

## How To Have A Great Feast

**Principles to Live By**

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This upcoming Feast will be my 53rd. Amazing for such a young guy, is it not? I have attended sites all over America as you probably have too, though I have never had the opportunity to have a Feast at a foreign site. But I have been at Feast sites from St. Petersburg, Florida to Anchorage, Alaska. From the Poconos to Tucson, from Eugene, Oregon to Norfolk, Virginia. From San Antonio, Texas to Squaw Valley, California, and a lot of places in between. I did not name probably half of them that I have been to, although I spent a lot of years in Jekyll and we spent a lot of years in Missouri, did we not?

Jefferson City and Columbia and Kansas City. I have been to feasts as a youngster, as a teenager, as a college student, as a young married man, as a father with babies and young children, as a father with teenagers—and those are different feasts!—and now as a grandfather. It is hard to believe. Since 1995 I have been to all those feasts in between as a minister.

And as I look back on all those feasts, it is amazing to recall all the breadth of experiences that I have been able to have. Who would have thought that I would have been able to see so much of the country, a lot of beautiful places where we have kept the Feast in the past, and of course I do not want to leave people out. I have met a whole lot of wonderful people at these Feast sites all over the country.

I have experienced some great feasts and I can say that positively. But not all those feasts were necessarily knock-your-socks-off triumphs of amazingness. There are times when the feasts were a bit of a trial. When I was a wee lad, I cannot remember exactly how young I was, we went to Squaw Valley, California and I distinctly remember two incidents that really left an impression on me, for different reasons.

The first incident was that I had, for the first time, I think, in my life, a little discretionary money, a little pocket money that I could spend any way I wanted to. And my parents were quite disappointed (you know that look that

parents give you when they are disappointed), that I went down to the corner convenience store and used it to buy a cap gun. Not a very millennial decision on my part. The second memory I had of that Feast is that, and I believe it was on the same day, as I was outside popping off my cap gun I got stung by a bee. It was cold up there in Squaw Valley, there was snow on the ground, I thought there is no way was there going to be a bee around, and one stupid bee who was not thinking about how cold it was. Or maybe he was thinking about how cold it was because he crawled up the sleeve of my jacket and when I put my hand in I got stung. That will make an impression on an impressionable kid. So I remember Squaw Valley for cap guns and bee stings.

My memories of St. Petersburg are eating at the Kapok Tree restaurant. I do not know if any of you ever made it down to that area but they had a kapok tree, it is this huge tree, and they have got a restaurant and all that around it. And that really made an impression on me that the tree was just massive. What I also remember about the St. Petersburg feast site, is that the arena that we were in was *massive* and we filled the place up. There were so many people at the Feast there in St. Petersburg. I do not know, there must have been 10,000 to 12,000 people there. I think it was in St. Pete where I screwed up my courage to go down to the front of the auditorium and approach Herbert Armstrong as he was taking his seat before the services started so I could shake his hand. So I went up there, marched my little body down there, and said, "Hello, Mr. Armstrong" and he was very nice, he was very polite, and he shook my hands and then he said, "You better go find your seat, services are about to start." "Yes, sir!" But I had accomplished what I set out to do there as a teenager.

I very fondly remember playing days of softball in the tournaments in Jekyll Island. The wives were not all that thrilled that they had to spend their afternoons through the middle of the Feast at a sandy field watching their husbands play ball. But we guys loved it. Those softball games, softball tournaments were great. They were fantastic games. We were in the Columbia church so we had good rivalries with the Walterboro church and Greenville and even Nashville came down one time and Mike Ford and Bob Taylor were on that team, and we knew them, and I think they beat us that year. But it was a great time. It was the Feast of Tabernacles, was not it? Is it not the feast of tournaments? No, we were pretty sports-crazy in those years.

Y.O.U. was very crazy, sports-wise. And we adults liked to do it too. That was during the late 70s and early 80s.

Beth and I went on a kind of honeymoon to Kauai Island in Hawaii. It was just a few months after we had gotten married and we went on a helicopter ride, like Magnum PI, flying over that verdant island. We went to a luau (hey, we are going to go to another luau this year), but I found out that I do not like poi. I do not know if you have had poi. It is just starchy. I also realized that I was not the island type. I am a bit too much of a stuffed shirt for that sort of thing and I do not even like fish very much. I ate steaks most nights in Hawaii. You have steak, you have hamburger, I will take that. I had one Mahi Mahi. But those are my memories from Hawaii, among other things. It was a pretty good Feast as I recall.

I also remember driving up to Rapid City, South Dakota. That is a wonderful place for a Feast if you have never been there. But what really makes me remember that Feast is watching Courtney take her first steps. She was about 10 months old or so and took her first steps on the drive up and then for the rest of the Feast, she wrapped her uncles around her little finger. But we saw Mount Rushmore and Crazy Horse. We went through Deadwood, you know the place where Wild Bill Hickok was shot after cheating in a card game or whatever that was. Calamity Jane I guess is buried there, is she not? Anyway, we also went out and saw a herd of buffalo. I remember that from Rapid City.

In Chattanooga, Tennessee we visited Civil War sites throughout the Feast. Saw a lot of good friends and family, let me put it that way. From the Feast in San Antonio. I remember giving my first Feast sermon and we ate at a lot of good restaurants. There is a lot of good restaurants in San Antonio. The accommodations were not great down there, where we were at least, because otherwise they were very expensive. But I remember having a really good time in San Antonio. I was ordained at the Feast in San Antonio in 1995.

One year at the Feast in Jefferson City we took Johnny in a wheelchair because he had just had appendicitis and because of that had his appendix removed. But by the time the Feast was about halfway over, he was out of that wheelchair and back to his former self. Jarod broke his arm at the family day in Nashville just a few years ago. And at the Feast dance in Topeka, Aric

asked 18 girls to dance! He was all of 10 years old and I have got pictures to prove it.

I am sure if you had the stage like I do here, you could regale us with similar stories from Feasts gone by. The Feast generates a lot of good memories for us, things that we cherish throughout the rest of our lives because feasts are extra special times of the year and they make big impacts on our lives. Yes, we have had a lot of good times at the Feasts we have attended, but does having a good time mean that we had a good Feast? Or even a great Feast? We often say at the end, "This is the best Feast ever." And we may mean it, we may think we have had the grandest time that we have ever had at a Feast. But I want to ask in spiritual terms, what makes a truly great Feast?

In this sermon, I am going to try my hand at explaining *how* to have a great Feast. So if you would, please open your Bibles to Leviticus 23. But instead of going to the section about the Feast of Tabernacles, I am going to start at the very beginning of the chapter, because I want to bring out a principle that we have to have as a foundation for keeping these feasts. Not just the Feast of Tabernacles, but any feast throughout the year. So let us just read the first two verses here in Leviticus 23.

**Leviticus 23:1-2** And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them [This is how he introduces his chapter here on the feasts that we are supposed to keep.]: 'The feasts of the Lord, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, these are My feasts.'

When He introduces the holy days to us, His feast days, He emphasizes one salient fact. And it is this salient fact that must be an absolutely unchallengeable bedrock principle for us in our keeping of the feasts, the feasts of the Lord, our God's feasts. *God's feasts*. He owns them, He directs them. All worship is directed toward Him and everything that goes on within those feasts should be things that God wants us to do. They are not Jewish feasts. Find the word Jew in this chapter. It is not there. It is not Hebrew feasts. It is not even our feasts, or the church's feasts.

They are *God's feasts*. He is the sole proprietor of these times. They are His appointed times. Holy convocations. They serve a much higher purpose than

mere days off of work or any kind of a vacation. I will stress a couple times in this sermon that the Feast is not a vacation. The Feast is a feast to the Lord. They are holy convocations. Now we sometimes tell people that in order to kind of speed things along and smooth things out, we tell them we are going to a church convention. Well, that is not even right. It is not really true that we are going for a church convention. We are going to a *holy convocation*, which is different.

We are going to a calling together. That is what a convocation is. And who is calling us? God Himself is calling us. He is gathering all His people into as few places as possible. In the olden times when all His people were in Israel, they all gathered in one spot—in Jerusalem. That was the place where He had placed His name and so they all came together as one. We do not do that these days, we go to separate feast sites. But it is nice that in this church we have basically one Feast site where we can all go. Now we do sponsor a few more internationally which have just a few attendees, but that whole region tries to get together as one.

But I emphasize here, we are going to a holy convocation. Put the stress on the word "holy" rather than on convocation. It is a separating out and bringing together of God's Family by God Himself for His purposes.

Are you getting the feeling, getting the understanding that these times that we observe, the feasts, are all about God, not about us? We have to understand that these are holy times and the only way that they are holy times is because His presence is in them. He infuses Himself into time in a way that we do not understand. And so if you are not at His place, at His time, you are not together with Him, you are somewhere else.

So at these feasts, and certainly at the Feast of Tabernacles, He is among us, He is there. He has placed His name where these gatherings are to occur and it is a thing that He does not do lightly. And so in response, we should not take it lightly either. There is a great purpose being worked out here below in these feasts. They are times for the church to make leaps: leaps in relationships, leaps in knowledge and understanding, leaps in service, and among many other things that we will get to as we go. But these are times when God concentrates messages, instruction, so that we can really learn and grow. And we should not pass too quickly over the fact that these are holy

convocations. The services that we attend each day of the Feast are the most important things, most important times during the eight days of the Feast and Last Great Day. Services are paramount.

It amazed me when I heard (I think it was Worldwide years ago), they would have a cruise and they would go out and they would cruise all day or they would go out and they would stop at a place and then they would have fun all day and then come back to the boat and have services on the boat in the evenings when everybody was tired. Half the congregation, it seemed, was asleep. They were too tired to really understand or grasp anything new that was being said from the pulpit. In those things, they might have been a great Feast, great trips wherever they were going, but they inverted the priorities. Now, I am sure they had to do that because it is a cruise and the daytimes are for going out on land and seeing these things, but the real priority at the Feast is the teaching.

So we have formal meetings between God and His people at the Feast, when God can deepen His people's understanding of Him and His way of life. And in turn, we worship together as a community, as a people, and we do this through song, through prayer, and careful attention to the messages. We should not have the attitude that they are just services that we endure to get to the more exciting things that are happening that afternoon or that evening. They serve, as I said, the chief purpose of the Feast and that is to worship God and to learn in fellowship with God and His called-out people in that particular environment, in that particular place.

The first step in having a great Feast is to prioritize the services, to worship God, and to learn. The Feast should be a spiritual feast.

We are going to move forward in Leviticus 23 to verses 33-38. This is where we receive instructions on the Feast of Tabernacles.

**Leviticus 23:33-38** Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the children of Israel, saying: 'The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the Feast of Tabernacles for seven days to the Lord. On the first day there shall be a holy convocation. You shall do no customary work on it. For seven days you shall offer an offering made by fire to the Lord. On the eighth day you shall have a holy

convocation, and you shall offer an offering made by fire to the Lord. It is a sacred assembly, and you shall do no customary work on it. These are the feasts of the Lord which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, to offer an offering made by fire to the Lord, a burnt offering and a grain offering, a sacrifice and drink offerings, everything on its day—besides the Sabbaths of the Lord, besides your gifts, besides all your vows, and besides all your freewill offerings which you give to the Lord.””

Now again, we see a principle here. Between verses 36 and 38, offerings are mentioned six times, the various sacrifices and offerings. This should give us a clue about the Feast of Tabernacles. God's feasts are times of offering or of sacrifice.

(By the way, for those of you who may be interested, it is this kind of instruction that we find here between verses 37 and 38 especially, that gave Herbert Armstrong the backing to collect offerings on all the holy days, not just on the three pilgrimage festivals that are mentioned in Deuteronomy 16. He felt that since all the holy days were days of offering and sacrifice that it was just as well to spread them over seven days as to have them on the three pilgrimage festivals, but that is just a bit of a sidelight here.)

But I am not talking about necessarily the taking up of offerings on the high days during the Feast. I am talking about something much more basic, much more principle related. The Feast, and all feasts actually, but the Feast of Tabernacles especially, is a period in which we should be sacrificing *ourselves*. So I am not talking about necessarily the monetary offerings we take up on the first day of the feast and on the Last Great Day, but I am talking about the other kind of sacrificing that we do what should be normal activities of a Christian.

The Feast, like I said, is a period in which we should be sacrificing ourselves, our time that we give to others, our money, our labor if someone needs something done, our attention. A lot of people do not get a whole lot of attention and when they come to the Feast, it is nice to get a little attention. But sometimes it takes a sacrifice on our part to give it to them, and any other way that you might think of that would be a sacrifice in order to help another person. And I do not mean just to God, I mean to other

people within the congregation. In Numbers 29, starting in verse 12 and going pretty much through the end of the chapter there (I will not read it), but it shows that more sacrifices were to be made at the Feast of Tabernacles than any other holy time in the year. I mean it is just dozens of sacrifices that are given during the Feast of Tabernacles and it is a principle that we need to follow.

The Feast of Tabernacles is a time of sacrifice. And these instructions in the Old Testament should indicate to a spiritual people that we must ratchet up our service as living sacrifices while we are at the Feast. Remember, I said this is a time each year when we can take leaps, we can take a leap in our character in terms of sacrificing and giving to others. We can serve and sacrifice in many, many ways and we should learn to be both spontaneous and creative when we see a need, as well as learn to plan our acts of service ahead of time. Both are good and right and fulfill the intent of the principle of the Feast of Tabernacles being a time of sacrifice.

Some serve by speaking, some by leading songs, some by giving prayers, some by leading or singing in the choir, some by playing special music, or by ushering. Some manage the sound booth, some manage the information table, some monitor the mother's room, some are standby just in case somebody gets hurt and needs a nurse, some spend a lot of time planning and leading activities for other people to enjoy, and on and on and on it goes. Those are what we might call formal serving positions, things that need to be done during the Feast so that everything runs smoothly. But there are dozens of other ways, informal ways, personal, and private ways to serve the brethren. And we need to be thinking about that at the Feast.

Of course, there is always taking people out to eat. I know a lot of people do that and that is a good way to serve. Especially if you have the means. There is spending time with people doing things that they might not have the wherewithal to do on their own. You take them out to a go-kart place or whatever. Maybe there are kids that do not have the wherewithal to do that and you can step in there.

But we should do these kind of things especially for those who are at the Feast alone or who are senior citizens or maybe widows, families with limited funds. People who do not have transportation. There are people that

go to the Feast and they spend most of their time on the resort site and do not get off to go do anything—to shop, to walk along the Strand, or what have you, just because they do not have any wheels to get to where they might want to go. So you can offer to take them someplace and spend the time with them. Some people who offer to watch a couple's child, let them have an evening without the little brat. . . (laughter) I mean without having to take care of the child. But we should be seeking these people out, learning who these people are, and find out what their needs are by one way or another, and then go ahead and make somebody's day by providing a memory that they will cherish.

We have a tradition too, which began in Worldwide years ago and it has gone on, that we give feast gifts to various people, not necessarily a mandatory thing, but I think if it is done right, it can be a means of service. We certainly do not want it to become like giving Christmas presents. That is the wrong spirit altogether. Because once you do that, then people expect that they are going to get a gift every year and that there needs to be some reciprocation and it starts to get all weird. We do not want that. If you want to give a gift to somebody, it can be a wonderful thing to tie you together. It is a kind way of letting somebody know that you have been thinking of him or her. It does not have to be extravagant. I mean you do not have to buy them a \$200 bottle of Scotch. Buy them the cheap stuff, (just kidding!) but at least they know you thought of them.

And a Feast gift really even does not have to be particularly meaningful. It can even be silly, depending on the personalities of the giver and the receiver. Years ago, and I hope you do not mind me saying this James, out of the blue James Beaubelle gave me a pair of pajama pants with race cars on them. Big Dog pajama bottoms with these race cars on them. They had eights on them, so it was like Dale Earnhardt Jr, and I loved it. It was a great gift, pajama pants of all things. I still wear them regularly at home and you know what? Every time I do I am reminded of James Beaubelle. This is the kind of thing that binds you together and makes you really love one another.

So the second step in having a great Feast is to sacrifice in service to God and the brethren.

We are going to move a little further into the Book here and go to Deuteronomy the 14th chapter. This might end up being my shortest sermon ever—and I was given all this extra time. Oh well.

**Deuteronomy 14:22-27** "You shall truly tithe all the increase of your grain that the field produces year by year. And you shall eat before the Lord your God, in the place where He chooses to make His name abide, the tithe of your grain and your new wine and your oil, of the firstborn of your herds and your flocks, that you may learn to fear the Lord your God always. But if the journey is too long for you, so that you are not able to carry the tithe, or if the place where the Lord your God chooses to put His name is too far from you, when the Lord your God has blessed you, then you shall exchange it for money, take the money in your hand, and go to the place which the Lord your God chooses. And you shall spend that money for whatever your heart desires: for oxen or sheep, for wine or similar drink, for whatever your heart desires; you shall eat there before the Lord your God, and you shall rejoice, you and your household. You shall not forsake the Levite who is within your gates, for he has no part nor inheritance with you."

This passage obviously has to do with the saving and using of what we call second tithe. So it is saving that money for use at the Feast and then how do we use it? The simple message here, if I could just put it in a few words, a few commands, is tithe. Notice he starts this out "*truly* tithe." He does not say tithe and skimp a little bit, or *say* you tithe but actually you only tithe two percent. It is "*truly* tithe." So that is the first thing—tithe—and go and *eat* before the Lord at the Feast. Even if it is too far away, even if you do not think you can make it all the way, even if you need help, tithe, go, and eat before the Lord.

Where are the exceptions here? This is to all Israel. Tithe, go, and eat before the Lord. Pretty simple instruction. And you know when it comes down to the end of verse 23, He says do this "so you may learn to fear" Me always. It is a very, very important principle. Tithe, go, and eat before the Lord. What God is saying is you make it happen, you do your part, obey the command, obey God's command. Even if it seems unreasonable or even if it seems like

it is out of your reach that you could fulfill it, do it: tithe, go, and eat before the Lord. Trust Him. Trust Him always, watch Him act, and not only just act, but act *generously* in your behalf. Watch Him work things out for you because He has called you there and He wants you there. He has got things to teach you there. So have faith. Trust Him.

What I am saying here is that the second tithe is both a test of faith and a means of providing the funds for keeping the Feast. But the way God approaches it here, it is almost like the means part is secondary to the trust part. He knows His people are not made of money. We do not have the greatest jobs. We cannot take \$20,000 to the Feast with us, most of us. I do not think many of us do, but if we truly tithe He will make it work.

One way we learn to fear God is in this: to watch how God makes the tithe cover one's expenses and provides in other ways to stretch one's funds. Or suddenly a person that you do not know hands you an envelope full of cash just at the time when you need it. Or someone volunteers to do something for you or to pay a meal or to buy some clothing or buy whatever, and it works out. God directs somebody to help the people in need.

We have all heard stories of miracles that God has done at the Feast for people. Like making sure that a car that is just a rattletrap and probably should not have been driven out of their driveway, ends up making it to the Feast and home again. Or that same car—the rattletrap that it is—breaking down, yes, but God makes sure that the rattletrap breaks down right in front of a mechanics shop, or like happened with my brother-in-law, right in front of the auto supply store. And not only that, it was a 24-hour auto supply store and he had the wherewithal, the means, to both buy the part and put it in his vehicle that he needed. Beth is telling me the story here. It was 2:00 AM at the all night 24-hour auto parts store.

But God is willing to work what you need, so that you can have a good Feast and you do not have to worry about the money. The church, obviously, has set up a second tithe account. And though it is not a huge thing, we are usually able to cover the needs of our people if they ask us for the funds. Sometimes that fund just lays unused because only a handful are humble enough to ask for the help, because some people are too proud to ask for help. But the money is there for that reason. People in the church have given

us that money so that we can have it on hand if people need it. And that is one way that God's people and God Himself makes sure that everyone who wants to be there can be there. Things like this, these miracles, these helpful things that people do, directed by God, they make us aware of how good and powerful God is. How He sees all and how much He loves His people and wants to help them, give them what they need.

Now let us move on just a little bit from there. We will stay in Deuteronomy 14 though. Notice his instruction on the use of second tithe at the feast.

**Deuteronomy 14:26** "You shall spend that money for whatever your heart desires: for oxen or sheep, or wine or similar drink, for whatever your heart desires [he repeats it]; you shall eat there before the Lord your God, and you shall rejoice, you and your household."

His instruction on the use of the second tithe revolves around food and drink. Now, if you think about it, these are two of the component of fellowship, food and drink, and the missing component is the other person or the people that you are fellowshipping with. This is obvious because what is this? It is a *feast*, right? What do you do at a feast? You all sit around in a circle and hold hands and that is it? No, at a feast you eat and drink and that is what God wants us to do. The eating and drinking part of the Feast of Tabernacles is extremely important because that is where you are calling other people and say, "Hey, let's share a meal, let's be hospitable one to another. Let's talk about this, that, and the other thing," and it binds us closer and we can toss ideas back and forth and maybe learn something from one another.

The use of second tithe is not limited to food and drink because He does repeat twice "whatever your heart desires." So if there is something else within the realm of the Feast that your heart desires to do, then He allows you to do it. But the general rule of thumb is that second tithe is to be used only for feast related expenses while at the Feast. And obviously there is some that we may have to pay in preparation or in coming back from the Feast. But the second tithe is set apart for that specific purpose and in that case it is holy. It is a holy tithe specific for use at the Feast and for Feast related things. Notice that though God gives us permission to eat and drink what our hearts desire, we need to make sure we balance this with Paul's

admonition in I Corinthians 9. I just want to read the whole paragraph there, so we understand what he is getting at.

**I Corinthians 9:24-27** Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? [He is trying to make an analogy here. He is using a metaphor for our walk toward the Kingdom of God, our race, as it were. So he says] Run it in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize [that is what is our goal] is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown [meaning athletes], but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight, not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.

He is talking about the metaphor of an athlete preparing for and running in a game. Like the games that were held in Corinth. They were well aware of these games because thousands or even hundreds of thousands of people would come to Corinth when these games were played, a lot like the Olympics, in another part of Greece. But Corinth was a big center of athletics because these games were played there. So people in Corinth understood what these athletes would go through to make sure that they would receive the laurel wreath for winning. So they were temperate in all things, it says there. They were moderate, they watched how they ate, they watched how they drank, they trained their bodies, they would exercise and do all those things to keep their bodies in top physical condition so that they could win the prize.

And so Paul here wants us to understand this in spiritual terms that we have to bring our bodies into subjection. We have to keep ourselves in top, as he is looking at it, spiritual condition so that we are able then to win, to complete the course. But this applies just as well to the way we take care of our physical bodies. Because if we do not take care of our physical bodies, we are not going to be able to run the spiritual race.

So when God tells us to eat and drink whatever our heart desires at the Feast, this has to be balanced by an understanding that, even though He gives us a command to rejoice and be able to indulge in these things that we do not

normally indulge in, we also have to have self-control. The New Testament warns us many times that *drunkenness is a work of the flesh*. And Paul specifically tells us in a couple places that drunkards will not enter the Kingdom of God. Why? Because they have shown no control. They have allowed something else to enslave them. And so they are really slaves of sin, slaves of this addiction rather than slaves of Christ, and we have to give ourselves wholly to Him. And gluttony would fall under the same thing. Gluttony is just the food addiction that drunkenness is to alcohol.

We need to take this command in perspective. If you want a nice steak and you have the means and it is really good, it is nutritious, and whatnot, go ahead and have one. If you like a drink after dinner, that is good, go ahead and have one. But do not have six. Do not blow all your money on a lot of food and a lot of drink just to satisfy yourself. That is selfishness. That is totally against what we have been talking about, that the feast is a time of sacrifice. So go ahead and have these things that you want to have, but be very careful that they do not run you, rather than you run them, if you know what I mean. Be in control.

So just because we *can* indulge ourselves a bit, it does not mean that we *should*. And that is especially true if we have a weakness for overindulging in food and especially drink. I think we have had more problems at the Feast from Worldwide days on, that have involved people drinking too much than any other problem. I heard that (I will not say which church this is and I will not say where it was), but they basically said, "Oh yeah, well this church is coming into town, we better stock up on our liquor because they drank us dry last time." That is *not* the kind of witness we want to make toward the world. We want them to see that we are God's people and we are in control of ourselves.

Just remember that God wants to see us exhibit self control. Remember Galatians 5:22-23, the fruit of the Spirit. The very last fruit of the Spirit is self-control. And as I may have mentioned in a sermon before, I think God put it last because it is the hardest to work on and finally manage and do well because we are flesh. We have a hard time with self-control. So leaving that point a little bit.

God does tell us though, at the end of verse 26, "you shall rejoice." It is actually a command. You *will* rejoice at the Feast. He wants us to enjoy ourselves there. Now to some, this means, "Woo-hoo! Par-tay!" But you know that is not what God means. People look at the word rejoice and they say, this means a celebration of me. I get to do all these things that I want to do, but that is not what He actually means here. The Hebrew verb is *samach*. It suggests three things. That is the word for rejoice, by the way.

- 1) It suggests a spontaneous yet unsustained feeling of jubilance. "Yay, that's great, wonderful!" But then you go on and you go about your business.
- 2) It may suggest a feeling inspired by some inspiring external stimulus. You hear a beautiful song that was played and it just makes you feel good, you feel a kind of joy. And especially in terms of (we are talking about the Feast), let us say, the special music, and you know that it glorifies God, and it gives you this special feeling because you have been stimulated by the music given in appreciation to God.
- 3) One of the things it suggests is a feeling so strong that it prompts some external expression like breaking into song or shouting or even dancing. Have you ever seen somebody get some good news, like their son or their daughter gets accepted into the college that they want and they go, "Woo-hoo!" and they start doing a little jig? Well, that is the kind of rejoicing that it is talking about. It is the jubilation for the blessing of God or happiness on realizing God's goodness. You know that this verb *samach* is almost always used in context in which God has done something, or it is a thing like a feast or a wedding. Obviously that is a thing that God promotes. Or something like where a person notices what is going on and realizing that God has made this possible, has worked it all out, is suddenly overflowing with joy because they understand that God's hand is upon all of what is going on there.

If you need an example of this kind of joy, just remember David dancing before the ark, rejoicing in God's presence, that God had allowed him to bring the ark to Jerusalem even after the mess up of the time before. But

what did he do? He just got in front of the procession and he started doing the highland fling, and Michel did not like it. But it was a spontaneous expression of his thankfulness to God.

So "you shall rejoice" is not necessarily about having a good time. If you are in the right attitude, you are going to have a good time. But it is going to be a good time that God approves of. It is about being glad, even overflowing gladness, jubilance. And the reason for it is the blessing of God. Somehow, God is involved in that thing and it just makes you overflow with joy because He is there and He has made things work.

Finally, in verse 27, He commands us not to forsake the Levite. Now, in this particular context, the Levite stands for those people that we mentioned before. The poor, the widow, the orphan, the foreigner. He means those who are not likely to have the means to amass sufficient second tithe. You know, Levites did not have many ways to make money, to have an increase, because they were always involved in the Lord's work. And so when they got to the Feast, they did not have anything extra. They would come to the Feast, but they would have to depend on the goodness of their fellow Israelites heart that they would give them, let us say, some money or they invite them to the Feast that they were having so that they can fellowship together and what have you.

He is again telling us here, keep your eyes out for those who have needs and fill them because they do not have the same blessings, perhaps, that you have been given and those need to be shared about. So, we are supposed to supplement them with our second tithe and as we are able so that they can rejoice before God too and have that overwhelming feeling of God's presence and help.

The third step in having a great Feast is to practice self-control amidst the plenty God has provided and help others to rejoice.

Let us move into the New Testament. We were just in I Corinthians 9. Now let us go to I Corinthians 6 this time.

**I Corinthians 6:19-20** Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God,

and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

He is telling us here that our bodies are vessels for God's Spirit, and through God's Spirit, He and the Son dwell in us. That is what we are told in John 14. That once we make the New Covenant with Him, He gives us His Spirit by the laying on of hands, and then He comes and dwells with us. He wants to abide with us—He and His Father. They are both dwelling within us and so we have a responsibility to present a fitting abode for Them in us.

Remember, They are holy. They are remarkably holy, if I can say that. They are the holiest beings in the universe and They deigned to condescend to dwell in us fleshly human beings. And we are far from holy on our own. The only reason why we are holy is because of the holiness of Jesus Christ. But that means that, even though that is the case, we have a responsibility to attempt to try to be as holy as They because that is the goal. We have to imitate our betters until we can do it ourselves. So we have to make sure that our bodies are in good shape as well as we can.

Now, these two verses that I read come at the end of a passage on sexual immorality and usually it is applied to that. But really the principle applies to any kind of defiling of the body that God has given us. So we need to take care of ourselves. Not because it is righteousness, not because it is going to grant us a higher place in the Kingdom of God. Paul said there "the Kingdom of God is not food or drink." But it is something that we need to do because a healthy body makes us able to do other things more easily. Good things, spiritual things, righteous things.

So we need to take care of ourselves at the Feast. And I think especially at the Feast since it is a concentrated time of worship, of fellowship, of eating and drinking, and all kinds of activities that we are not used to doing. And sometimes all those activities, all those services, all those meals, all those glasses of wine, you name it, all of those things tend to tip us over the edge and we get sick.

Now, it may not be your fault at all. Maybe someone has not taken himself out of the fellowship for a while and quarantined himself or herself when

they are sick. And I should repeat, this is a good godly principle: if you get sick, do not come to services. Stay in your room until it is over because you do not want to pass that around. That is not the kind of giving that we are talking about here. Do not give somebody the flu or whatever you have. Stay away out of love for them so that they can enjoy the Feast. Remember this is about helping others rejoice, but we need to make sure that we take care of our bodies during this concentrated time of learning and fellowshiping. So I have a few points here.

Make sure you get enough rest. That is a biggie! Set a time for you, whatever it is, 10:00, 10:30, 11:00, where you are going to go to bed and stick to it. I know some of you like to fellowship late into the night or to the wee hours of the morning and that is really fun to you. But you know, it puts you and your mind in bad shape for the services the next morning and you rack up five or six or seven nights of that and you are probably well on your way to being worn out by the end of the Feast. So get your sleep. There is time to fellowship.

Do not eat foods that you know your body will react adversely to. Make sure you maintain your diet. I know you can indulge yourself a little bit, but just be careful. A little bit of indulgence goes a long way and you will probably appreciate it more doing it sparingly than overdoing it, quite a bit. So if your body has a difficult time with alcohol, forgo the beer, the wine, the hard liquor because that will affect things down the road. You will maybe not be able to come to services or what have you.

I have found that out regarding alcohol. I like a good beer with my steak, but I cannot drink it anymore. We went out with the Hunt's last night and I looked at that beer list and I saw my beer on there and I had to say no. I knew I was speaking today, so I had to be a good example. But it just does something to me and makes me so that I cannot sleep. It gives me headaches and so I have had to learn that. Not all of you are like that. Many of you can take alcohol and take more than I can, certainly way more than I can because I am a lightweight.

But just be mindful of that. If you notice that you have problems after drinking alcohol, then cut back because God wants you healthy so that you can learn and do those things that you should be doing at the feast.

Also be careful of the activities you do, especially if you are into sports or daredevil type of things and your body is not in the shape to do it. I do not know how many times people have come to the Feast and done something like windsurfing or whatever and they end up hurt, hobbling about, or they play football or softball or whatever with guys out on the beach and they end up with a twisted ankle or what have you.

Remember Jarod in Nashville? Well, he was not doing anything overly athletic. He was actually just trying to slide and because it was grass, he got caught and he broke his wrist. But we know that there is nothing worse than waiting in an emergency room at the Feast. It is not the place to be. There is no fellowship there that is really any good, although Jarod and I bonded. No, just kidding! I was worried about how much it was going to cost and all those X-rays and everything. It was not something I really wanted to be bothered with at the Feast. We handled it. But if you can avoid that, please do. It is not the place to be.

So be circumspect in what you allow yourself to do so that your health becomes a non-issue. You do not want it to rear up and affect your Feast. You want to have good health through the Feast. So make sure you maintain your regimens, whatever they happen to be. Take walks, go down and exercise. There is a beautiful beach out there that you could walk up and down or run, or you can play in the water. Do those things to get your exercise that you need. If nothing else, go out and breathe the fresh air and just take it all in. Rest. Meditate. Whatever you do, take care of yourself so you can get the most out of the Feast.

So the fourth step for having a great Feast is to take care of your body. Get your sleep, get proper nutrition, make sure your activities are within your range of activities. So take care of your body—sleep, nutrition activity.

(Here it is 10 after 4. I am at my conclusion. You know that does not mean anything, right? I could spend an hour and a half on my conclusion.  
(laughter))

Let us go to I Peter 4. I am, in a way, taking this out of context and just applying it to the Feast. But I think you will understand the principle.

**I Peter 4:7-11** But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers. And above all things have fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins." Be hospitable to one another without grumbling. As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers [or serves] let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Finally, my fifth step for having a great Feast is this: Maintain your customary spiritual activities.

Some of these overlap what I have already said, but they need to be reinforced. Yes, the Feast is a time of sacrifice, but do not sacrifice your spiritual routines—not for fellowship, not for activities—these are necessary. So pray, study, meditate, fellowship, show hospitality, serve one another. Put your all into all your spiritual responsibilities. The Feast is not a vacation. I repeat: The Feast is *not* a vacation, either from work or from your personal contact with God. I have known many people that pack their Feast so full that they never get a chance to say "Thanks God" for what He has provided because they are going from the time they wake up to the time they go to bed exhausted.

Like I said, the Feast is not a vacation, either from work or from your personal contact with God. And because that it is a feast of the Lord, you may, in fact, want to increase them because this Feast is *to* Him, it is not *for* us. There are parts of it that are for us, but He is the central pillar of the Feast of Tabernacles. That is where God has placed His name. He is there among us and He is actively working to bring us closer together with Him and with each other.

So I wish you the best Feast ever. Have a very wonderful time and please be safe!