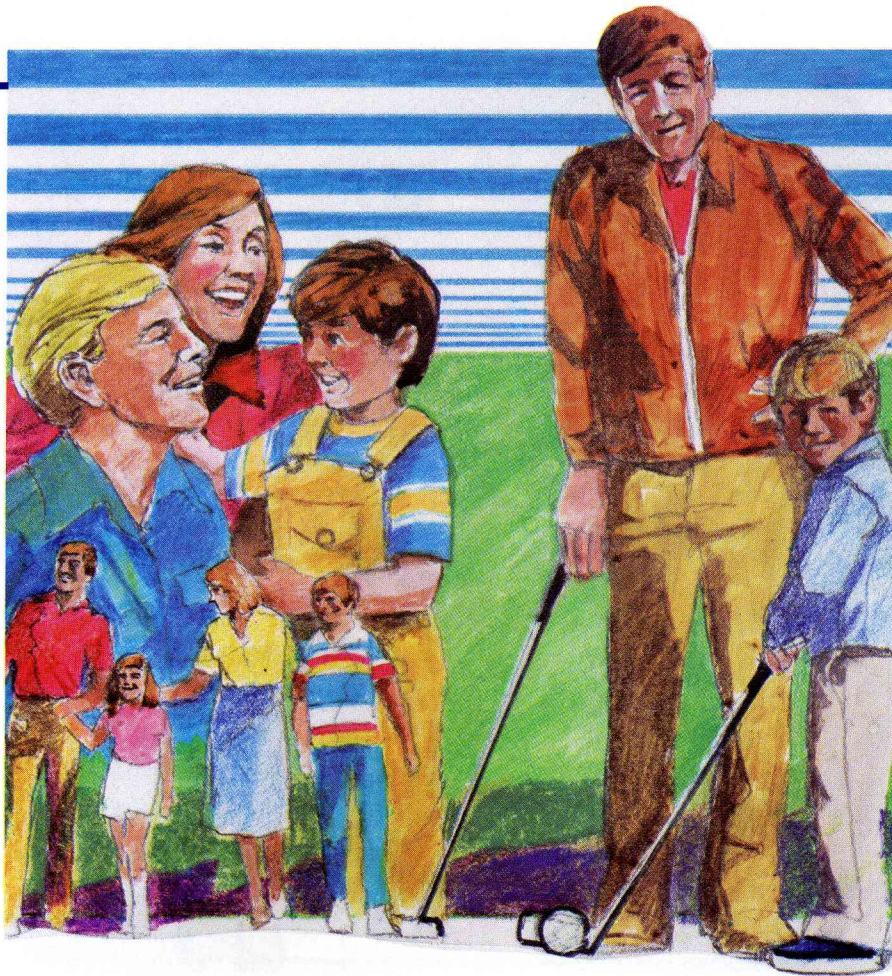




How Your Children Can Rejoice

Whether your children are able to really rejoice at this Feast of Tabernacles depends on you!

By Bernie Schnippert

Make no mistake: God's Feast of Tabernacles is just as important for your children as for yourself or your spouse.

God, in fact, commanded that your children enjoy the Feast — that they rejoice just as you will rejoice (Deut. 16:14).

But an important difference exists between the rejoicing of an adult at the Feast and the rejoicing

of a child. Whether an adult rejoices depends largely upon himself. He determines whether he saves his second tithe, how he spends it and how he keeps the Feast.

But the same is not true for children. Their ability to rejoice at the Feast of Tabernacles depends upon their parents. What you do decides whether your children will rejoice. Read that again: What *you* do at the Feast decides whether your children will rejoice or not.

How about it? Will you keep the Feast in a way that will allow not only you and your spouse to rejoice, but also your children? You should, for the command that your children rejoice is just as strong and pointed as the command that you rejoice.

Probably most parents in God's Church sincerely want their children to enjoy the Feast. They know that their children are set apart by God as holy (I Cor. 7:14). They realize that this means their children can have a better chance of being in God's Church when they mature than the average young person in the world. They can have a better chance, that is, if their parents make good use of training opportunities (like the Feast of Tabernacles) while the children are young.

But how does one go about teaching his child to rejoice at the Feast?

Set the example

The place to start is with yourself. Anyone who has children knows well that they mimic us — sometimes too closely! Therefore, we should set a good example. We should keep the Feast properly ourselves.

The place to start is by strictly setting aside our second tithe throughout the year. If we don't save our second tithe properly, we will not have it to spend at the Feast and therefore cannot rejoice as fully as we might otherwise.

If we don't rejoice, it's a cinch that our children will not either. By not saving our second tithe properly we are, in effect, robbing our children of happiness. Certainly we have no right to do such a thing.

Also, we should make sure that we thoroughly understand the meaning and purpose of the Feast of Tabernacles. And while at the Feast, we should make a point of attending all services, obeying all rules and being coop-

erative in a Christian and godly manner. Our children will mimic our obedience and reap the joy that obedience to God's law brings.

Help children understand

Having resolved to set a good example ourselves, our next step in helping our children rejoice at the Feast should be to teach them about the Feast. Certainly, this should include some formal "child-in-the-lap" instruction where we explain the academic meaning behind the Feast and the things we do. But the most meaningful teaching for our children goes even beyond this.

Children learn by doing. That's why God commands us, though we are physical adults, to attend the Feast of Tabernacles ourselves. We are God's children, and we learn what the Millennium will be like by acting it out.

In the same way, we should help our children act out the Feast and teach them why we are doing what we are doing as we are doing it.

Notice Deuteronomy 11:18-19. God commanded: "Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes. And ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up."

Notice that in these scriptures God does not say the teaching should be solely a classroom experience. No, He wants you to teach your children why you are obeying God and how to obey God as you yourself do.

Applying this to the Feast of Tabernacles is simple. As you save your second tithe throughout the year, explain to your children what you are doing and why. As you pack for the Feast, give them lessons about being prepared. As you travel to the

Feast, explain why you leave your home for a week and a half each year to meet in the place God chooses.

When you get to the Feast and pull up to the motel or into the campground, explain the meaning of temporary dwellings. As you go to the services, help your children understand what God's ministers are teaching and what all the speakers are saying.

Carry your teaching over to your leisure-time activities, also. If you eat in a nice restaurant, explain how you have received this blessing for obeying God and His ways. Tell them that in the world tomorrow all people will be as blessed as you are.

If you go for a walk in the park, explain how the animals in the world tomorrow will be tame and how children will be able to stand with one hand on a lion and another on a lamb without fear.

Give them special attention

Do you see how simple it can be to teach your children? Sometimes we as adults make things too difficult. Teaching your children about the Scriptures — even having them memorize certain key passages — is important, and this type of training should be included in your Feast of Tabernacles instruction. But the best instruction for the Feast is simply for your children to learn by doing what you are doing.

Tailor some of your activities especially to the children. The hubbub of important goings-on at the Feast can sometimes cause us to unintentionally shove our children into the background. We can think that the deep, beautiful spiritual truths of God can't reach young minds and therefore inadvertently leave them out of the action.

In fact, that's exactly what Christ's disciples did. And it was Christ's disciples' act of pushing the children away that caused Christ to rebuke them (Matt. 19:13-14).

If Christ took time out for spe-

cial attention toward the children, so should we. Plan now for special activities strictly for your youngsters. Take them to the zoo or to the miniature golf course or to a restaurant they might like.

And don't forget, while you escort them through the activity you should again remind them that they are having this fun because your family is obeying God.

Learn from them, too

It's true that this article is about how to help your children rejoice at the Feast, but another point should be made: While teaching your children, take a moment to learn from them.

See how teachable and believing they are as you explain to them about God's way. See how their minds reach out to understand God's truth as you explain it to them. Marvel at the questions they ask about God's way, and how willing their minds are to accept and believe what you say simply because you are their parent and they trust you.

Shouldn't you and I as adult members in God's Church be as receptive to our spiritual Father, the great God Almighty, as our children are to us? Certainly.

And we will be if we take time out to guide our children's way through the Feast instead of just letting the Feast happen to them. We will see the joy that they experience, and we will see more perfectly how teachable we should be as the spiritual children of God our Father.

The Feast of Tabernacles is a fun time for each one of us. We as adults should diligently help our children understand the Feast and see that they rejoice as we ourselves do.

If we do, our children will express the proper, teachable, humble, rejoicing, childlike attitude that Christ said would characterize God's children in His Kingdom. And the sound of our young people rejoicing at the Feast of Tabernacles will be deafening in God's ears! □