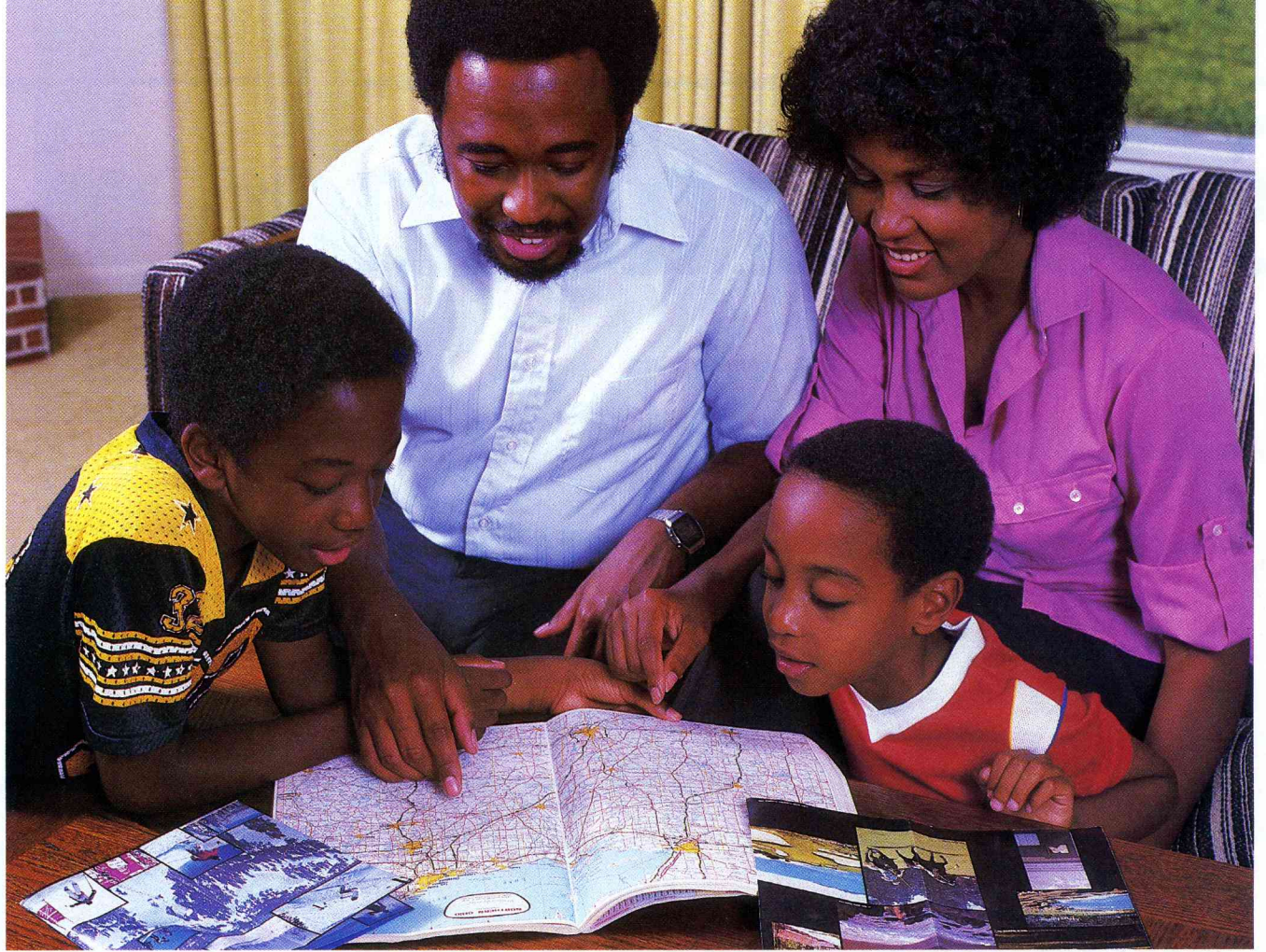




Teach Your Children About God's Holy Days

Your children can begin to understand God's great plan if you teach them about His festivals. Here's how.

By Selmer L. Hegvold

I shall never forget the question!

My children were soberly watching through our station wagon's windows as "Booth City" and the Big Sandy, Tex., festival grounds receded behind us.

The Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day had ended. We were

driving westward on Highway 80 toward Los Angeles, Calif., 1,500 miles away.

There was heavy silence as each member of my family retreated into his or her own nostalgic thoughts.

As the sun rose higher into the morning sky, my son suddenly asked, "Dad, how long will it be 'til next Feast of Tabernacles?" I took a quick

glance at my son's pensive face, and sensed that my children were about to burst into conversation.

They did! Each had his or her own most exciting experience to relate. It was almost too much to wait for the others to finish relating theirs. There were giggles and laughter and many a sigh.

We were a family united in pleas-

ant reminiscences of "the greatest Feast ever." Each of us wanted the Feast to last forever! Job and school seemed far away. We would long remember our eight days shut off from this world, being fed spiritual food and fellowshiping with our brethren before God.

This happy phenomenon always occurred, year after year!

Our children are different

Children in the Worldwide Church of God enjoy a special relationship with almighty God. God says your child is unique! The apostle Paul explained the powerful impact a believing husband or wife can have on unbelieving family members:

"For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy" (I Cor. 7:14).

This does not mean your child is either "lost" or "saved." It means that God has, for your sake, given your child access to spiritual knowledge and contact with Him. It means you can teach your child about God. It means your child's chances of being converted when sufficiently mature are multiplied.

Paul went on to say, "For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?" (verse 16). It's a matter of salvation for all within your family.

What a heavy responsibility God has given us as parents! You hold the key to your child's future. How much assistance are you giving your child so he can make the proper choices in life?

This world exerts incredible pressures — negative pressures — on your children, especially through their peers. Their friends are powerful influences.

Your child can choose to drift along, going where life takes him. That option appears to be the least complicated — just float with the tide. Your child can hope, and most young people do, that he will not have to "pay the piper" eventually — but everyone does.

On the other hand, some youngsters find it in themselves to steer clear of peer pressure and the wrong influences of their neighborhood or school. They set their sights on developing talents and achieving high goals *in this world*. Granted, these ambitions may be more desirable than the meaningless drives of the "floaters" first described.

But as Pastor General Herbert W. Armstrong states: "Modern education trains students to earn a living in the professions, occupations and vocations — but fails to teach them



how to live! It commits the crime of developing the machine, but it fails to develop the man" (*Tomorrow . . . What It Will Be Like*, p. 12).

But you as a member of God's Church can offer your child the chance for far greater and more exciting achievements! It is to be hoped that you are presenting God's way of life to your child colorfully and convincingly, from the cradle through adolescence! You must begin at birth to train and teach your child how to live a rich, full, happy, abundant life (Prov. 22:6).

To do the job fully, you must instill in your child the concept of God and His great overall purpose for all humanity. But how?

Teach God's Holy Days

Mr. Armstrong has written of the need to teach children about God's plan:

"Children *need*, as they need life itself, an awareness of the basic TRUTHS of the Bible, while these children are growing up. Years ago this

realization plagued me. God had called me to an important ministry that He was blessing with rapid and constant growth. But the children were being neglected in this ministry. How could I supply this lack?" (*The Bible Story*, Introduction).

The same realization has plagued me, you readers and the ministry as a whole. How can we instill in our children an understanding of and love for God and His great plan for humanity?

What you do with your children at God's festivals, and the way you do it, could decide how readily they seek out God and His way. Take advantage of their special relationship with God and foster in them a love for God's Holy Days and His plan!

First, teach them who God is and about His commandments — His way — and His great love (John 3:16). Then show them the meaning of each week and its last day — the *Sabbath*. Help them anticipate the Sabbath with excitement and pleasure (Isa. 58:13-14).

Think positively. Use your imagination. Reflect deeply on God's plan, pictured year after year in His Holy Days.

What about each Holy Day would have stirred your interest most when you were a child? Or, if you grew up in God's Church, what excited you most about each one? If you had to overcome some grave dislike you had as a child about the way your family observed any Holy Day, what would you change in its observance now so that your child today will come to love it?

Have you assumed that your child is not able to comprehend, at his tender age, God's great plan as pictured in His annual festivals? The earlier he gains insight into the glorious future you, his parents, are preparing for, the better for the entire family!

Show each spring how, beginning with the *Passover* and the *Days of Unleavened Bread*, another new year on God's calendar has commenced. Explain that, as the year unfolds, we are one year closer to the wonderful world tomorrow.

When the Festival of *Pentecost* comes around, tell your children how, more than 1,950 years ago, Jesus

Photo by Warren Watson

Christ began His Church by putting His Holy Spirit in 120 people. Explain how people must have God's Holy Spirit to really overcome their problems in this world ruled by Satan.

Show how your children's friends, through no fault of their own, have been blinded by Satan to God's marvelous truth. Teach your child what Christ meant in John 6:44: "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day."

This scripture is also a promise that God will not overlook your child's friends, but will call them eventually. Give your youngster this hope!

Your child can enjoy good friends in and out of the Church and at the same time be an inspiring example of how to be happy by living the right way. Teach that simply living God's way, without trying to talk his friends into believing God's truth, is the best example he can set for them.

The fall festivals

Explain each year that the *Feast of Trumpets* pictures the angelic buglers creating a spine-tingling musical fanfare for the glorified Jesus Christ as He returns to earth. All eyes will point heavenward as humanity sees Christ coming in the clouds of heaven, to rule all the earth from His throne in Jerusalem.

When that happens Satan's hold on this world will be broken. Jesus Christ will then begin to open the way for all mankind to join us in the Kingdom, and eventually in the Family, of God. Teach your child to pray for this momentous event.

Show that God's fast day, the *Day of Atonement*, though difficult for us to keep, is really the joyous Festival that heralds the soon coming day when Satan the devil will be bound and put away in a special prison (Rev. 20:1-3).

Point out that as we fast, we are made powerfully aware of how important it is for the devil, who has deceived the whole world (Rev. 12:9), to be banished forever. Because Satan has deceived your child's friends, they are now literally *starving* for the truth of God's way,

the truth that could (and soon shall) fill them with happiness, joy and hope.

Then your children can focus on the coming day when their friends, blinded by Satan, can see and join them in joyous fellowship forever.

The Feast of Tabernacles

The *Feast of Tabernacles* probably seems to take a long time to come each year. One couple hit upon an interesting way to spur "Feast fever" in their home.

The family pasted together a paper-link chain to hang in their window. They removed a link each day. As the number of links grew smaller, their children's anticipation mounted.

Excitement reigned in that home the day the last link came down out of the window and it was time to leave for the Feast. Each child had been privileged to remove several links in turn with the others. It's not too late to make your own paper-link "Feast-fever" promoter.

You will certainly be able to think of other methods to keep your family enthusiastically oriented toward the Feast of Tabernacles.

Let every family member help plan your itinerary to and from the Feast. Great excitement can be generated by pointing out the areas of scenic landscapes that will unfold before you, for instance.

Plan and take along fun games everyone can play — these will hold interest for hours during the trip. Don't forget any homework your child's teacher assigns. Encourage your child to complete his assignments beforehand, so as to free the Feast time for more pleasurable activities. On the way to the Feast select night lodgings, if possible, with a pool, playground or park where your children can romp and let off pent-up energy.

And encourage your children to make new acquaintances quickly at the Feast — don't let the days slip by. Our children always seemed to quickly break through any barriers of self-consciousness and make many new friends. The Feast actually promotes new friendships, especially for young people in God's Church.

When Jesus Christ returns, He will marry His Bride — His people, His Church — in a stunning, gala wedding ceremony and celebration (Rev. 19:7-9). Explain this tremendous event to your children and help them look forward to it with excitement.

Is your daughter, for instance, awed by large, beautiful weddings? Would she be interested in attending the most glorious and lavish wedding of all? Think of colorful, factual ways to communicate the splendor of Christ's coming wedding so she will be thrilled with anticipation.

You will accomplish a great deal if, in doing so, you fill her mind with the necessity of recapturing true values. Help her realize that she can attend that wedding, not as an observer, but as part of the Bride!

God's great plan

Has your child lost a relative or a close friend in death? Does he know he will see him alive again?

When the Feast of Tabernacles comes to a close and the *Last Great Day* begins, take the opportunity to picture to your child the wonderful day when those close to you both will come up alive again to learn what you have learned, so they can all be with you forever. Read and explain Isaiah 65:18-25.

How well are you teaching your children about God's great plan by making clear the meaning of God's Holy Days? Don't assume your youngsters can't understand — they can and they will, if you train them properly.

You can accomplish all that has been presented in this article. How? Begin a personal study, in detail, in your Bible, asking God to help you better understand and communicate to your children the fantastic vistas of who and what God is, of His Holy Sabbath day, His Church and these annual festivals and their impact on your child's future.

All else should fade into insignificance in relation to what God is offering these unique children of ours! With God and the meaning of His plan firmly fixed in their minds, they can achieve true success and happiness here and now! □