

You Are Here
Feast of Tabernacles
Rick Railston
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Greetings again. I want to thank the chorale and Les King particularly for all the hard work that goes on for months before today. Thanks to Jerry Moore for the wonderful flowers.

Well, we're all here together to celebrate the start of Christ's millennial rule, the beginning of His government on earth and looking forward to a thousand years; think of it, peace, joy, no tears and no sorrow, thanks to God. He gets all the credit that we're here together. It's been a long and difficult road for many. There have been many unexpected turns, but all of us are here because we are firmly holding onto what God has revealed to each one of us.

I ride a Harley and it's my joy and escape to get out with no phones, computers or emails. It reminds me of a trip I took to Chinook Pass this spring. We live in a little town called Yakima, Washington. It's in the south central part of Washington State. Most people think of Washington as Seattle, it's green and it rains all the time. But that's only the western third of the state. The eastern two-thirds of the state are kind of what you see here and if you drove through Washington to get here, it's high desert, a lot of agriculture and farming. The geographic features that separate the western third from the eastern two-thirds are the Cascade Mountains. They run north and south through the state. There are several peaks over ten thousand feet. The highest one is Mount Rainier, of course, at 14,440 feet. If you want to go from east to west or west to east, there are six mountain passes that you must cross. The Cascades have some of the harshest winters on record on the globe. In fact, the world record for snowfall for a one-year period is a little place on the southern slopes of Mount Rainier, the record is 1,225 inches. That's 102 feet of snow. The Cascades get incredible blizzards and winds and snowfall and it can be very dangerous going over in the winter. Chinook Pass is probably my favorite pass to take a ride. It's over 5,000 feet high. It's 5,400 feet exactly. They get over 500 inches of snow at road level during the winter, so it's closed in late fall and they hope to get it open in spring by Memorial Day. Some years they do and some years they don't. They have these giant snow blowers and augers that start at both ends of the pass and try to meet in the center, and they're clearing by late spring in May. They are clearing thirty to forty feet of snow off the roadway. Once they get it opened, everybody flocks up to see all the sights. As you come up over the pass from the east where we come from, you take a hard right and there is a pull out area and down below is a beautiful alpine lake called Lake Tipsoo. Behind it is Mount Rainier in all its glory. Now I know James Smyda doesn't believe that Mount Rainier exists because every time he comes out here it's in the clouds. He thinks we photo shop Mount Rainier and put it on postcards and send it to you all, that it really doesn't exist. But it does. Lake Tipsoo is there down below and Mount Rainier is right there. The Forest Service built a guard rail along about an eighth of a mile of this pullout, and they

had eight foot square supports for the guard rail. They were eight feet square and came up in a pyramid and made of concrete and rock. There was a hole where they could put a split log and run to the next support around twenty or thirty feet down. It made a beautiful guard rail and you could take pictures and look down at the lake and look up at the mountain. It was just gorgeous.

I came up the next year. A couple of the split logs had been broken and before the end of the year they replaced them. It was still very nice. But the third year I rode the motorcycle up at the first opportunity in the spring. I went around the corner and pulled up to the pull out and there was nothing there. If you walked up to the edge and peaked over and down below was the rubble left from the eight foot square, pyramid shaped rock and concrete berms. Then you look back and see the mountain up there and see where these avalanches came down the side of the mountain, across the road, hit the supports and just obliterated them. There wasn't a piece bigger than a basketball down below. It just shows you the power of God's creation. As a result, they have never been rebuilt. We go up there and look at them every year and they are just in pieces.

This year in June, I was riding up seven or eight miles from the pass, and the Corps of Engineers back in the 1930s cut this two-lane road up through the mountain. It is solid granite on the right hand side, just right to the roadway. On the other are some trees and then it drops off for another thousand feet down below. You're on this little two-lane road with solid granite on your right hand side. As I was riding up, I couldn't help but notice there was a wild flower stuck on the side of the granite. It looked like you just took some glue and pasted a flower up there. Then a half mile further you would see another one. Overall you might see three or four of them, just hanging onto the side of this granite face. In the fall, the leaves drop off and the wind comes and the temperature drops and the avalanches come roaring down that mountain and that little flower survives year to year. If you stop and look at it real close, there is a little crack in the rock, and at some point a little seed got blown up into this little crack and began to germinate and then a little root went down deep into the crack and in the crack was water and the plant began to blossom. Because it found water and because it wedged itself down inside that crack, it has withstood all that I just described.

I got to thinking, riding back down and looking at the flowers as I passed, that we are the flower. All of us, we are the flower. Christ is the rock. We know that ... Matthew 16. The flower is attached, just anchored to that rock. The root goes deep inside the rock and gets water. We know that water is a symbol of God's holy spirit. I just couldn't help but think ... that is us. We're just hanging onto the side of that rock, just wedged in there, hanging on through thick and thin, storms, trouble, turmoil and we are there. God somehow looks at us as little flowers hanging onto that rock. As I said, it's been a much harder, much longer road than most of us originally thought.

Gail Tyndal is listening today from Mesa, Arizona. She was baptized in 1952. Shirley Angell is listening today, and she is from Prescott, Arizona, and she was baptized in 1954. I'm sure when they were baptized, they never thought that fifty or sixty years later that we would still be here. I'm sure all of us thought the same thing. Look at all the

trials the world has gone through in the last sixty years. Look at the trials that the church has gone through in the last sixty years, and look at the trials that we personally have gone through in the last sixty years. There have been many obstacles to overcome. Some people have lost jobs. Some people have even lost careers. Others have lost mates, as Dale was describing. Some have lost dear friends that no longer seek God, no longer go after God. Some have experienced discrimination, even in the church in its many forms. Some have faced abuse in the church in its many forms. Many have had health trials as we are obviously aware. Despite all of those difficulties, we are here. We are hanging onto the side of that rock.

As we get older and we are obviously a lot older than when we were when we were baptized, hopefully we are a little wiser. As a result though, we have a few battle scars. Understand, we are here and God gets all the credit. God does the work, not us. We can't claim any greatness at all. The fact is that you and I had a big part to play in some important ways in being here today. That's what we want to talk about. We're going to talk about two things today. We're going to examine what you have done that has enabled you to be here and then I hope to encourage you to do one more thing over and above what you've done to be here today.

So let's talk about what we've done to be here today over these years that we've just described. We're going to talk about three things.

First, you are here today because you have been willing to yield to God.

You have been willing to yield. In other words, to step back and let God do what God does and not get in the way.

Let's look at a principle in Romans 6:16. This principle applied when Paul wrote this letter to the church in Rome, but it especially applies to us today. I'll read out of the King James unless otherwise noted. Notice what Paul says. Understand the principle.

Romans 6:16. *Know you not, that to whom you yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants you are to whom you obey; (KJV)*

He says there are only two ways to go; you can yield to sin and to death, or you can yield to the way of obedience and righteousness. We are here today because as imperfectly as we yield sometimes, we have yielded and we want to yield to God. We've been willing to admit that our way does not work. I have learned that over the last five or six years especially. Our way does not work. As soon as we try to do it our way, it blows up in our face. The only way that works is God's way revealed in His word. We learn through painful experience that we're little kids that stub our toes when we try to go on a path that is not the right path, yet everything works out in the end when we follow God and God's way.

But yielding, you see, requires humility. We can't yield if we don't have humility. Let's go to Micah 6:8. It's a memory scripture. It's one we know by heart, but for emphasis,

let's turn to Micah 6:8. It talks about the three things that God requires of us. One of those things allows us to be here today. There is simplicity in God's way, simplicity in Christ as the Bible says and it couldn't be simpler here.

Micah 6:8. *He has shown you, O man, what [is] good; and what does the Lord require of you ... (KJV)*

Not asks, but requires.

8b) ... but to do justly (to be fair) and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God? (KJV)

To follow God and just say, "God, whatever You want me to do, that's what I will do. I've learned that my way doesn't work. I just want to do what You want me to do." Not putting the self first, not telling God what God is going to do. We see a lot of that today in the church, people telling God what He is going to do. Who are we to say that? We just want to know from God what He wants us to do. Humility, you see, is possible only through the holy spirit of God Almighty. True humility ... that's the only way to get it; and you're here because at least we've been willing to yield a bit and say, "God, whatever You want." We are learning to begin to yield. That's the first thing that we've done that allows us to be here.

Second, we are here because we have allowed the holy spirit to lead us.

We yield and then we allow God's spirit to lead us. Let's go to Romans 8 and see the defining scripture on this subject. We're going to read verses 5 through 9 and then jump to 13 and 14. Notice what he says. These are basic principles, and sometimes we forget them in the rush and busyness of life ... we forget.

Romans 8:5. *For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; (KJV)*

That's what is on their minds.

*5b) ... but they that are after the spirit the things of the spirit.
6) For to be carnally minded (fleshly minded) [is] death; But to be spiritually minded [is] life and peace.
7) Because the carnal mind [is] ... (KJV)*

The King James says "enmity." That means simply an *enemy* of God, an *enemy against* God.

*7b) ... enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.
8) So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. (KJV)*

They cannot make God happy.

9) But you are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if so be that the spirit of God dwells (lives) in you. ... (KJV)

Remember, Christ promised the disciples that, “The Father and I will come and make our abode with you, inside you, within you.” That’s what this is talking about.

9b) ... Now if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his. (KJV)

Meaning Christ’s... Now verse 13. We’re getting to the crux of the matter.

13) For if you live after the flesh, you will die: ... (KJV)

No wiggle room there.

13b) ... but if you through the spirit do mortify (put to death) the deeds of the body, you shall live. (KJV)

Verse 14 is where we’re getting at.

14) For as many as are led (must be led) by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God. (KJV)

We have to yield to God and then allow God’s spirit to put in our minds what we need to do and, therefore, we become led by the spirit. We’re following behind God’s spirit. God is out there leading and we’re just like little kids coming along behind, staying in His footsteps. But again, yielding and being led by the holy spirit and humbling ourselves. It requires humility. The only way to let God’s spirit lead us is through humbling ourselves and saying, “God, You are greater by infinity than I am. Just show me what You want me to do. Show me Your way.” We need to realize that we of ourselves are nothing. We are not worth anything. John the Baptist said to the descendants of Abraham, “God can raise up stones to be descendants of Abraham.” God can raise up stones to replace us. We are nothing without God’s spirit, and allowing God’s spirit to lead us is the only way we can exhibit Christ-like behavior. That’s the only way that will happen is if we allow God’s spirit to lead us. So our job is to not get in the way of God’s spirit working in our lives. Get out of the way. Let God do what God is going to do in us. We are all imperfect, but we have begun to allow that to happen, to allow God’s spirit to lead us. We’ve started to learn that, and I’ve learned it very painfully many, many times. That is the second.

Third, you are here today because you care about the brethren.

You care about each other. You wouldn’t be here if you didn’t care about God’s people and want to be with God’s people.

It's amazing how many times you can read the Bible. I've done it to my embarrassment too many times. You read a scripture for decades. You read right over it. You know what it says, but you don't know what it means. You know what it says, but it doesn't get embedded deep inside you. That's happened to me. About fifteen years ago, I read this scripture and it hit me like a thunder bolt. I bet I read it hundreds of times. 1 John 3:14. A light bulb came on and I kicked myself. It should have come on probably thirty years earlier, but it didn't, slow learner that I am. I just stopped in wonderment.

1 John 3:14. *We know that we have passed from death unto life, ... (KJV)*

All of us want to know that we've passed from death to life. We want to know that. John is saying, "You can know whether you've passed from death to life because ..."

14b) ... because we love the brethren. ... (KJV)

That means it's got to be very important to love the brethren. He goes on ...

14 continued) ... He that loves not [his] brother abides in death. (KJV)

If we don't love the brethren, we're not going to be in God's kingdom.

Dale and I did not talk about his message today and mine. God has a way of doing this. What God is saying to us is we're not going to be there, this time that we celebrate. We're not going to be there if we don't love the brethren.

You, over time, have allowed God's love to work with you to the point that you love the brethren. The closeness we feel here and hopefully as we get through these eight days, the closeness will be stronger and stronger, and that is due simply to the bond of God's holy spirit. That's all it is. We can't take credit for it. It is God's spirit in action inside us that causes us to bond together. Being at peace and being in harmony and being at one with each other is only accomplished when we get our minds off of ourselves and onto other people. Let's go to Philippians 2:3. As Dale was talking about in the sermonette, when you win the lottery, guess where the focus comes? It comes right to the self, and that's why God won't, hopefully, allow any of us to win the lottery.

We wouldn't be here if we hadn't started to learn this principle. I'll read it out of the New King James.

Philippians 2:3. *[Let] nothing [be done] through selfish (to the self) ambition or conceit (which is to the self) ... (KJV)*

He's implying, let everything be done:

3b) ... but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. (NKJV)

Christ said we should take the lowest room if you were invited to a wedding supper. Don't go to the highest room. Esteem others, honor others better than ourselves. Don't put ourselves first.

So the third point is that we care for and love the brethren and we want to serve the brethren and love them certainly as much, hopefully a little more than we even love ourselves.

So we've seen three areas where we've had a part to play in being here:

- Yielding to God;
- Allowing God's spirit to lead us;
- Developing a love for the brethren.

As I said, we can't take credit because God's spirit has accomplished that through us. God has done the work. We are just the conduit, the mouthpiece so to speak.

I said we're going to cover two areas, so that brings us to today, here and now. We're the little flower on the side of the rock face of the mountain. The question then that gets to the second part of the sermon is:

Where do we go from here with this subject in mind?

As I said, I'd like to encourage you to do one more thing. We know, of course, we have to do a lot of things. God requires a lot from us. We all have our shortcomings and our weaknesses and things we really have to work on. I'm not diminishing any of that. What I'm saying is, there is one more thing that applies to the Feast and to us here today, one more thing that I believe God wants us to do. We're going to emphasize that today. That one thing is ...

Make a positive difference in the lives of other people.

I'll say it again. Make a positive difference in the lives of other people.

We have a tremendous opportunity over the next eight days to begin to do that and to practice that, to make a positive difference in other peoples' lives. The key to doing that is what we talked about before, getting the mind off the self. I can remember years ago we were in our local church talking about the Feast and the various attributes of the various Feast sites. One Feast site came up and a woman said, "What's in it for me?" She was dead serious. I thought, "Oops; that's not a good way to go to the Feast. That's not the right mindset to go to the Feast." You see, our focus on going to the Feast should be on God and Jesus Christ first and then on helping serve other people, loving God with all our being and then loving our neighbor as ourselves. We should love the people here in Kellogg, love each other and love our mates. That's what God requires of us. Let's go to Romans 12:1. We covered this many times recently and we

need to have this spirit and attitude and approach. If we do this at the Feast, we're going to have a joyous and wonderful Feast. Paul says to us today ...

Romans 12:1. *I beseech you ... (KJV)*

That's a strong term. He is saying, "I beg you; I plead with you ..."

1b) ... therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice ... (KJV)

Now back in that day when you said "sacrifice" they knew what he was talking about, because there were millions of animals killed. Some day maybe we'll find out how many billions of animals were killed from the time of Moses until the time of Christ. They knew what a dead sacrifice was. Paul is saying, "No, we're not talking about a dead sacrifice here, we talking about a living sacrifice." That's a new concept to them. "I want you to be a living sacrifice." Then he goes onto say it should be a holy sacrifice. It should be a sacrifice acceptable to God.

1 continued) ... holy acceptable unto God, [which is] your reasonable service. (KJV)

It means your reasonable duty or your reasonable job. It's what we should be doing, being a living sacrifice for other people, getting out of ourselves and getting our minds off of ourselves. As Dale pointed out in the sermonette, people are not very happy when the mind is on the self. You see that in people. You see selfish people and they are not happy. The happiest people are the people who are making other people fulfilled and other people happy and who are uplifting and supporting other people, who are making a positive difference in the lives of others. Those are the happiest people on the face of the earth. We have the chance to do that very thing here at the Feast.

Now it seems like an odd place to interject this subject, but we're going to go to the example of Paul about the difference that Paul made in the lives of others. He started making a horrible negative difference, as you know. Let's look at Paul's past for a moment. He was a Pharisee. He studied at the feet of the greatest teacher of his day. He was a great zealot for his beliefs. In today's terms, his résumé surpassed just about every other résumé of the men of his day of the Pharisees. He approved of Stephen's death and he did so with great pleasure. He threw men and women in prison. He chased brethren into foreign cities and countries to imprison them and beat them. He asked priests for the authority to murder. He solicited incriminating letters from fellow synagogue members to put other people in jail for torture and brutality. He even attempted to force Christians to blaspheme through torture. He did everything possible to oppose the name of Jesus Christ and he made a huge difference. People were in fear of him. Guess what? He was called. After all of that, he was called. Think about if you were Paul and you had done all that and then you were called. What on earth would you do? What would you do? Notice his guilt and his regret. 1 Corinthians 15:9. I'll read it from the New King James. This is summarizing his first letter to this very

dysfunctional church. He's talking about love and spiritual gifts and the resurrection. In 1 Corinthians 15:9 notice what he says about himself.

1 Corinthians 15:9. *For I am the least of the apostles ... (NKJV)*

I wish we could see that today of all the people that claim to be apostles.

9b) ... who am not worthy to be called an apostle ... (NKJV)

He tells everybody why.

9 continued) ... because I persecuted the Church of God. (NKJV)

"I murdered people. I tortured people. I chased people all over the Middle East and I am not worthy to be called an apostle." He viewed himself as the worst of sinners. Notice in 1 Timothy 1:16. I'll read this from the NIV. He had guilt on top of guilt, regret on top of regret.

1 Timothy 1:16. *But for that very reason I was shown mercy ... (NIV)*

Greater mercy than probably anyone, given what he had done.

16b) ... so that in me (Paul), the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display His unlimited patience ... (NIV)

He is saying, "Look what Christ put up with regarding me. Look what I did and He didn't blow me to smithereens."

16 continued) ... as an example for those who would believe on Him and receive eternal life. (NIV)

Here's an example for us today. No matter what our sins are, Christ is patient with us, kind and gentle and ultimately forgiving when we repent.

You see, Paul had a choice after doing all of this and then being called. He could wallow in self pity, he could wallow in guilt and wallow in misery. He could be like the one pulling the lever on the toilet bowl or sink and just go down the drain given his past. He could have blamed all his problems on other people. He could have done all that. Or he could change and make a positive difference in the lives of others. That's exactly what he did. Paul's conversion and his subsequent example show us the power of God's spirit to change a human mind and a human life and put it in a totally different direction, and Paul is the poster child for that process. Despite his past, what a difference he made. He wrote more words of the New Testament than any other author, and those words have permeated the first century church and permeated us today by reading his words. Look at the difference he has made. Look at what the holy spirit did in his life after he was converted, and his writings have positively influenced

tens of thousands of people who will someday be spirit beings in the Kingdom of God. Can you imagine Paul starting this process and going out and preaching the gospel and arriving at an area and in the audience were people who were relatives of those he had murdered or people who were relatives of those who were still in prison and couldn't get out. Or there were people sitting in the audience who were disfigured by the tortures that he authorized, and now he is preaching Christ to them. Can you imagine how he must have felt, and of course, some of those people had to change their attitude also. But the only thing we can conclude is that Paul's transformation from what he was before to what he was then after his conversion must have impressed mightily many, many people. That God could take this man, who was the worst of sinners and caused havoc in the church to him standing in front of people preaching Christ and forgiveness and mercy and the Kingdom of God. It impressed them then and it impresses us today.

The message for us today is what God's spirit did for Paul, it can do for us; it can do for each one of us. Look at the degree of transformation of Paul; it can be the same for us today if we will allow it, if we will yield, if we will allow the spirit to lead us. Let's go to Romans, chapter 6:6. This is what Paul experienced, this is what we are experiencing and need to accelerate. Paul is saying that if anybody could talk with authority about the "old man", Paul could.

Romans 6:6. *Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with [him] ... (KJV)*

With Jesus Christ, put to death, killed and buried.

6b) ... that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. (KJV)

It was obvious then and it's obvious now that Paul's old man was dead. He was dead. Now look at Ephesians, chapter 4. We're going to see three scriptures, Romans being the first. Three different scriptures to three different churches that say the same thing, and it's important therefore, that we get that message. He said it to the Romans and he is saying it to the church in Ephesus. I'll read it out of the New King James.

Ephesians 4:22. *That you put off (put away from you), concerning your former conduct ... (NKJV)*

The way you used to live, think and act.

22b) ... the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, (NKJV)

You see lusts are incoming. When we have lust, we want to satisfy ourselves. He says that the old man was corrupt because of those lusts. Paul is saying obviously to us that he rejected his past. He rejected everything he stood for. He turned his back on it and he went a new way.

Now look at the letter to the church at Colossi. We will read Colossians 3, verses 9 and 10. This is under the subject of what the holy spirit did for Paul, it can do for us today. These few scriptures and many others, of course, point this out. He is saying this to the brethren; apparently there was a problem and it's a problem in the greater church today.

Colossians 3:9. *Lie not one to another, seeing that you have put off the old man with his deeds; (KJV)*

What the old man used to do or think, or the way the old man used to behave.

10) And have put on the new [man], ... (KJV)

A new creature, a new creation, a new being.

10b) ... which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him (meaning Jesus Christ) that created him: (KJV)

We are made new and created new through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the indwelling of God's holy spirit and that power, yielding to God and letting that spirit lead us. So you see once Paul was converted and he saw what he was, he began the process of becoming Christ-like through the new man and rejecting the old man. That is what we are called to do.

So right here, right now at this Feast, again we come back to the question ... what should we be doing? We should be making a positive difference in the lives of other people. Now we all know the two great commandments. I know you know them, but it's good to read it again with our eyes. Matthew 22 and we'll begin in verse 35. It is amazing how all of us, and I'm the worst at that; you read over scriptures and read over scriptures and for whatever reason, they just don't sink in or they don't lock into our brains. One of the things I think we have missed in the past is the simplicity of the two great commandments. It couldn't be simpler. It's easy to understand, but it's difficult to do, but it's simple to understand.

Matthew 22:35. *Then one of them, [which was] a lawyer, asked [him a question], tempting him, and saying,
36) Master, which [is] the great commandment in the law? (KJV)*

Christ could have answered and just given him one, but He didn't. He gave him two. He said, referencing the first one:

37) Jesus said unto him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart ... (KJV)

Your innermost being.

37b) ... and with all your soul (life), and with all your mind. (KJV)

38) *This is the first and great commandment.*” (KJV)

He could have stopped there, but He didn't. He chose not to.

39) *“And the second [is] like unto it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*
40) *On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”* (KJV)

Think about this with me for a minute. The first commandment, loving God with all our heart, can be done in isolation. You could be the proverbial monk in a cave on a mountain top and love God with all your heart. You could study, you could pray, you could fast and love God with all your being in this cave on a mountain top.

The second commandment cannot be done in isolation. You can't love your neighbor as yourself if you're a hermit and you live alone. It can't be done. The second commandment can only be fulfilled in the presence of other people. It can only be fulfilled that way. Let's go to Hebrews 10:25. I believe this is why this scripture is in the Bible, because it helps us fulfill the second great commandment. Yet some people reject this today, and obviously back in those days it wouldn't be there if people weren't rejecting the second commandment and just going off by themselves.

Hebrews 10:25. *Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together ...* (KJV)

The prime reason is to fulfill the second commandment.

25b) *... as the manner of some [is]; ...* (KJV)

So apparently it was a problem and it's a problem in some cases in the greater church today. But he said, “Rather than going off by yourself ...”

25 continued) *... but exhorting [one another] ...* (KJV)

You can't do that in isolation. Exhorting means to encourage and to uplift. It's interesting he used the word “exhort.” That's a positive thing. That's a good thing.

25 continued) *... and so much the more, as you see the day approaching.* (KJV)

The second commandment can't be fulfilled in isolation. It just can't be fulfilled that way. Assembling and exhorting requires that we regularly fellowship with one another. So right here, right now, all of us need to commit to making a greater difference in the lives of other people in the church and out of the church. But here for the next eight days we have a wonderful opportunity to make a difference in the lives of our brothers and sisters in God's Church, in our marriages, in our children, in our family and amongst all of us. We need to start right after the closing prayer. We need to commit to do that, to make a positive difference, to have a positive effect on other people, rather than say, “What's in it for me?” We should be saying rather, “What can I do to make this Feast better for someone other than me? What can I do to make their Feast better?” Thus

we make Kellogg a little better place because of our presence in it. Now a widow or someone who's elderly and hard to get around may say, "How can I do that?" We're going to spend the rest of the time talking about three ways to do that, how to make a positive difference. They are simple, they're obvious, but we need to focus on it.

The first , we make a difference by what we do.

Remember Paul said that the doers of the law will be justified, not the hearers only. That's in Romans 2. It's by what we do.

Let me discuss for a minute what one man did years ago. He was not in the church and didn't have God's holy spirit, but in this sense, he was not far from the Kingdom of God. It's a bit familiar to me because I was in the Air Force at the time during the Vietnam War. This happened during the Vietnam War. His name is Ed Freeman. This is what he did on November 14, 1965. I'm going to read what a journalist wrote. Put yourself in a jungle in Vietnam in 1965. It's steamy, hot and miserable and your life is in danger. I'm quoting now:

You're a nineteen year old kid. You're critically wounded and dying in the jungle in the La Drang Valley, landing zone x-ray, Vietnam. Your infantry unit is outnumbered eight to one and the enemy fire is so intense from a hundred to two hundred yards away that your own infantry commander has ordered the medivac helicopters to stop coming in.

These medivac helicopters had special markings. They had a red cross and some of them were painted white and, in theory, they weren't supposed to be shot at. The fire was so great that the commander of the troops on the ground that were surrounded ordered those helicopters not to come in because they were going into certain death.

You're lying there listening to the enemy machine guns and you know you're not getting out. Your family is half way around the world, twelve thousand miles away and you'll never see them again. As the world starts to fade in and out, you know this is the day. Then over the machine gun noise you faintly hear that sound of a helicopter as you look up to see an unarmed Huey, but it doesn't seem real because it has no medivac markings. Ed Freeman is coming for you. He's not a medivac, so it's not his job. He's flying his Huey down into the machine gun fire after the medivacs were ordered not to come. He's coming anyway, and he drops it in and sits there in the machine gun fire as they load two or three of you on board. He flies you up and out through the gunfire to the doctors and nurses."

Now get this:

He kept coming back thirteen more times and took about thirty of you and your buddies out who would never have gotten out.

In military school, I lost some buddies in Vietnam because of that very thing. But you see, this man, Ed Freeman, just a guy, decided that he could and would make a difference in the lives of people. He decided, "By what I do, that's what I am and that's what I'm going to do." By the result of his deeds, he won the Congressional Medal of Honor. He died in 2009 at the age of eighty, not far from here in Boise, Idaho. But Ed decided to make a difference.

With that in mind, let's go to James, chapter 2 and read verses 17 and 18. Talking about doing and making a difference by our deeds, James tells us a principle here.

James 2:17. *Even so faith, if it has not works, is dead, being alone. (KJV)*

It's dead. It's not worth a thing. It's dead. A dead body is dead and not worth anything. It says, *being alone*, being isolated and by itself.

18) Yes, a man may say, You have faith, and I have works: show me your faith apart from your works... (KJV)

But James says:

18b) ... and I will show you my faith by my works. (KJV)

There's a true statement; it's one of my favorite quotes. I don't even know who the author is, but it says: "*Your example is shouting so loud, I can't hear what you're saying.*" Sometimes what we say and what we do are so different, but the example is what really cements you in peoples' minds. It's what we do and not what we say. People say one thing often, but their example betrays them. Ed Freeman's example defined who he was and he let his deeds (not his words) do the talking.

I'm going to embarrass Gary Klar for a minute, but look at Gary. He's had rheumatoid arthritis for over thirty-five years. He is in constant pain. You know his recent trials, but when the brethren need him, he is always there. He can be in bed in pain and if he needs to go to the hospital, he gets up and goes to the hospital. He and Judy drove to Elkhart a month or six weeks before the Feast when he was hurting and yet they got in the car and went to Elkhart to make sure everything is going to be okay for the brethren at Elkhart. Gary says, "You know, I can't do this, but God gives me the strength to do what I need to do." God has done it for Gary, God did it for Paul and God can do it for each one of us.

So how do we begin? This ties in with some of the things that Dale said earlier this morning. You walk in and see somebody off by themselves like we had last night. We had these round tables. You see somebody at a table all by themselves. We could just ignore it and go be with our friends. Maybe you don't know the person, or we could

walk over and sit down beside them and get to know them, or invite them over to another table. Invite people to join activities. A good buddy, Dave Fremo says there are wall flowers and corner persons. I think most of us are probably one of the two, wall flowers or corner persons. We kind of back off into a corner. We need to identify with wall flowers and corner persons and we need to go after wall flowers and corner persons because, remember we are the flower on the rock. We are there and sometimes the flower needs company. We need to get to know the kids. We need to know the kids by name. We need to be able to talk to them and ask them how they are doing. With the activity that Kathleen has every morning, they come out with something that they made. Sit down and talk to them about it. It's amazing what goes through the minds of kids. They are hoots! They really are. We need to get to know the widows and the widowers. As Dale was saying, the first Feast after losing a mate is a tough Feast. It's a tough second, third, fourth and fifth.

Sometimes some of us don't sleep too well at night and are not blessed that way and sometimes we have a bad night's sleep and we wake up crabby and we come to church and take out our fatigue on everyone around us. That's easy to do because the mind is on the self. I didn't get any sleep. I'm feeling crummy. I'm kind of testy today and I'm going to let you know about it. We can do that or we can realize that maybe in the room there are probably a whole bunch of people that had a worse night's sleep than I got and then we can commit ourselves to be positive and uplifting and talk to people for their benefit, thinking nothing of the self.

So you see we need to make a difference by what we do. That's the first way.

The second ... (this is not any new revelation) We can make a difference by what we say, by the words we say.

Let's go to Proverbs 25:11 ... one of my favorite proverbs. It paints a picture for us about our words. It's a beautiful thing that God inspired Solomon to write because it puts our words into a picture. The King James says:

Proverbs 25:11. A word fitly spoken [is] ... (KJV)

Then the New Living describes it, I think, a bit better. It says:

11b) ... as golden apples in a silver basket. (NLT)

Now think about that. A shiny silver bowl or basket and you have golden apples in it. What this picture tells us is that a fitly spoken word is like that. The Hebrew word for "fitly" is a word pronounced "ophen" and it's kind of odd that God would choose this word, but it means *to revolve*. It means *to revolve as a season*. So the seasons come at a fit time and the seasons revolve and they always occur at the same time. The Complete Word Study Dictionary of the Old Testament about "ophen" says, *at the right time under the right circumstances*. So a word spoken at the right time, under the right

circumstances is like golden apples in a basket of silver. These are words that are not dictating, words that are not condemning, but speaking the right thing at the right time.

I think we've all experienced that before. You remember the situation of David and Nathan. We won't turn there. It's 2 Samuel, chapter 12. This is a year after Uriah's death, the baby had just been born and David was married to Bathsheba. David thought God winked at his sin and everything was going swimmingly and he's got his court and his minions and his ministers around him and in walks Nathan, the prophet. Nathan the prophet tells him a story. He said, "There's a man in your kingdom that has a little lamb. That's all he's got, and he treats the lamb like one of his children. His children play with it and they feed the lamb off the table. The lamb sleeps in his bed. Then you have a rich man that's his boss in your kingdom, and he has multiple flocks and herds. This rich man had a guest come into town and rather than take one from his many flocks, he took this man's one little lamb and killed it and offered it as a meal to his guests." David just shouted out, "That man deserves to die!" Nathan then said four words at the right time, at the right place. He said, "You are that man." Nothing more needed to be said. It hit David like a thunder bolt. David repented. He said, "I have sinned against the Lord." You know the story. It took just four words at the right place and the right time. It made an incredible difference in David's life and in our lives today.

So the power of what we can say for good is just amazing.

I had an example of my early time in the church in the early '70s. I had been baptized five or six years. We were standing around, four or five guys and talking about things after services. A guy was boasting about being in God's Church when most of the world wasn't. He was kind of boasting about it and the fact that we were in God's Church and he had kind of a corner on the Kingdom of God. He felt he had a guaranteed place in the Kingdom of God as we often thought back then. He was guaranteed a seat. The minister walked by and leveled the whole conversation with one sentence. It hit me like a ton of bricks. He said, "Not everyone is going to be in the Kingdom of God." I never thought about it that way before. Not everyone is going to be in the Kingdom of God. We know that. Christ said in Luke 19, "*Those that wouldn't have Me rule over them, bring them and kill them in front of Me.*" We read over that scripture and it says that not everyone is going to be in the Kingdom of God. Those words permanently changed my view of my calling. We can lose it. We can absolutely lose it.

I'm going to talk about my good friend, Harold Lee, for a second. We were talking one day about a situation in the church and discussing things that were going on. I think all of us at one time or another, I certainly have especially when I first came into the church; when we have severe trials, we think that God is out to get us. I've sinned so badly that God has this axe or hammer and He is just waiting to smash my toes to teach me a lesson. God wants to inflict pain and watch me suffer. Sometimes we can have that attitude because of the way we've grown up, the way we were taught or sometimes it's just Satan putting stuff in our head. All of us have read Romans 8:28.

Romans 8:28. *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to [his] purpose. (KJV)*

We just blow by this verse when we think that God is out to get us. Harold and I were discussing suffering in God's church and Harold put Romans 8:28 in different words and again it hit me like a ton of bricks. I'd read it, but didn't take it inside. He said, "God never does anything for our harm." That is Romans 8:28 in different words. I thought, of course, God doesn't do anything for our harm; He doesn't like to see us suffer. He doesn't like to inflict pain on us. He doesn't take some kind of perverse pleasure in seeing His little kids suffer. All He causes and all He allows for us to come our way is for our ultimate good, not our harm, not to our hurt. Harold's simple words changed my view of God from that day forward.

Words have a powerful affect. Many of you have done likewise to those who have been suffering. You've sent cards, you've sent letters, you've sent them emails and made phone calls and it's changed their lives. Daisi Swint who is here in the audience today, when she had the horrible IRS problems, people became aware of it and she said, "I got cards and emails from people I don't even know and they're praying for me." It wasn't but a few days later that IRS called and apologized and took her to breakfast, if you've ever heard or seen that. They did, and where did that come from? She felt so supported and so loved by you and what you can do, what all of us can do. Christ said that we're going to give account for every word we speak and let's make the words we speak fitly spoken words.

The third way we can make a difference and this is one nobody knows, because it's what goes on between our ears. It is what we think.

We can make a difference by what we think. Let me give you an example. People don't call a minister to say, "You know I'm having a wonderful day. The sun is out and I'm feeling good, I got a promotion on the job, my car is running well, my wife loves me, my kids are good and everything is fine. I just wanted to call you and let you know that." I guarantee you next week some smart aleck will do that! We deal with problems and when the phone rings, you know that three out of four calls is going to be a problem at the other end. You can get in a habit of thinking negatively. Oh, here comes another phone call. Here comes another problem. That can lead to negative thinking. It's something that elders have to watch very carefully, and I know all of the elders do, because we don't want to be negative. But it's so easy to think negatively because that's what Satan does and he is the prince of the power of the air and he can broadcast thoughts into our heads. They're not positive, they're not happy, they're not sweet. They are negative, sour, bitter and dark. Satan does that, but there is an antidote. Let's go to Philippians 4:8. This is what we need to do here at the Feast. We need to begin doing this more and more, and I'm speaking to myself as much as anyone. Paul is wrapping up his letter to the church in Philippi and he is summing up. This is important. When you sum up a letter, you say, "Finally, this is what I want you to do."

Philippians 4:8. *Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true ... (KJV)*

Not gossip, not rumor or innuendo.

8b) ... whatsoever things [are] honest, whatsoever things [are] just (fair), whatsoever things [are] pure ... (KJV)

We need to have a pure heart before God.

8 continued) ... whatsoever things [are] lovely, whatsoever things [are] of good report; if [there be] any virtue, and if [there be] any praise, think on these things. (KJV)

All of us need to do a better job of that. Here at Kellogg, look at what we have to think on. Look at this beautiful day, just a gorgeous day. The mountains, the smell of the air, the trees, it's just beautiful. Think on like-minded brethren being here together, living in peace and harmony and unity. Think about kids. It's just wonderful to watch the kids playing together; they're happy and they're engrossed and they're giving and sharing and just enjoying life. Think about the positive aspects of our brothers and sisters here in this room, because you know what the truth is. We are what we think. What we think translates to words and what we think translates to deeds.

So we've seen three ways to make a difference:

- What we do;
- What we say;
- What we think.

We need to focus on that going forward. All of us do, because we want to be in the Kingdom of God. If we want to be happy and fulfilled, we want to make a positive difference in the lives of others.

Now let's project forward in conclusion. Let's project forward to the millennium. Let's go to Isaiah 30:21. I want you to think about this from a personal perspective of you and you alone, me and me alone. We quote this often and often it was quoted with the idea of ruling with a rod of iron and barking out orders.

Isaiah 30:21. *And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, This [is] the way, walk you in it, when you turn to the right hand, and when you turn to the left. (KJV)*

Meaning that the individual, if they're getting off the path to the right or left, they're going to hear a voice behind them saying, "Uh uh, nope, this is the way. Stay on the path and walk in that." Now guess who is going to have the privilege and the honor of saying those words? It's us. We're going to be able to say those words and thereby make an enormous difference in the lives of other people. We'll talk about that on the Last Great Day. Billions and billions of people; we will have the opportunity of making an

enormous difference in their lives that leads them ultimately to become children of God Almighty.

You see, what we need to do now is start that process of making a difference in the lives of other people, because you see we have to start the process now because God wants us to learn how to do that and learn to be like Christ and learn how to talk like Christ and to learn how to treat others as Christ would. We need to start that process right now because God is not going to have people in His kingdom and His family who like to tear their houses down, who like to destroy things, who like to pollute things. He is going to have children who want to uplift and be positive and to make a difference in the lives of the people that God will ultimately give us to serve and to help. We have a tremendous opportunity here at this Feast to begin practicing that. So as we begin the Feast, let's individually determine right here and right now to make a difference and have a positive effect on one another.