

The Feast Is for Teenagers, Too

Here's information, addressed to both parents and teens, on how teenagers can make the most of this year's Fall Festival.

By Ronald Kelly

Nearly 14,000 teenagers will attend this Feast at sites around the world! That's about *one in every seven* individuals who will attend the Feast!

The Feast of Tabernacles is definitely for teenagers, too.

When God instituted His annual Holy Days in ancient Israel some 3,500 years ago, He said, "Thou shalt observe the feast of tabernacles seven days, after that thou hast gathered in thy corn and thy wine: And thou shalt rejoice in thy feasts, *thou, and thy son, and thy daughter*" (Deut. 16:13-14).

God intended the Feast of Tabernacles to be a family affair.

To help prepare this article, I asked the freshman class at Ambassador College in Big Sandy, Tex., to write papers on how they looked back upon their Feast experiences during their teenage years. I was pleasantly surprised to see how many of them looked back with great joy at spending those valuable days together with their families at the Feast. Here are some quotes about family togetherness:

Most of the Feast I spent with my family, which I enjoyed. I noticed that in some families there was less family unity than in ours. Some teens were out doing one thing and the parents another. Seldom

did they get together as a family to do something.

As I look back upon it, I am so happy now our family did many things together. Some students who do not have close families have mentioned to me how much they wish their family had done — but never did.

And from another student:

The last few years I've noticed a change in attitude among many teens. It seems that more are becoming interested in the Church and interested in their families.

I think the teens still enjoy the same activities as always — activities such as dances, skating and boat rides. But I also think that teenagers, because of new interest in the Church family, have learned to enjoy family activities such as family dances, picnics, sight-seeing tours and amusement centers together.

Teen years provide the opportunity to build solid, enduring family relationships. The time spent traveling to and from the Feast plus the eight days at the Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day give occasion, probably, for more family togetherness than at any other time of the year. Families should capitalize on this marvelous opportunity.

Most families begin their Festival planning many months

before the time that bright full moon signals the beginning of the Feast in the seventh month on God's sacred calendar. Of course, the first order of business is to decide which site to attend.

In some cases, this might be quite a problem. One family member may want to attend a site near home. Another may want to drive two or three days each way. The kids probably look to exotic recreational opportunities such as visiting Disneyland or a stop by the nation's capital on the way to or from the Feast.

In most cases, the family's finances and the time available off work and school will dictate the kind of Feast trip the family will take. But with so many exciting places to keep the Feast (77 sites worldwide this year!), site selection can be quite a problem.

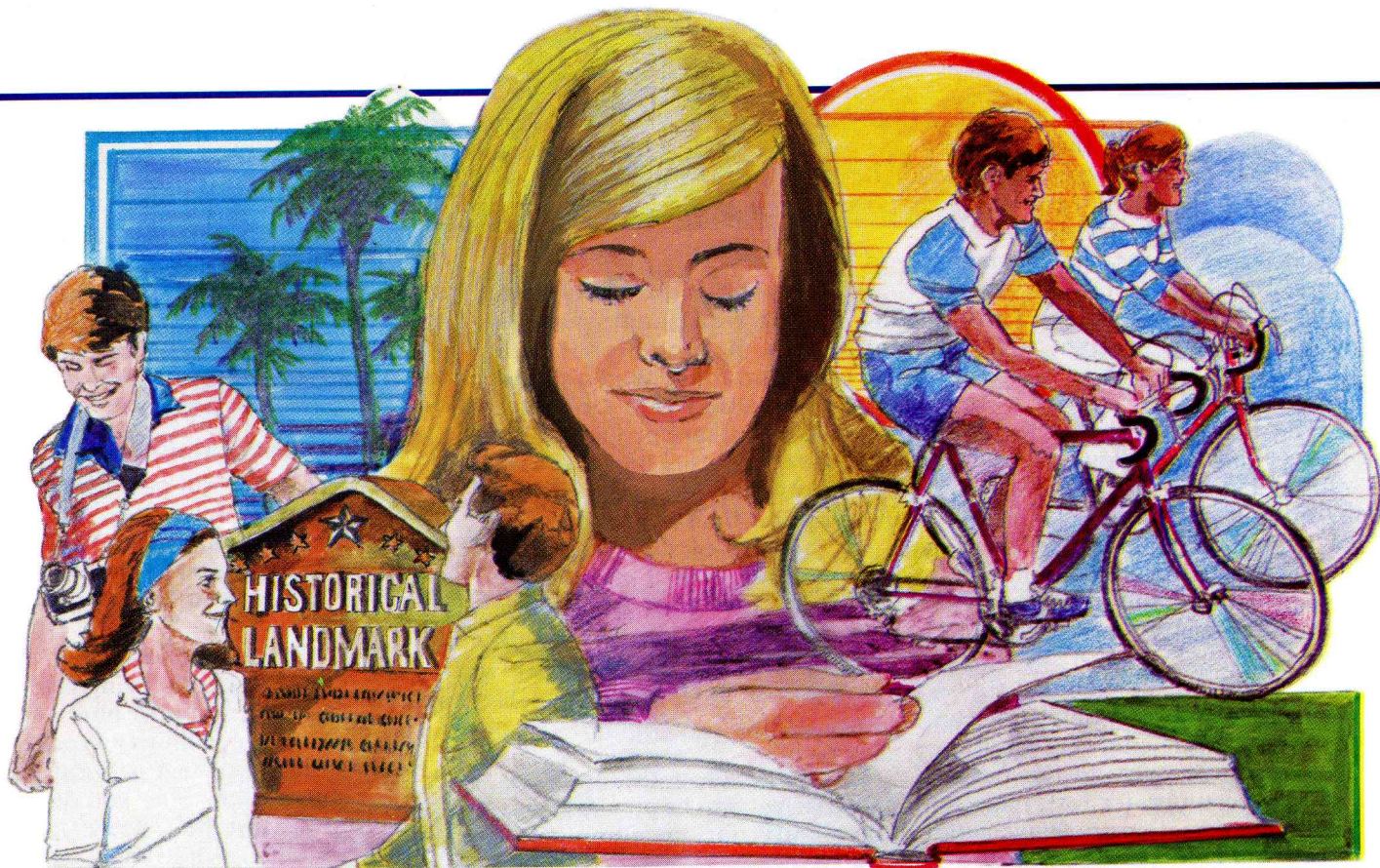
Leaving school behind

Of course, in addition to planning in terms of time and finances, each member of the family must make proper personal arrangements. Dad, for instance, will have to arrange vacation time from his job.

All the kids who are in school need to be sure they get off to a good start with school officials and teachers each new school year. Leaving school for eight or 10 or more days early in the school year can create difficulties unless properly handled.

So, early in your Feast planning, make arrangements for time off from school and establish the best possible relationship with teachers and school administrators. Over the years thousands of young people in God's Church have been able to properly arrange for the Feast time without undue hardships or academic difficulties.

Don't fall behind in or miss any schoolwork because of the Feast. Some teenagers go all out and do extra work beforehand so they won't have so much homework to do during the Festival. Others take their books along and make sure they spend a certain amount of time each day at their studies.



Make every effort to keep your grades up.

Travel is education

Education comes from many areas in one's life. Certainly, classroom instruction is important. But teens in God's Church may benefit in ways other teenagers may not be able to, by taking full advantage of the travel opportunities available in keeping the Feast.

Enterprising students have arranged with teachers to write themes about the trip and historic sites they visited. Others, who enjoy photography, have taken slides of their trips and put on slide shows for classmates. Thus the teachers did not view the students' trips to the Feast of Tabernacles as negative, but as positive. Most teachers recognize the value of travel in one's education.

Far too often, families barrel down the highways mile after mile without so much as even pausing for a few minutes to take advantage of the educational opportunities and natural wonders along the road. Families need to plan together, before the Feast, the route they will take and the sights

family members would like to see. Visiting national parks and reading historical markers can provide information and inspiration.

Here is one student's comment on his Feast travel experiences:

I remember on the way we would stop by different sites that made the trip special and entertaining. It kept that part of the Feast from being dreaded.

Benefit from the spiritual meat

Of course, the primary purpose of attending the Feast of Tabernacles in God's Church today is to receive the spiritual meat provided during the services.

By the time one is a teenager, he should be prepared to think more seriously about the meanings of the sermons and sermonettes God's ministers bring.

The college students were quick to point out how they began to realize, in their teens, the importance of getting something from the messages:

The sermons and sermonettes helped me realize my

responsibility for the knowledge I gained. Baptized or not, I was still under the law. The messages also helped me feel more a part of God's Church and His coming Kingdom.

Another wrote:

As a young teenager, it was often hard for me to follow the sermons. Some days we sat by ourselves and ended up playing little games during Church. But as I grew older, I found the Feast to be more rewarding when I paid attention during services.

Still another wrote:

Most of all, I remember the many services and messages we received. I think, though, that if I had been made to pay more attention I would have gotten more out of it. Now that I am late in my teen years, I appreciate the Feast messages more and more. Therefore, I have come to enjoy my favorite time of the year even more.

Encourage discussion on the way to lunch or back to the motel

after the sermons. Ask teenagers their opinions about the message — talk about the notes they've taken and the main points that were emphasized. A brief review while riding in the car can help cement thoughts and ideas in our minds as well as provide a platform for family discussions.

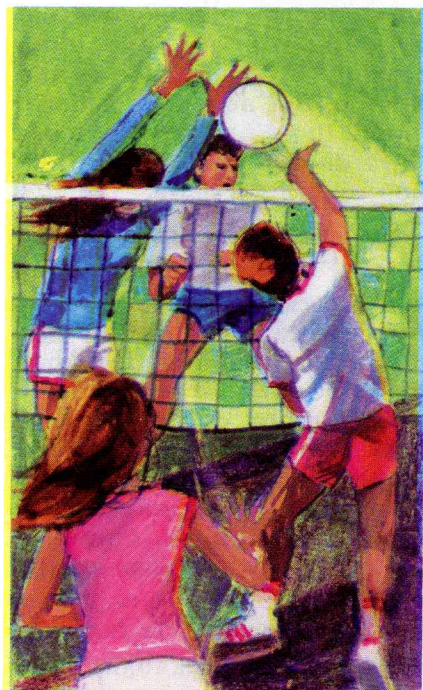
Recreation at the Feast

The Feast of Tabernacles is a time of spiritual fellowship, inspiration and instruction in God's Word, but in addition it is a time of Church fellowship and recreation. At Feast sites around the world, almost unlimited recreational opportunities are available.

We have already seen that travel is education. And coupled with visits to historic sites and natural wonders on the way to the Feast is the opportunity for rest, relaxation and recreation to rejuvenate every family at the Feast.

Many college students looked back on profitable recreational opportunities. Perhaps you will get some ideas for this year's Feast from them:

Group dates are an absolute blast during the Feast. Getting a carload of people and going bowling, dancing or just out for pizza or a beach



sing-along are good, clean ways of having fun. Recreational opportunities at the Feast were endless.

Another wrote:

A few years ago I saw how the Church was gearing up for teenagers. At one Feast site we attended there was a game room for YOU [Youth Opportunities United, an organization for Church youths] members at a teen center — this allowed us to spend time together.

By the end of the Feast the teen center had become an important factor of our being able to spend time with our peer group — that's what being a teen is all about.

Old and new friends

For a teenager, the Feast of Tabernacles can be a marvelous opportunity for spending time with friends.

Not only can close friends from a Church area be together for the Feast, but teens from different areas can become acquainted with one another.

YOU sponsors many activities during the Feast. In addition, there are movies, special films from Ambassador College, dances, sporting events and a host of other activities that encourage teenagers to spend time together.

If you have not been involving yourself with teen activities, plan to do so this year. Long-lasting relationships are started at the Feast of Tabernacles. Students often begin corresponding with fellow teens and find that enduring friendships are formed.

In this most important area of life, here's what a couple of students had to say:

As a former member of YOU, I can remember how important meeting new friends was. Various activities scheduled throughout the Feast made making new friends very easy. Outings to an amusement park were always popular. Other activities included beach par-

ties, roller-skating, horseback riding and dancing.

And:

The Feast is a terrific opportunity for young people to make new friends. The friendships do not have to end right after the Feast. Teens should take each other's addresses and become pen pals.

Make the most of the Feast

Your teen years will pass by all too quickly. You may, as a high school student, think college, marriage and career are far away. But they will be upon you before you know it.

During this special time in your life when you are still living at home, yet growing toward physical and emotional maturity, you are formulating personal patterns that will affect everything you do for the rest of your life. The Feast of Tabernacles can and should be one of the most important parts of your life.

Here are a few more comments from Ambassador students on those delightful years:

If it were not for the Feast days, I would have thought life to be quite boring.

And from another:

The last two things that I thought really added to my Feasts were Feast gifts and serving. These things, instead of making my Feast simply get, get, gave it a bit of balance and made it more fulfilling.

Here's one more:

The Feast of Tabernacles is a wonderful time of year that pictures on a small scale what the world might be like during the time of the Millennium.

Don't take the Feast for granted. The Feast for teenagers will not be enjoyable unless they make it fun, exciting and educational themselves.

Don't let the Feast pass you by — make the most of it this year and every year to come. □