tell you from experience, many do wait anxiously for others to come to them to converse.

Look for people who aren't smiling, look alone or lonely or are perhaps new in the Church. Include them when and where you can. Think of those who are dependent on others for transportation and offer to help.

• *Serve at least once and help at least one person.*

Some years ago a U.S. television commercial for potato chips used the slogan "Bet you can't eat just one." The advertiser dared people to try his product, hoping that once they did, the snack's merits would speak for themselves.

Sit down and determine where and when, within your means, you can serve in various ways at the Feast. Could you help with parking, the choir, ushering? How about first aid, transportation, cleaning? Possibly recreation, motel monitoring, information or security? If you're not sure, ask God to guide you to where He can use you best. Then watch the blessings flow.

It's only logical: There's no way that several hundred — or several thousand — can meet in one place for a week without a lot

of people working a lot of hours to make the affair a success.

• Stay close to God.

Remember Christ's words? "Man shall not live by bread [or oxen or liquor!] alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4).

Sometimes Feastgoers can be fooled by the exhilaration of this special time of year. Certainly, the Feast is not normally a time for fasting, but you should not forget to pray, study your Bible and meditate.

A full physical schedule does not equal a spiritually full mind. Any who have tried this experiment know how true that statement is.

There is a great temptation to let faithful prayer and study habits slip at the Feast because, after all, you're hearing all those inspiring messages and your Bible is open on your lap, you're singing from the Psalms and you're involved in inspiring conversations you may not often have throughout the year.

All these aspects of the Feast are wonderful and special and right, but they are fully effective only when you partake of them in conjunction with the same foundation you use in January or June — regular, proper prayer, Bible study and meditation.

Sexual immorality, drunkenness, demonic influences (demons love to disrupt the Feast, because they know this time pictures the Millennium, when they, with Satan, will be bound and totally excluded) and hostile, irritated attitudes are potential problems.

James wrote, "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you" (Jas. 4:8). Plan to have no regrets in this area!

Attitudes you must not have

• *Physical circumstances can affect the success of a spiritual Feast.*

All the initial statements in this category — statements like the one above — are false. If you allow yourself to believe them, you'll prevent yourself from having your best Feast ever.

Paul wrote in Philippians 4:11-

Photos by Doug Johannsen and Ricardo E. Perez

12: "Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need."

Have you found yourself having to repeat these words to yourself at a frustrating moment during a Feast? Many — indeed, most — have had to swallow hard on occasions at the Feast because things did not go as planned. All of us have stories to tell.

At Wisconsin Dells, Wis., one year my wife and I (and one baby!) had to sleep on an old bed that was at least a foot short for me (I'm 6'7"). The only solution for me was to sleep with my feet up in the air on a pillow propped against the wooden headboard. That was frustrating — even if only you taller men can appreciate it!

Don't let slow restaurant service, bad traffic, heavy rains, heat, flat tires, poor seats, less-than-perfect accommodations, bad directions or any one of hundreds of other potential problems affect what is really a spiritual Feast. How can they, really? They're all physical circumstances.

If your circumstances cause you to "suffer need," be content and thank God you're even there. If your circumstances cause you to "abound," don't let prosperity turn your head, either. Be sure to keep the right perspective.

• *Thousands of people can live together for eight days in perfect harmony.*

It's just not possible while we're still in the flesh! We're going to make mistakes in our dealings with others. Even though it's God's Feast, human nature will be present.

Look at your family for a moment. Do you all love each other? Of course! Do you get along pretty well on the whole? Probably! Do you enjoy doing things together? No doubt! Do you all know each other well? Certainly!

All right, now think: Have you had at least one little irritation of one kind or another in the last eight days? The answer surely is yes. And your family may represent only three, four or five or so people.

Well, suppose your family had thousands of members — many you didn't know well or even know at all. All kinds of problems could occur and no one, really, would be at fault. Time and chance would be bound to cause a problem sooner or later, even if nothing else did. The point is this: If "three is a crowd," what is 5,000?

When traffic problems, jammed restrooms, crowded dances, parking inconveniences, misunderstandings and other problems (possibly because of someone else's momentary thoughtlessness) occur, take them in stride. David wrote in Psalm 119:165, "Great peace have those who love Your [God's] law [God's way of life and all it represents], and nothing causes them to stumble."

• *You've already heard what will be said in the sermons.*

This point is especially for "spiritual old-timers" — those who have been in God's Church for several years.

If you think about previous Feasts you've kept, you'll no doubt remember some of the most outstanding messages you've heard. I know that's how I feel. Specific messages come clearly to mind, with some of the details still intact.

When the Jews kept the Feast in Jerusalem, as they'd done all their lives (John 7), they had no reason to expect anything unusual, either in what took place or what was said.

But during the Feast a new

speaker arrived and gave a new message, different from what they'd always heard before.

Because they weren't ready for this new message, the Jews rejected it and tried to kill Christ for it! They missed the opportunity to learn more than they had learned in 30, 40 or more previous Feasts put together.

They weren't expectant, hopeful, eager, mentally prepared for a spiritual banquet. If they had been, maybe history, on that day at least, would have been different. Perhaps some could have later been called into the Church, thus changing their lives, because of the attitude they could have brought to the Feast.

After you hear the messages at



Sermons have something for all.

this Feast, discuss them, pray about them, cement them into your mind. Even thank God for the repetition of old principles, because He knows which points need special emphasis. Don't assume you know everything.

Attitudes you must have

• *Appreciate that you know the meaning of the Feast.*

Sad to say, some people who once knew what you now know about the plan of God are not with us any longer.

God's plan, we know, is pictured in God's Holy Days each year. Some were willing to trade this treasure of understanding for the chance to rejoin this Satan-

deceived world (Rev. 12:9). After people stop keeping God's law, they eventually lose most or even all of the understanding God once gave them (Ps. 111:10).

Here's a case in point: When Jeroboam led the northern tribes into rebellion, splitting Israel into two nations, he shifted the feasts to the eighth month, instead of the seventh as God commanded (1 Kings 12). Eventually Israel stopped keeping the feasts altogether, because God wasn't blessing their disobedience.

The result: Without the sign of God's Sabbaths, including weekly Sabbaths, Israel lost sight of the true God and later lost their own identity. The impact was so far-reaching that the 10 lost tribes are still lost to the world today.

We not only have had God's Feasts revealed to us, but we know why we keep them. The knowledge that God's government will one day rule the whole world and bring to everyone

This is because so many people who have God's Spirit will be gathered together by the hundreds or thousands.

And this example of God's Spirit will, as it always does, have an effect on the employees at restaurants, motels and other places of business that we patronize. Our attitude is often reciprocated by these people. The combined effect is uplifting and unlike the joy we feel at any other time.

Christ expressed to His disciples His desire that "My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full" (John 15:11). How much joy are you leaving with others? Much? Some? Very little? None? It is to be hoped that it will at least be "some," and because of the inspiration we should all feel, we should be able to increase it to the "much" category with only a little effort.

Make your conversations and even your facial expressions uplifting and encouraging. Practice God's way of giving and sharing what you have, whether it's little or much, with others.

No matter how shy you are, it's wonderful when someone warmly greets and engages your interest and conversation. Your own feelings tell you that.

The golden rule of doing to others what you would have them do to you (Matt. 7:12) tells you, then, that turnabout is fair play. Try it — and you'll like it.

• *Learn and take with you the fear of God.*

Deuteronomy 14:23 says that while we attend the Feast, spend our festival tithe and rejoice, we are to be learning to fear God.

Every fear that people have is learned. Fear of dogs, cats, snakes, open, closed or high places, thunder, the number 13 or any other fear is either acquired slowly, perhaps over years, or suddenly because of some traumatic event that can inbreed a

fear through quick and wrong association.

Many of these fears are hard to unlearn and can even seem nearly impossible to overcome if they are deep-seated.

So it is with the fear of God — the deep awe, respect and reverence we should feel for our Creator, and the absolute unwillingness we should have to disobey Him. We're not born with it. Like any other fear, we must at some point learn it. The deeper we learn it, the harder it is to lose it and, of course, with this kind of fear, that's good.

Many scriptures admonish us to learn and choose the fear of God, and it can be learned all year around. However, the only specific reference to learning it at one particular time of year refers to the Feast of Tabernacles. What does this have to do with a time of great rejoicing?

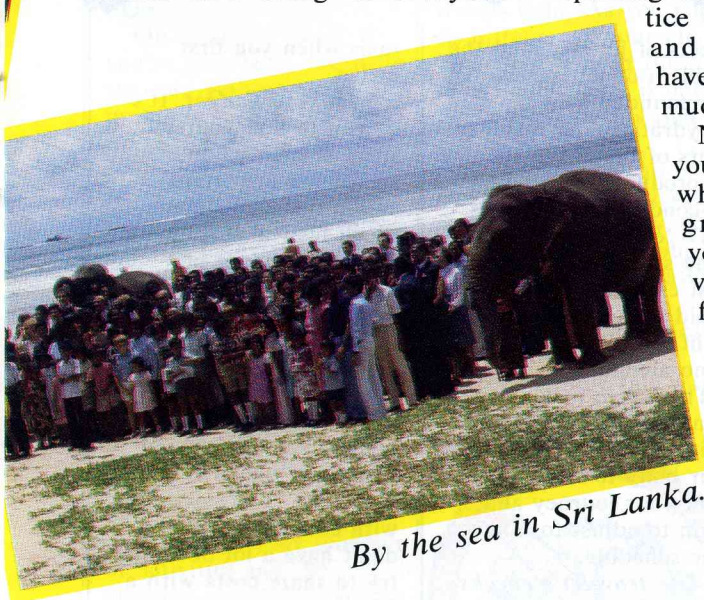
As we see the way of God working in harmony in peace and happiness, when so many are together obeying God, it puts us in awe and deep respect of the mind of God and how beautifully His whole plan has been put together. No other time of year pictures His plan working so well on a large scale.

Practice these points

I can't count the number of times I have heard or read an important spiritual message and resolved to use and practice that information, only to procrastinate and allow other things to crowd in, or to recall later that I had forgotten it altogether and lost the impetus I felt when I first realized its importance.

Will the 12 points in these four categories go the way of all unused sermon notes? Will they go the way of all forgotten messages? Or will they be thought about, prayed over, acted upon and benefited from?

Promise yourself right now that you'll review and meditate on these principles so you'll be ready to really practice them at this year's Feast of Tabernacles. The chance to do so will be gone before you know it! □



By the sea in Sri Lanka.

peace, happiness and all the good things anyone could want is precious. It's special, privileged knowledge given to you and me. We should never treat it lightly. That way we'll never lose it.

• *Spread joy at the Feast.*

One of the things that's most exciting about the Feast is that, during this Festival, we'll see more of the fruits of God's Holy Spirit displayed, probably, than we'll see all the rest of the year.