

The Feast is for Young People too!

*Here's how you can help your children — and yourself —
benefit even more from the Feast of Tabernacles.*

By Ronald Kelly and Alex Peck

“And thou shalt rejoice in thy feast, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter . . .” (Deut. 16:14).

How about it? Are you *and your children* deriving all you should from the Feast of Tabernacles? Maybe you have never thought of it before, but how your children regard the Feast may have a lot to do with their present and future relationship with God.

If the Feast of Tabernacles is a happy and positive experience for your children now, there is a far greater likelihood they will continue in God's way through the remainder of their lives.

But how can you make this Feast a truly special event for your children?

Instruct the children

When God gave ancient Israel His law, He instructed them: “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” (Deut. 11:18-19).

The year-in and year-out repetition of the festival seasons is one of the key ways children learn about God's good way of life. Children who grow up in God's Church should have many fond memories of the Feast of



Tabernacles. In fact, the highlights of their memories of preadult life should include the trips, activities and teachings of the Feast. God saw to it that learning His law can be fun. God's right way of life should be followed every day — year around — but the Feast of Tabernacles is the highlight of each year.

Plan together

Whether you are now preparing for the 1980 Feast of Tabernacles or are already considering the 1981 Feast, the first order of family business is planning together. Involve your children. Find out what they would really like to do, too.

Whether you are going far away or only a few hours distant, let your children help plan the route. How

about some special stopping points of interest to them on the way to and from the Feast? If possible, visit historical sites and stop to view some of the beauty of God's creation.

When school officials know you plan to visit natural wonders or important historic sites, they will often look more favorably upon the children's absence from school than if the youths will only be attending a religious convention. In dealing with the schools, here is a chance to be “wise as a serpent and harmless as a dove.”

When it is nearly time to leave for the Feast, have the children pack their own suitcases. To be sure they include everything they need, help them make a list of things to take. Will they need swimming suits, jackets — or even possibly snow boots (There may be snow at the mountain sites!)?

Even if the scenery is beautiful, sometimes travel can be boring if you are going to be driving all day. So planning travel games and stops along the way is important. Nothing can spoil a good trip like bored or overly tired children. Therefore, get the kids involved in the planning right from the start, and they'll be happier travelers.

Another way to help a child anticipate the Feast is to help him or her prepare financially for the trip. You parents have saved second tithe, but what about some money for the children to call their own?

Throughout the year, or at least a

Photos by Warren Watson



few weeks in advance, give them a Feast allotment. Use a jar or box labeled "Feast Money" where they can put their second tithe — perhaps money earned from running errands, raking leaves or collecting redeemable cans or bottles. You may want to add a few extra dollars of your own now and then. And maybe Grandma or Grandpa will even send them a gift of some Feast money. If the children see their own Feast fund building up, they will really get excited.

The scripture, "spend the money for whatever you desire" (Deut. 14:26, Revised Standard Version), has a lot of "kid appeal." But a child needs to be taught how to spend money at the Feast. God instructs that this money should be spent for the trip, food and entertainment, but He also commands that those who appear before Him at the feasts are to give Him offerings. Even a child should plan to give a special offering of thanksgiving to God on every one of His Holy Days. And how about a gift for a Church friend or for Mom, Dad or the grandparents? Giving is one of the great lessons of life, and what better time to learn it than during the joy and excitement of the Feast of Tabernacles?

Whether you are planning to camp out, rent a house or stay in a hotel or motel for the Feast, be sure the whole family looks forward to spending time at your temporary dwelling. If the children don't get to swim very often at home, they might really enjoy a swimming pool at the Feast. Most sites have such accommodations, so if the children know what is ahead, it can be more exciting.

Even though dining out may be a luxury for your family throughout the year, you can plan some special meals at fine restaurants at the Feast. At many Feast sites there is a wide variety of delightful places to eat, and an occasional evening out can greatly contribute to family enjoyment. Eating in a really nice restaurant also helps children in their social development. Take advantage of this Feast opportunity.

Activity books will again be given out to children (ages 5-11) at many Feast sites. Go through each Feast book, page by page, with your children. Discuss with them whatever is not clear — whether it is how to work

a certain puzzle or a reference to the Millennium or Last Great Day that they don't understand. Make it a fun learning experience for them as you enjoy the books together. Many of the pages will also lend themselves to further ideas for discussion and teaching.

(Those who may not, for some reason, receive the children's activity books at their sites may request copies from the Festival Information Office after the Feast.)

Ideas you can use

We asked a number of Ambassador College students and others to relate some of their most memorable experiences at the Feast and to give us their ideas about how to make the Feast more enjoyable for children. Here are some suggestions we hope you will find helpful.

- Show the children how much better God's Feast days are than Satan's pagan holidays. By saving second tithe the family can enjoy the Feast and a trip far more than any holiday in this world's society.

- Be sure the children understand that the Feast shows the 1,000-year reign of Christ, when we will have peace and prosperity for the whole world, just as the Church enjoys these eight days.

- Since Isaiah makes such a point of the millennial nature change in the animal world, talk to the children about animals as pets in the Millennium. All children love animals. What will it be like to have a pet lion or tiger? The possibilities are exciting!

- While you live in a tent or motel room for the Feast, talk to the children about the lessons of temporary dwellings. Show how ancient Israel built booths on top of houses. Maybe the children could make miniature "booths" out of cardboard or draw and color pictures to help them learn the lessons.

- Let each child select an activity that he or she would like to do for an afternoon or evening during the Feast.

- Do several things as a family during the Feast: Swim together, go skating, take a hike, fish — but be a family.

- As you enjoy the finery of your hotel or motel and the good food,

remind the children that the majority of the world have never lived like this — but in the world tomorrow the whole world will prosper.

- At the end of each day have a discussion with the children about the things you did that day: What did they learn from the sermon? Did they enjoy the day's activities? How did they benefit from the activity of the afternoon or evening? Show them the greater happiness that comes from doing things with and for others.

- Use some of your Festival funds to help others. If your children know of a needy family, have them ask a friend in that family to join you for a meal. There is real joy in helping someone else have a good time.

- Don't send the kids off to a babysitter day after day, evening after evening.

- Be sure to teach the children that the Feast is more than just a vacation. God's way is to provide a vacation with all the Church members together — but in an environment of learning the lessons to picture the wonderful world tomorrow.

In addition to these suggestions, you can make a list of your own ideas for family activities. And how about sharing them with fellow Church members before the Feast, so that all can have an even better time?

The spiritual lesson

Let's not forget the most important part of our Feast responsibility, which is to teach our children the meaning of the Feast, picturing the wonderful world tomorrow.

The Feast shows coming out of this world. As we travel to the Feast to live among and have fellowship with God's people for eight days a year, we leave behind our day-to-day cares.

While traveling point out, where appropriate, the contrasts of the beauty of God's creation with the pollution and ugliness caused by man.

As some families fly to the Feast in modern jetliners, or drive there in speedy automobiles, a fun conversation might be to discuss how God's people got to the Feast in Bible times. How did ancient Israel observe the festivals? How did Christ and His family get from Nazareth to Jerusalem every year? You will be surprised at how the children think it might have been during those days.



Another topic to discuss on the way to the Feast might be how the Feast will be kept in various locations around the world. How about the children in South America? Or in Africa? Or Australia? What languages will be spoken?

And how will all nations begin to keep the Feast after the return of Christ (Zech. 14:16)? Ask the children what they would do if they were in charge of Feast organization. How would they go about having millions of people keep the Feast of Tabernacles all at once?

Also, remember that most children do not comprehend the sermons as you do. So, help them understand by going over sermon messages with them while sitting around the pool or eating. Take time often to review the spiritual applications of the Feast.

If children are old enough to take a few notes during the sermons, be alert to guide them in this effort. Show by your attitude that the "meat" being offered through the ministry is an important part of the Feast. However, remember that the Feast should consist of more than spiritual "meat." During the eight days there, take opportunities to point out to your children the beauty of God's creation. Plan family outings and recreation, as well as fellowship with others. This way your family will enjoy a truly balanced Feast.

Teenagers are people, too

It is important for every member of the family to benefit as much as

possible from the Feast, so don't neglect your teenagers. At this time in their lives they are capable of understanding more of the Word of God than when they were younger. The teen years are the final molding opportunities for adult life, so during these formative years it is important that your youths see the purpose and meaning of God's plan.

Sometimes teenagers may not be very excited about the soon-coming Kingdom of God. Right now they may be far more concerned about their college educations, marriages and careers. Some teens tend to think the Kingdom of God will interrupt these opportunities in their lives.

However, they need to realize that should God's Kingdom be established before they reach career goals and marriage, they will live physically on into the millennial years. They will be the lead generation in the establishment of the world tomorrow. And if they have taken full advantage of being reared in God's Church, they will hold outstanding positions of leadership.

Therefore, teens should be encouraged to learn the joys of following God's way of life at the Feast of Tabernacles and throughout the year. Their future positions can depend on how well they respond right now.

The Church's youth organization, Youth Opportunities United (YOU), is planning a variety of entertaining afternoons and evenings for teens. Certainly, during this time in life, young people enjoy being with their

peer group often. Some of the strongest teen friendships have been formed at Church youth activities — summer camp, regional and national sports competitions, music competitions and other events and, very importantly, at the Feast of Tabernacles.

The main point is: Be aware teenagers have special needs — sometimes to be with the family and sometimes to be with their friends. Respect these needs, yet at all times encourage them to live God's way. Point out the resulting benefits they will receive, now and in the world tomorrow.

The trip home

All too soon the Feast comes to a close. Most of us have made a lot of new friends, and we certainly have seen a lot of old friends. The conclusion to the Feast is "bittersweet" — the final sermon, and then the final hymn that brings tears to many eyes.

Then we have to return to the world for another year. The hugs, embraces and the sad goodbyes are a natural part of life's experiences.

Our children wave goodbye to new and old friends, promising to see them next year and, perhaps, to write a letter soon.

The trip home is just as important as the trip to the Feast. It may also include short side trips to beautiful places or historic sites.

But, more importantly, as you travel home you should also have family discussions about what was learned and how each family member can grow in Christian character during the coming year.

Another matter of discussion on the way home will probably be — you guessed it: Where shall we go to the Feast *next* year? Shall we attend the same site? Or will we have an opportunity to transfer to another place we have always wanted to visit? And the more you think about the 1981 Feast, the more excited you all become!

Meanwhile, as you begin to plan for next year's Feast, don't forget to make your trip home from this Festival a safe one.

May the 1980 Feast be for you — *and your children* — the "best Feast yet" — that is, until next year. □