

# Why Do We Go to the Feast?

A couple of weeks ago we were out one evening, and as many of you probably saw, there was a beautiful full moon. We commented on the fact that it was only a month until the Feast of Tabernacles. In a week's time we'll have the Feast of Trumpets. The new moon begins, and the cycle begins again. As we are at this point in time it is an appropriate time to be considering preparation for the Feast of Tabernacles. In saying that, for most of you the physical preparation is probably complete - apart from one or two details.

In a very short period of time I know some people will be leaving to travel to the feast. Some people will be leaving various parts of the world this coming week and will be visiting other areas from Trumpets onwards, in preparation for the Feast of Tabernacles. It's rather remarkable that in a day and age in which communications are so quick, where we can climb on a plane at Heathrow at 11 o'clock in the morning and be in Los Angeles at 3 o'clock the same afternoon, that people still travel so long to get to the Feast of Tabernacles! It's almost like going back to the first century because people of those days will have spent, in most cases, many weeks travelling to get to the feast in Jerusalem.

For the majority of us, the preparation have been made. But of course God's Feast is not just about physical matters and physical preparations. They need to be taken care of. They need to be overseen properly and appropriately so that we can accomplish what God desires of us at the Feast. The Feast is more than physical matters. It's about the spiritual. It's no accident in my mind that the Day of Atonement precedes the Feast because it is to be kept by a world that is at one with its Maker.

God intends it to be a spiritual event where the world is at one with its Maker. What a change! What a transformation that humanity will undergo. It's so easy, when we talk or think about the Feast, to see the physical changes that will be brought about as a result of the Kingdom of God and sometimes overlook the underlying spiritual changes that will in fact allow those physical changes to come about.

The change that is needed in the first place is one of the spirit. The Day of Atonement portrays that in the binding of Satan; his removal as the god of this world, so that Jesus Christ can take His rightful role in terms of the entirety of the creation as King of kings, and Lord of lords. He will be able to usher in the rule of the Kingdom of God.

In giving instructions about the feast, Moses recorded for us the Eternal's vision of how we are to keep the Feast. Oftentimes we turn to Leviticus chapter 23, but this time, by way of change, I'd like to turn to his account in Deuteronomy chapter 16.

*Deut 16:13 (we find similar comments to this for each of the Holy Days.)*

*13 "You shall observe the Feast of Tabernacles seven days, when you have gathered from your threshing floor and from your winepress.*

*14 "And you shall rejoice in your feast, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant and the Levite, the stranger and the fatherless and the widow, who are within your gates.*

*15 "Seven days you shall keep a sacred feast to the LORD your God in the place which the LORD chooses, because the LORD your God will bless you in all your produce and in all the work of your hands, so that you surely rejoice.*

He's talking specifically about the Feast of Tabernacles. Moses does not mention the 8th day of the feast on this particular occasion, but we know from Leviticus chapter 23 that it's a commanded occasion, a commanded assembly.

The instruction that is given is that we are to rejoice. The rejoicing is given in a much more detailed manner than in Leviticus 23. It says you are to rejoice at the Feast - you and your son and your daughter (we can interpolate from that that wives were included as well - and in those days it probably included more than one), your manservant, your maidservant, the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless and the widow who are within your gates.

15 *"Seven days you shall keep a sacred feast to the LORD your God in the place which the LORD chooses, because the LORD your God will bless you in all your produce and in all the work of your hands, so that you surely rejoice.*

One of the translations says "You shall hold a festival before the Eternal your God seven days at the place the Eternal shall choose. For the Eternal your God will bless all your crops and all your undertakings and you shall have nothing but joy." The responsibility is to have a very joyous time at the Feast of Tabernacles.

I use this particular scripture, especially verse 14 because in this particular rendition the Eternal makes it abundantly clear that the Feast is not just for mums and dads. It's for children as well. It is for the children who have parents. It is for the fatherless. It is for the entire community. Children even are to rejoice.

I know children find it very easy to rejoice at the feast, especially the smaller they are. For a start it's time off school. The smaller they are the less responsibilities and the less homework may be given to them by school. There's a certain ability to rejoice: "I'm away from school. I can go to the Feast while all the rest of my schoolmates are sitting in class."

It changes as you grow older because suddenly the teacher starts to burden you with homework or make up work which you've got to accomplish while you're at the Feast. Some teachers aren't as generous as others because some insist on giving you more work to do at the Feast than the rest of the class are going to do while you are away. It's as though you get penalised for taking this time off and upsetting the teacher's routine. It becomes awkward to rejoice at the Feast.

On the other hand for the little ones, they look at the Feast as a time of receiving gifts. In the Church of God we have had somewhat of a tradition of using the Feast days, and especially the Feast of Tabernacles as a time of giving special gifts to children. Children look forward to that and rejoice in it. These are all physical areas of rejoicing, of responding.

The world has a standard when it comes to rejoicing and celebrating. All one has to do is note the comments that are being made about the millennium celebrations. There's a lot of complaint about the price of special events. It is also clear about the concern that exists of accidents, of drunken driving and the associated carnage that goes with it, as a result of this world's methodology of rejoicing.

This world sees going to excess as being a means of rejoicing. There was a case in the paper the other day of a young man who was on a stag cruise. One of his friends was getting married and as a stag party they took a ferry from Portsmouth to Calais. They went ashore, imbibed copiously, got back on the ferry and continued to imbibe copiously until one of them fell asleep in the toilet. When he awoke the ferry had been to Portsmouth, had moved on to Plymouth, and had left Plymouth en route to Bilboa in Spain! He had rejoiced so much that he had been non compos mentis for a considerable period of time and he now found himself taking a week's cruise at the expense of P & O. It's not an uncommon event. That's this world's approach to rejoicing.

Sadly, if we left our children to rejoice themselves, what we would find is those excesses would very quickly become the standard for their rejoicing as well. As Solomon wisely said "A child left to himself brings his mother to shame." It's a statement about life. I look back on my younger years. I can see the way in which I could have easily gone had it not been for the moderating influence of my parents and their concern for me. They desired I learn to do the right thing. Solomon understood that when he said "A child left to himself will bring his mother to shame", - and for that matter, his father and all who are associated with him.

So we are to rejoice, but we are to rejoice according to a godly standard. The standard which is not that of this world. We have the Feast. We have the chance to learn some very profitable lessons as we rejoice before the Eternal. God wants to give us something.

Mr Hulme, in the latest member letter, talks about that, how God is wanting to give us something because He's giving. In reality we can give our young people something at the Feast of Tabernacles which will stand them in great stead for their future and for the future of the rest of humanity.

What does God's Word say about children and the Feast? There's one scripture that in my mind paints a very vivid portrayal of the Kingdom of God. It's a physical scene yet it is a scene that is laden with meaning:

*Zech 8: 1 Again the word of the LORD of hosts came, saying,*

*2 "Thus says the LORD of hosts: 'I am zealous for Zion with great zeal; With great fervor I am zealous for her.'*

*3 "Thus says the LORD: 'I will return to Zion, And dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. Jerusalem shall be called the City of Truth, The Mountain of the LORD of hosts, The Holy Mountain.'*

Zechariah focus on the re-establishment of Jerusalem as God's place, upon the re-establishment of the temple as God's dwelling place and the way in which all nations are going to flow to it and come to it to learn of God's way of life. Jerusalem is going to be established as a city of truth. It's going to be the mountain, or government, of the Eternal of hosts. The holy government, the holy mountain.

Then he gives us an insight into what Jerusalem is going to be like:

*4 "Thus says the LORD of hosts: 'Old men and old women shall again sit In the streets of Jerusalem, Each one with his staff in his hand Because of great age. (There will be longevity.)*

*5 The streets of the city Shall be full of boys and girls Playing in its streets.'*

*6 "Thus says the LORD of hosts: 'If it is marvelous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days, Will it also be marvelous in My eyes?' Says the LORD of hosts*

This scene of elderly people playing with boys and girls in the city is going to be marvellous in God's eyes. He is going to bring that about. He sees that as something that represents a society that He longs to see. A situation of grandparents overseeing their grandchildren, supervising their play. It talks about connectedness, about people being connected together as a society. He uses the extremes - little children and people of great age together in the streets, not as beggars, not as bad people (as we find in the large cities of this world today), but as people who are there enjoying the opportunity they have.

The sad thing with society today is that we are disconnected. We're fragmented. We divide society up into little bits: infants, pre-school, primary or elementary school, high school, college, university, young adults, singles, marrieds, have-been marrieds, and ultimately, the aged. Having divided them all up what do we do? We put them into their own little boxes, in their own particular part of the country. The elderly go to the south coast. Children go to some grimy school and they are kept together, segmented, you might say almost in the terms of Huxley's brave new world. They have little in the way of interaction together, no relationship one with the other. But God describes a situation where society is going to be connected. It's going to be connected in a right way. That's a very important aspect for us to bear in mind at the Feast of Tabernacles.

For parents it's very easy to be connected at the Feast. You're going to see your friends who you met last year or the year before. You want to get together with them, and spend an evening discussing all the events that have taken place in your lives and their lives in the intervening period of time. It's very easy for most adults to become connected at the Feast of Tabernacles, in an appropriate way.

It's very easy for young people to become connected at the Feast of Tabernacles in a wrong way. It takes greater effort for them to be connected in a right way. Why do I say that? Because I've heard some of the stories of what's happened at the Feast of Tabernacles, not necessarily at the feast sites where you've been. But some of the things I've heard about the Feast of Tabernacles would turn those of you who are white even whiter. You would think "What are young people doing that for at the Feast of Tabernacles?" What are they doing that for at any point in time, let alone at the Feast of Tabernacles?

So this aspect of connectedness is a very important thing for us to consider. How do we relate to one another at the Feast of Tabernacles, in a way that leads to the sense of rejoicing that God desires?

Today I'd like to talk about this aspect of connectedness and relating. I'd also like to talk about another aspect that ties in with this - that is, appropriateness. There are things that are appropriate to us.

Look at the situation of the young people in the streets of Jerusalem. Ask yourself "What games will they be playing?" What will be the end purpose of the games? To destroy or injure the other person? I don't believe

so. I don't believe that level of competition will be the underlying purpose of those games.

They'll be learning games that are beneficial to them, developing skills, confidence and other attributes to help them become balanced, well adjusted adults. They may be learning a bit of hardship, to run a little harder, to hit a little harder. But above all else they'll be aided in the development of proper character. What is there is going to be appropriate. It is interesting that God uses this situation to describe the interaction of grandparents and grandchildren. Oftentimes grandparents are able to see their grandchildren in a better and more balanced light than the actual parents can. They've seen a little bit more of life. They know what children are like and they can sometimes deal with their grandchildren in a more balanced way than the parents can because they can see a little bit more of the ultimate goal of that child. They've seen more people grow up. They've seen the end result of various characteristics in children. They can probably look at a little one and say "Yes, he's just like Uncle so-and-so." Having seen Uncle so-and-so grow up, they probably realise some of the lessons he's going to have to learn to be able to control the particular talents or attributes or faults of character, whichever it may be, that that child has. They can help in a very beneficial way, and do as Solomon said in helping train up a child in the way in which he should go.

I'm not saying that because God intends that parents turn their children over to the grandparents. Grandparents need some rest once in a while, I understand! I've not got to that point yet, but I understand that one of the delights of being a grandparent is that when you get a little tired you can send them back to mum and dad. You say "I've had enough for today, they're yours to take care of."

It is often fascinating to see the relationship that develops between a child and its grandparents. I've seen that in my own family, the way in which grandchildren would gravitate to grandparents. They saw them as help and solace in difficulties they ran into as a family.

So what is appropriate is very important.

Col 2:14 talks about what is seen as a very difficult Greek phrase - 'the blotting out of the handwriting of ordinances' which Christendom basically has interpreted as being blotting out and doing away with God's law. They read verses 16 and 17 in terms of God's Law having been blotted out. The term that Paul uses in Col 2:14 is not found as an expression anywhere else in Greek literature except in one source. It is found in the Rabbinic writings in relation to one particular day of the year, none other than the Day of Atonement. It was an expression that was used by the rabbis to describe the way in which God was going to remove sin from humanity in His judging of humanity, and the forgiving of sin. This term was used by the rabbis to describe what happened on the Day of Atonement.

*Col 2: 16 So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or Sabbaths,*

- Paul was talking to people who were in fact keeping those Holy Days.

*17 which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.*

*Col 3: 1 If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.*

- If we're raised, if you are committed to this calling, looking forward to the establishment of the Kingdom of God with His righteousness and His greatness, if we've bought into that and made it a part of our life, then our lives need to reflect that.

*2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.*

*3 For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.*

*4 When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.*

*5 Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth ...*

Paul is not talking about becoming so 'other-worldly minded' that you are no good in this particular world. It's not talking about us somewhat taking leave of ourselves and becoming some absent minded professor who floats around in some ethereal state. Paul said, "If you're committed to this way of life, there is something that becomes appropriate to that way of life. That is portrayed by putting to death our members

which are on the earth.

*5 ... fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.*

*6 Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience,*

- These are the reasons why the Kingdom of God is going to be established. These are the fruits that have brought this society at the end of the 20th century to its knees, and finally the will of God needs to be established.

*7 in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them.*

This is the way each and every one of us used to walk, to a greater or lesser extent depending on our background. Oftentimes it wasn't because of ourselves that we did not indulge in certain things. It may have been because of our parents or others who were in control of us, who kept us from them.

*8 But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth.*

*9 Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds,*

*10 and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,*

- There's a new life to live. A life which is appropriate to the One Who died for us. This aspect of appropriateness becomes very important for us.

Oftentimes the Feast of Tabernacles provides an opportunity of dealing with young children and describing things to them about what the Kingdom of God is going to be like. The lion and the lamb. Or as we might describe it, the 'peaceable kingdom'. We can focus upon the peace and prosperity that will exist at that point in time. Peace may be one of things we want to focus on. In terms of some people in other parts of the world, the prosperity may be the need to focus on because they have so very little.

Let's ask ourselves a question: How can little children relate to the World Tomorrow if they don't see peace between mum and dad? How can that be? If they see our religion as one which has unbridled anger between father and mother, a lack of peace, how can they relate to the World Tomorrow? How can we describe the World Tomorrow to them?

We live in a world in which children suffer. When our children were in primary school, more than 50% of the children in their classes came from broken homes. That wasn't from a disadvantaged school. That was a Jewish day school, and most of the parents had to pay to send their children to that school, yet over 50% of the children came from broken homes. Homes that knew no real peace. Homes in which fights occurred between fathers and mothers over who had custody or visiting rights with the children.

Little children weren't created by God to undergo those experiences. That's not a godly environment for them. Hopefully that's not the situation we find ourselves in. But there's always a question for us to ask ourselves, as to how well our family environment represents the peace that God would have.

We teach our children these things, but do we live that way? Are we appropriate to it? Do we live our lives in accordance with that, to the best of our ability? We each have problems that we have to overcome and each and every one of us is somewhere on the spectrum of overcoming those problems. Children can be very forgiving of their parents, very forgiving.

*Col 3: 12 Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering;*

*13 bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.*

We're not to bear grudges one against another, with great periods of prolonged silence: "I'm not talking to you. You did this to me and you're getting the shoulder or the silent back or whatever." There is that aspect of forgiveness.

*14 But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.*

*15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.*

Be grateful for what God has done for us. Make sure that the peace of God is dwelling in your heart. I know some of us live in hostile environments. Many of you leave home on Monday morning to go to work, and you come back several times between then and Friday afternoon, but you exist in a hostile world. A world which would easily devour and consume you. God says "Let My peace dwell in your mind."

In the mid 1970s on one occasion I was on a flight from New York to Los Angeles. I had flown in from Lagos and was going to a conference in Pasadena. I was sitting next to a little Nigerian man. We got talking and I explained I had come in from Lagos. He said he'd also come from Nigeria. He was an Ibo. (Ibos are usually fairly small in stature). He also was a little man.

From the late 1960s until the early 1970s we had had the Biafran war, where the Ibos in the east of Nigeria were trying to break away from the rest of Nigeria.

It was a very bloody and gruesome period of time. I spent a little time talking with this man, about his background and what he was doing in the United States. While we were talking there were two business men behind us. They were talking about what they were going to do to the clients when they got to the clients' place. They were going to carve them up, chew them up and have them for breakfast the next day. They were going to make mincemeat out of them. It was clearly a dog-eat-dog world. I couldn't help focus on the fact that here I was sitting next to a little man whose whole life, his family and everything he had, had been destroyed by war. Here I was in an aircraft, in a 'peaceful country', but the men behind me had exactly the same attitude that created that war in Nigeria. They had the same anger, hostility and rancour towards their opponents that the Nigerians and the Ibos had. A very tragic situation.

We go out and live in that world. It's a world of which we at this point in time have a part. But God says "Let My peace dwell in your hearts. - even in the midst of all the hostility you face. Let My peace abide in your heart above all, because that's what you've been called to." We've been called to that peaceable relationship. And God says "Above all be thankful - thankful for that".

I know very much that for many of you it is a treat to be able to get home on the Sabbath day. On Friday night you can put everything of the world behind you and get rid of all the hostility that is out there. That's what God's Kingdom is about. It is about peace. It is about us living that life of peace.

We talked about little children in the first instance. When we come to the matter of teens, that matter becomes more difficult, because 'teens are difficult', aren't they parents? And teens will tell you that 'parents are difficult'! For some reason or other, something happens in the world when parents get to a certain period of life and get stuck in their ways and their children just can't work out what's happened to them. "What has caused them to become these great ogres who don't want us to do anything?"

Parents have sleepless nights wondering what hellions those precious little babies they had, turned into. Sadly that period of time is called 'teenage'. Changes take place within the bodies. Hormones begin to run and this produces massive changes in the lives of young people. To parents, those once docile children who could be expected to do everything they were told, when they were told now suddenly become monsters, who want to do what they want to do in their good time. To teens, those once caring parents become those ogres who stand between them and everything they want to do, and everything their friends are doing. It's a time of change. It's a time that requires patience and wisdom to handle.

Oftentimes the problem parents have with young people coming into the teenage years, is that they may seek to control them in exactly the same way as when they were younger. Parents oftentimes seek to control their young people in exactly the same way as when they were children without realising that they are undergoing changes, and that the parents need to change as well.

It's not a matter of throwing out the values and standards that you've had in the past, but it is being able to make that transition from childhood to teenage and then into adulthood without losing the respect of the offspring. It requires a difference in handling, a difference in being able to relate. One scripture which sums it up really well is one that the Eternal stated to Israel:

*Isa 1: 18 "Come now, and let us reason together ...*

Teenage is a time in which communication between parent and teen has to go to a new level. Young people should not do things just because parents say so. It is a time for them to start learning why it is appropriate for them to do something. It is a time for parents to really spend the time explaining and helping their offspring to come to right decisions in terms of their lives. If that transition is not made, the teenage years can be a period of lost opportunity, rather than a time of opportunity.

Oftentimes they become a time of lost opportunity because we as parents want to put our needs and our comforts ahead of our children - rather than realise "I've got to put more time into the education of my children. I've got to spend more time doing things with them on a one on one basis, whereby I can explain things about life to them."

You could even allow your children to see some of your shortcomings, and see the way in which you had to wrestle with problems in your own life.

They can start to see "I'm like mum. I'm like dad. I've got to battle with things and make decisions in my own life that are just like them. And rather than becoming a detached group of people, we can remain connected and that relationship can continue. It's a time which could be described by 'controlled freedom'. Certain freedom can be offered but it is on a certain basis. It requires a certain response from the youth. It's a time for them to put into practise the things that have been taught. To understand the issues of life.

One of the constant complaints I hear about the Feast of Tabernacles and young people is about Services. We might ask ourselves "What is appropriate for young people at the Feast of Tabernacles?"

Ecclesiastes was intended to be read at the Feast of Tabernacles. Solomon is addressing these issues. Not only do they apply to the Feast of Tabernacles, but they apply universally whenever we come before God.

*Eccl 5: 1 Walk prudently when you go to the house of God; and draw near to hear rather than to give the sacrifice of fools, for they do not know that they do evil.*

Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child. Does that mean to say we allow our children to be foolish when it comes to Services? Of course the answer to that is 'No'. The rod of correction is not the only way in which the foolishness can be removed from the heart of a child either.

*2 Do not be rash with your mouth, And let not your heart utter anything hastily before God. For God is in heaven, and you on earth; Therefore let your words be few.*

You have a responsibility. Why are we at the Feast of Tabernacles? We are there to worship God! We are not at Services to connect with other young people who we may not have seen for the last 12 months. God willing, your parents will be wise enough to provide opportunities for that. But Service time is not the time for that. Service time is a time to listen.

Young's Literal Translation says "Keep your feet (watch what you do) when you go into the House of God and draw near to hear, rather than to give of fools the sacrifice, for they don't know they're doing evil."

They are ignorant. And so what is appropriate for young people at Services? It is to be there to listen, to hear, to learn. To learn things that are going to be of great value for them. Services are not the time for fellowship and companionship, sitting in the back row of the hall, or in the dim lights of the gallery as has happened in the past. It is a time to be there to learn.

Clearly in times of that, appropriateness means that it should be with parents. Or if they say you can be with somebody else's parents, then with them. It's a time to listen rather than to connect with everybody else.

I say that because there is a need for appropriateness, both in and out of Services. Parents need to be very much aware that their teens do need the opportunity to let off steam. They may need a good run along the beach every morning, or something similar. They need the opportunity to do things rather than to sit around and listen all the time. It must happen otherwise we will provoke them to anger. Once again, appropriateness

comes back in again. Those energy levels need to be catered to. But appropriateness is the key. Is a disco or a night-club to the wee hours of the morning appropriate of the period of time that we are keeping before the Eternal? The answer is no. It's not the appropriate way. The challenge comes back to the parents to use some wisdom and think "What is appropriate? What are the needs of my family?"

No two families are the same. And as most of you with two or more children realise, no two children are the same. The first one comes along and mother thinks "This is what babies are like." Then she becomes pregnant again and instead of being docile and calm, this one keeps her awake at night, tossing and turning within her. She wonders "Am I ever going to get any peace?" And when the baby comes out into the world, it's probably exactly the same, restless.

Children are different from the point of conception. Too often parents make the mistake of thinking all children are the same and that they can treat them in exactly the same manner. The more children we have, the greater the variety we have, and the greater amount of wisdom we need to be able to take care of them and direct them. To be able to see their strengths and weaknesses. To see what it is that they need.

The same is true at the Feast of Tabernacles. Different children in the family may need different challenges at the Feast of Tabernacles, and this places a challenge on the parents to give of themselves for the benefit of their children. So that they also can rejoice before the Eternal in an appropriate manner.

Returning to the aspect of connectedness again, I know teens like to be with other teens. It's a great opportunity. Friendships and companionship are important. I know oftentimes the friendships that young people within the Church have made at Summer Camp or at the Feast of Tabernacles, have oftentimes lasted beyond the Church. They have their own network and keep in touch with one another. This dates back over the years. It is amazing in which young people who were at Imperial School together have maintained networks and contacts with one another irrespective of where they ended up in the world and in terms of the Church. Those relationships can be very useful.

But those times together can as quickly be destructive as it can be constructive, if it is not handled properly. I think at times, teens and parents can overlook the opportunity and the benefit that the teens can have by being with adults and by teens being included in adult conversation. Parents, you may be surprised what you might learn from your teens if you were to ask them how they see various things. How various things appear to them in terms of this world. Inevitably they are looking at the world some 20 / 30 years on from when we entered it. Their entry point into this world is a very different entry from where you and I entered this world. The experiences they've had are very very different from the ones I've had. I know that because of my own children. I was some 20 years of age before I ever went up in an aircraft. My son had flown 200,000 miles before he started school! He has a very very different view of the world than I have. The world truly is his oyster. The proverb 'iron sharpens iron' that Solomon wrote, relates to young people as much as it does to those amongst us who have grey hair, or no hair. They can benefit from such conversations. It is interesting to consider where most of those conversations take place - around the meal table.

I can think of numerous conversations that we've had with various people over the years with our children sitting around the meal table, either at home or in a restaurant. It does something for a young person, to be with older people in terms of conversation and being able to interact with them in a respectful and proper manner. It provides something that other teens can't provide. I know, teens, it may not be 'cool'. It may not be the done thing to talk about to other people at school, yet it is something that will set you apart in terms of your life and being able to relate to other people in a very dramatic way.

Most of those occasions take place in terms of eating and drinking. It's interesting the way in which God describes the Feast. He talks about us eating and drinking at the Feast. In fact, the apostle Paul said "Don't let anyone judge you in terms of eating and drinking", because that's what they were doing. The young people were learning a certain level of propriety in terms of how much was drunk and consumed, and how not to go to excess. It was a certain opportunity to learn and to benefit from it.

Maybe it is appropriate that we consider that, being one of the hallmarks of the Feast in terms of being able to rejoice before the Eternal. That aspect of being able to eat and drink together with one another provides a level of connectedness which is pleasing to God. We read in Zechariah about children and grandparents. In reality what the book of Zechariah talks is the connectedness of all peoples to the Eternal. It is one of the



overriding themes of the book of Zechariah. How God is the God of all people, and He is going to bring all nations to Himself. They are going to have that relationship with God. That relationship is going to be one that God considers to be appropriate because it's going to be based upon God's standards.

When we look at this aspect of rejoicing, we obviously need to have some memorable times at the Feast of Tabernacles. Our young children need to be able to go back and talk about what they've done. If you are going down to Weymouth for the Feast of Tabernacles, you could go fishing. It seems as though it's built into every little boy to like to go fishing with his dad or somebody else who knows how to fish and catch fish. It's amazing what it does for the manhood of the little boy, to have gone fishing and caught his first fish, or to have caught the biggest fish that was caught on that occasion. It seems to do something to their chemistry!

The same way with teens. They need to have something they can go back with so they can talk to others about what they did. "What did you go to Weymouth for?" Well you can say something! Then friends might say "I wish we could get out of school and go away like that!" It takes wisdom on the part of us parents to be able to decide "What do my offspring need so that they truly can rejoice before the Eternal?"

It's not just the baptised members who are to rejoice before the Eternal. It's the entire family - all of us together as part of the family of God.

*... Peter Nathan  
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[Back to Top](#)

[Back to Sermon Summary List](#)