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Presentation Transcript
FOT1 – Healing Broken Hearts
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I was watching a documentary on TV sometime ago. It was about the making of the movie, *Ray*, which is about the life of Ray Charles, the musical genius, actually. Jamie Lee Fox was the actor that was playing Ray. They did a really smart thing. They asked the real Ray Charles to be a consultant in the film. And Jamie Lee Fox, apparently, is quite good at playing the piano, so they were going to use him instead of just dubbing in Ray's stuff. In the documentary there was a scene where he was trying to play something just like Ray Charles was playing it. They were both at the piano. Ray would do it. And he would do it. He'd play and Ray would say, "No, do it like this." And he'd try it again, and he say, "No, more like this." He'd try it again. And finally, Jamie Lee just threw his hands up and said, "I just can't do it." And Ray said, "Yes you can. Yes you can. It's right there. It's right there under your fingers." I mean, that's easy for him to say, right? But it was.

So I want to take you from that story to another one. There was an exchange that took place between Jesus and the Pharisees. It's in Mark 12, verse 35. It says:

Mk. 12:35 – *While Jesus was teaching in the temple courts, He asked, "How is it that the teachers of the law say that Christ is the son of David? David himself, speaking by the Holy Spirit, declared, 'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet."'" David himself calls him Lord, so how then can he be his son?" The large crowd listened to Him with delight. They loved it when somebody got the better of the lawyers. It's kind of like today.*

The teachers of the law had been calling Jesus a blasphemer for saying that he was God. So they took the position that the Messiah was David's son – a human. So Jesus takes this scripture, which is one of the scriptures they used to show that the Messiah would come and make their enemies their footstool, and He illuminates something in that scripture that none of them had ever thought of before. It wasn't just under their fingers, but it *was* just under their noses.

So it's kind of humbling to be stumped, silenced and embarrassed time after time by a carpenter's son, who had no formal education in the law. And that's what was going on there. They quit asking Him questions after awhile, because they knew they were going

to lose. But He just kept showing them things that they never knew out of the law. And it wasn't that they hadn't read the words, or like it was unfamiliar to them, it was like they had just never thought about it like that. They'd never seen the connections that He made.

The reason I'm telling you this story is because I have a time-honored question to ask you today. Why are we here? I know that the minute I say that, eyes are going to roll back and we already know all the answers. Right? We do, don't we? We've heard it all. We've been here a long time. We've listened a long time. We've heard all kinds of sermons about it. But I want to ask you another question. Can you tell me that you know *everything* there is to know about why God tells us to keep the Feast? Are you sure? I don't think I do. And I've been doing it for over forty years. I think I heard Ron Dart say one time, "When it comes to understanding God's plan, if it's a hundred story building, we might be on level five." I think there is a lot that we haven't plumbed to the depths of yet. And I think that anybody who *thinks* they know everything about it is on pretty shaky ground.

So, if you were to learn something new, would it be from scriptures you've never read before? Most of us have read it all – over and over again. Probably not. Most of us have read everything that we can about the Feast and the whole Bible, for that matter. So, if there is anything new that we might learn, it's going to come from scriptures we already know. And it is going to be just like with Jesus and the Pharisees, where it was there under our noses all the time, but we just didn't make the connection. So it would be something that we would see that was familiar, but see it in a new light and understand it in a deeper way.

So what is there to learn about the Feast that we don't already know? Well, I'm going to read some scriptures today and I'm going to throw out some things for you to think about – to stir the pot a little bit – and see if you can make any new connections or understand anything that you didn't understand before about the Feast and why we keep it.

By the way, how would you know if you can learn something new from a sermon? How would you know that? One way that you can know is, if the speaker, at any time during the sermon, asks a question and you don't immediately know the answer, get ready to learn something that you didn't know. Makes sense, right? Okay, so here we go.

Let's go to Leviticus 23:2. Why are we here?

Lev. 23:2 – *Speak unto the children of Israel and say unto them concerning the feasts of the LORD, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations – even these are My feasts.*

Then it says, down in verse 34:

V-34 – *Speak unto the children of Israel saying, "The fifteenth day of the seventh month shall be the feast of tabernacles for seven days unto the LORD. On the first day shall be a holy convocation and you shall do no servile work therein. Seven days you shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD. And on the eighth day shall be a holy convocation*

unto you. And you shall offer an offering made by fire. It is a solemn assembly and you shall do no servile work therein.

People say, “That’s for Israel – not for Christians. That’s all from the law – it’s done away. Blah, blah, blah.” So let’s go to 1 Peter 2:21. When I went to Bible school, this was sort of Bible 101 – this scripture. I mean, fundamental.

1 Pt. 2:21 – *To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in His steps.* Right? We’re all supposed to walk like Christ walked and follow the example He set. Isn’t that right? That’s fundamental, bedrock Christianity. We do what Jesus did – or we *try*. So how would you know what to do, except that He shows us the way. He sets an example for us. We’re all familiar with that.

Let’s go to Bible 101B. How many people have ever heard that saying – or said it – *the faith once delivered*? Are you familiar with that terminology? That comes out of the Bible. Did you know that? It’s in Jude 1, verse 3. This is bedrock principle number 2.

Jude 1:3 – *Dear friends* – Jude says – *although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith once delivered that was once for all entrusted to the saints* – or, in the King James, it says *delivered*.

So okay. What’s he saying here? He’s telling the New Testament church – it was under attack doctrinally and also being persecuted – that they needed to *contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints*. So Jesus came and He taught the disciples how to do church – how to *be* the New Testament church. And the model they left behind is a perfect example of a model for us to follow. So we do church the way they did it. That’s the second principle. So *we’re* to contend for that same faith that Jesus delivered – pure, perfect, in need of no changes, no deletions and no additions.

I have this friend who is a real techie. We both love to do computer stuff and all that. He has *no* knowledge of Christianity whatsoever. In fact, no religion. He was just kind of brought up and that was just sort of a big blank spot in his upbringing. He’s a really nice guy, but he knows *nothing* about religion. And he’s always asking me questions about why I do this or that. I was trying to explain to him that the example set by the New Testament church was the example we should follow. And he said, “Yeah, but why?” I said, “Well, you know Roger, you’ve got your iPod there. There are lots and lots and lots of copies of that. Everybody’s making little things you can put music on and stick in your ears.” But I said, “The iPod was the first one and it’s always going to be the best.” He said, “Oh!” Then he got it. He understood it. You have to connect to different people different ways, right? He understood that.

So the example that we have in the New Testament church is another stand alone. It’s like the example of Jesus Christ. The New Testament church kept the *feasts of the LORD* that are mentioned in the Old Testament. And in the New Testament, we can see Jesus and the apostles keeping all the holy days – not all of them, but a good number of them –

I guess all but one of them. And not only that, not only were they *doing* it, but they were doing it with *additional meaning* – additional meaning to what they observed in the Old Testament. Passover, Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, Atonement, Feast of Tabernacles...all of those are in there. They are all observed.

Presently, at LifeResource, we're doing a series on these holy days. We started with the fall and we'll finish up in the spring ones. But you can be looking for them in the months to come. The emphasis there, on a lot of it, is going to be explaining why we keep them as well. I've been thinking about the holy days a lot lately and I was thinking that, if I gave seven sermons about it, I could tell everything I knew. I can't do it. I just can't do it. There's just too much. We know too much about them. It's *amazing* what we know when you really start tallying it up.

So the first reason that we keep the Feast is because it is a commanded convocation. Right? We just read that. It's a commanded convocation and we saw them doing that in the New Testament as well. So they understood that principle, too.

But telling somebody that we keep the Feast because God told us to...I mean, that's a really good reason for us to keep it. There's no doubt about that. And it might even be the most important reason – at least in one sense, because it all *starts* with keeping it, doesn't it? But it reminds me of asking a four-year-old why they don't go out in the street. The answer is, "Well, my mommy told me not to." I mean, that's a *great* answer from a four-year-old. Right? But there's more, isn't there? It's good for kids to stay out of the street, because it keeps them safe. That's why they were told to stay out of the street in the first place. So could it be that the Feast is also good for us? That it spiritually enhances us? If we think about that, then we might be getting a bit deeper – if we focus on that thought.

So how would it be good for us? In Nelson's *Bible Dictionary* I looked up the word *worship*. And it says, "Reverent devotion and allegiance pledged to God; the rituals or ceremonies by which this reverence is expressed." So when we come here, we come here to worship God, don't we? To rejoice before Him, and to celebrate, and to just worship God. We're acknowledging that God is great. Coming here does that. We had to put all our stuff aside to come here and do *His* stuff. So we're coming here to worship Him.

In ancient times, the sacrifices that they offered were part of that worship. They sang a lot of songs, too. And the songs that we sing today are a part of that worship. We're extolling God's greatness.

But why is worshipping good for us? What is it about that? Worship actually connects us to reality. God is great. We are small. That's what worship does. That's how it helps us. It's always good to know how it *really* is, isn't it? That's called *wisdom*.

So why is it good to understand that God is great? Have you ever thought about that? What's helpful about that? We'll talk some more about that later on.

So the second reason, I think, that we can look at about why we keep the holy days – besides the fact that we were just told to do it – is that we're told to *worship* God here.

And worshipping God helps us put everything in perspective between us and God. He's great. We're small. He's powerful. We're weak. He can do stuff that we can't do. He can take care of us in a way that we can't take care of ourselves.

Now another thing – and this is traditional – that we've always talked about. In ancient times, the children of Israel constructed lean-tos of branches and stayed in them through the Feast. That's why they called it the Feast of Tabernacles – or tents, or booths – temporary dwellings. And God *told* them to do that as a reminder that they lived in temporary dwellings when He freed them from Egypt. It's like you go back in time and relive what happened. They were rehearsing the plan of God for them.

So, when we do as Jesus told us, and we take bread and wine the night before the day He was killed, we're rehearsing the freedom that God has granted us – and Jesus Christ – from our sins, aren't we? It's a rehearsal. It's thinking back to what was done for us, isn't it? Just like they were. Then, once we get past the Passover – the sacrifice that Christ made – and we go through Unleavened Bread, which is living in a state of grace without sin – not by our own works, but by Christ's – and we go through Pentecost, which is the founding of the church – which is an act in the past – then we come to Trumpets, which is something that hasn't happened yet. Right? That seventh trumpet that we observe on Trumpets – seventh trumpet – seventh new moon of the year...so that would be the seventh trumpet, wouldn't it? Then the Day of Atonement, which is God reconciling not just the church, but everybody. Then the Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day. We're rehearsing things that haven't happened yet, aren't we? That's all future stuff. So we've gone from looking back to looking forward all of a sudden. When we get to these days, it's a revelation of things to come, isn't it?

So what we're really doing when we worship on these days is, we're sort of doing some advanced rehearsing of something that hasn't happened yet. We're rehearsing the plan of God. So that's a third reason why we come here. It's so that we don't ever forget. And we're also given a window into the future to understand our destiny with God, aren't we? Because it pictures what is going to happen.

There are some really fun people that I used to work with at the mental health clinic where I worked. And there was this one woman who was one of the most popular therapists we had. She was a play therapist. She loved to work with kids. And she is just really, really funny – just a really nice person. She found out I was going to be gone for a couple weeks for the Feast and she was quizzing me about where I was going. I told her I was going to the Feast of Tabernacles, and she said, "Well, what's that?" I said, "Well Dora, that's a religious festival that was kept by Israelites of old and it was also kept by the New Testament church." She said, "Really? I never heard of that." I said, "Yeah, if you observe those festivals, you'll learn something about God that you never understood before." And she said, "Cool!" But she hasn't asked any more questions about it. But you never know. So another reason we keep the Feast is to understand and rehearse the plan of God.

In talking with Aaron last night, he was telling me that he has started to work a lot more with Sunday-keeping people in his ministry. And he finds them to be *hungry* for

knowledge about God. I just think that is such an important thing for us to understand – to not be embarrassed, or feel like we’re doing something that is weird or odd, because they don’t look at it that way once they understand what it is. They don’t.

So we get to learn by doing. It’s hands-on learning, in a way. Have you ever looked into a Bible dictionary or a commentary and read about the festivals? It’s really interesting. You ought to try that some time. You can tell, by the way that they write about them, that they’ve never kept them. I mean, I was like that at one time, too. So I’m not looking down on them for it. My point is that, if you keep them, you learn something that you *can’t* learn any other way. So I think we can call that hands-on learning. Let me give you an example of how that works.

Most Christians today believe they’re going to go to heaven when they die. And when they read about the resurrections in Revelation and about what Paul said – *in a moment, in a twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet* – they get confused. Why would a person, who was already immortally alive and in heaven, *need* to be resurrected. What’s the deal? That’s the confusion for them. But if you keep the Feasts and you connect the observances with the scriptures, then it all becomes clear as a bell – sort of – up to level five out of a hundred, which is better than not being on the elevator at all.

So I asked a man that I knew to be – this is a harsh word – a *deceiver* about his belief for those who had never heard of Christ. At one time he used to believe like I believe, but he had gone back, I guess. He squirmed around that issue by saying, “Well, we know God is fair. We just don’t know how.” I told him that I *knew* how God was fair. I can remember the exact moment I learned. I know exactly when I learned that all those who have never had a chance to commit to Christ would one day have an opportunity. I know *exactly* where I was when I learned that. I was at the Feast of Tabernacles on the last day of the Feast. That’s when I learned it. Because that day is about the resurrection to life of all those who are *not* resurrected with the saints.

So those people who *don’t* observe these illuminating festivals are stuck with believing that it is now or never for everybody. Mainstream Christianity believes that those people who don’t have a chance – or who have never submitted to Christ – are going to agonize in a burning fiery hell forever. We don’t have to believe that, do we? We’re not stuck with trying to explain that one. We understand it.

Now I’ve talked to a lot of people in our group, and a lot of them want to stop here. We want to stop with obey, worship and rehearse. That’s what we’ve done a lot. Another one that some of us are willing to go to is found in Revelation 5:8 and 10. And it says there:

Rev. 5:8 – *When He had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song. And this song said, “You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because You were slain and, with Your blood, You purchased men for God from every tribe, language, people and nation.”* That’s the saints, right? Redeemed. *You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God and they will reign on the earth.* Right? We understand that,

don't we? What's that going to be like when that happens? What will it be like when you are in that position – when you're in that kingdom and you're a priest – or perhaps, a king. (We're not going to fight about the difference in translation today – between that and the King James.)

The Bible tells us that the earth is going to undergo terrible birth pangs when Christ comes back. The birth of the Kingdom of God is going to be *traumatic*! As in smoking hulk! That's what the earth is going to be like. And people are going to be traumatized. And our task is going to – here's where the *healing broken hearts* comes in, by the way – just as Jesus said – our task is going to be to heal the brokenhearted, isn't it? We're going to be a part of the restoration. And we're going to be *doing* that.

I think we have given this a lot of lip service. We've talked about this a lot. But I think...I'll just speak for myself. I know, in my past, my lack of understanding prevented me from knowing how I should prepare for that time. I didn't know. I didn't know what I should do or what was necessary. This was all sort of pie in the sky stuff to me. I just thought God is going to do something and we'd all be there – kind of like sitting on a cloud in heaven, but I had it down on the earth. I didn't have any specifics. I grappled with that for a long time. And there was nobody to really help with that either. I kind of had to come to my answer for myself on that. But what I found out was, that it is right there. It's right there – not under my nose, but it's under my fingers. Because there is stuff I can *do* today that is going to get me ready for that time when I'm going to be a priest with God.

So what was the piece that was missing? We're going to talk about that. But before we do, I want to talk about another reason why I believe we are to keep the Feasts.

There's a story in the book of Nehemiah about the Feast of Tabernacles. It is the most detailed picture of the Feast of Tabernacles that we have in the entire Bible. Yet we have pretty much ignored what happened there for years. The story is that the children of Judah had come back out of captivity to rebuild the city of Jerusalem – a city wall and the temple. And the people had been intermingling with the Gentiles that lived there and they were becoming spiritually confused and distracted. They were weakened spiritually by this influence that they were allowing to take place in their lives. Hosea said that they had built their own houses first, instead of building God's house. So their priorities were all mixed up. They had themselves ahead of God, instead of the other way around. So the work had come to a standstill. The temple was vulnerable, because, while it had been rebuilt, the wall was not constructed. Then, in the story, along comes this firebrand – this Ezra, the scribe – sharp as a razor in the law of God and filled with zeal for God. He talks to Nehemiah, the governor, and they work on a plan to light a fire under the people. They hold the Feast of Tabernacles – and Trumpets and Atonement.

This Feast, like I said, is the best picture we have. We see them all get in together to worship God. They had an opening prayer. They had a minister up on a pulpit. They had a song service. And they prayed. Then the law of God was read to them. And that was important because they didn't have a copy that they could hold on their lap and take home with them and read. They had just the law that was in the temple. So they had that

read to them on this festival. We see the picture that they did a lot of the same things that we do. They rejoiced. They worshipped God. They praised God. They also listened to the priests explain the law to them.

These people, who had come out of slavery, had never heard the law of God read before. They were like a lot of people that I know where I work that are Christians, but they've never read the Bible. They've just taken somebody else's word for it. These people heard the law and something happened to them. As they heard, something *astounding* occurred in their lives. They saw that they ought to be doing God's work *first*, instead of their own. We see, in the pages of the Bible – there in that story – a purpose of the Feast that I've never heard anybody talk about in all my years of Feast going – *spiritual renewal*. I mean, I've heard about rejoicing. I've heard about picturing and rehearsing. But I've never heard anybody talk about being spiritually renewed. I know that some people have been, but it wasn't something that we talked about as a group.

But that was Old Testament stuff, right? But what about the New? Let's go to John 7, verse 37? What is the purpose of the Feast? Why are we here?

Jn. 7:37 – *On the last and greatest day of the feast, Jesus stood up and said in a loud voice, "If anybody is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. And whoever believes in Me, as the scripture has said, streams of living waters will flow from within him." And by this He meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him, were later to receive. Up to that time, the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.*

Okay, so when somebody is completely dehydrated and just dried out, their mouth is like cotton. They are in need of restoration, are they not? They are in need of rehydration of life-giving water. We know that Jesus isn't talking about just physical thirst here. He's talking about *spiritual* renewal. And He was talking about it *at the Feast of Tabernacles*, was He not? Talking on multiple levels.

I think the way the Church of God did the Feast back in the twenties, and thirties, and forties, and fifties, and even the sixties, was a really good thing, because there were a lot of people in this country that didn't have a church to go to. So they went to the Feast because they needed to hear fundamental stuff explained day after day. It was good. It was helpful. But we've all heard all of that stuff, haven't we? So over the years, the Feast has gotten kind of out of our minds – that fundamental stuff – because we already know it – and it's become a vacation. It's become kind of a vacation. We go to church early in the morning, then we all disappear, and we don't see each other again until the next morning. So all afternoon and all evening is vacation time. We can do what we want to do.

I know it says to rejoice and all of that – and that's good – but I think that if we're going to listen to what Jesus said, I think it is also fair to say that the Feast can be a time for renewal – time for new learning and being reinvigorated spiritually. And if there was ever a group of people that needed that, it's the Church of God.

So, here at this festival, with God's help, we hope to provide the *water* – the opportunity for spiritual renewal. So we don't have just sit-down-and-listen material, but we have stand-up-and-take-action and we have speak-out-and-participate kinds of things for everybody, because we know that that's what revs people up and gives people new learning.

Okay, I asked you a question about that. Does everybody already know that? Or is that a new one for you? Spiritual renewal. Have you ever been renewed at the Feast? Some have. So that's good. But I'm hoping that we'll have a lot more hands than that when we leave – after day eight – here. So that would be the fifth reason.

Let's move on to another one. When we talk about the people in the time of Nehemiah, what was the indicator that they were spiritually adrift and in need of renewal? Well, they had stopped doing the work of God. They were building their own houses, and marrying Gentile people and they were getting away from God. They were distracted by other things. They put other things in higher priority. When we do that, we go dry. That is what causes spiritual weakness. So at *that* Feast, they learned that they needed to *do* what God said to do every day in their lives. They needed to begin *doing* the work of God.

So what is it that causes spiritual health? What is it that *nourishes* us spiritually. Most of us have been taught to believe that it is sermons. We've complained plenty about all the boring sermons we've heard over the years. We've pounded the table to be fed. We've thrown our heads back and squawked for food like baby birds in a nest. Sermons are like the napkin that you put in your lap, or maybe the call to dinner, but they are *not* spiritual food. They are not. Let's see what that is. It's in John 4:34.

Jn. 4:34 – *Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work."*

We can never blame somebody else for our spiritual condition. One of my favorite movies is *Top Gun*. There's Maverick up there. He's supposed to be supporting his wing man, but he's suffered acute stress symptoms from a mid-air disaster previously. While his wing man is being attacked, he's having flashbacks, and his buddy screams into the mike to Maverick, "Engage, engage, engage!" Somebody needed to yell that at us. We need to *engage*. That's the message that God sent to those people in the days of Nehemiah. And it's a message that we need to hear today! Get up! Get active! Rev up your spiritual engine! Overcome inactivity and distraction. Stir up your spirit. Open up your heart. Let your light shine. Learn about your gift. Develop your spiritual gifts and skills. Do something good for somebody else. Become a humble *servant* of other people. Begin your own spiritual ministry. Draw people to God by His good works shown out in your life. That's engagement. It's *not* sitting and listening. We've done plenty of that. We need to get up and get moving.

So we're all going to have an opportunity to go hands-on right during this Feast. Last year at this festival, fifty percent of the people who came didn't show up for the work project. Half of them didn't even come to it. To me, that's a giant exclamation point under what I just said. We need *renewal*! We need to understand what's important. So we

have an opportunity here for all of us. It doesn't matter if you can't stand on concrete all day long. We have something for you to do sitting down. Whatever it takes to get you there, we'll help you. We *need* you to be there. And in the end of the day, God is going to make an impression on other people through us. We may never see the results, but the results aren't our department. Our department is just to *do* what we're told, and then the results will come. It's right there under our fingers. All we have to do is just go to it – to reach out.

Last year after the Feast, I was reading the feedback forms that people turned in and there was a – I don't know, she might have been fifteen or fourteen at that time – a teenage girl – and she was assessing the Feast. And she said that the best part of the Feast for her was the service project. She said that she hoped when she went home to be able to find similar activities that she could do in her community. I thought, "Yes!" That's what I'm talking about. That's what we want to do. We want to teach our children how to do that. And the way we do that is by going and doing that *with* them. We take them with us and we show them how to do the work of God. It is *so* important.

Okay, so that was – what did I say? – six? There's still one more that I know of. I may not even be up to level five on the elevator, but this is what I know. If you look at each of these six points that we've talked about so far, there's something else. And all six of these are wrapped up in it. If we're obedient in coming here, and when we come here we worship, and we learn about the salvation plan and rehearse that, and we know that we're to prepare to be a king or a priest, and we experience a spiritual renewal, and we learn to do the work of God now, there's still something else after that. Do you know what it is? There's that question. Write it down if you do. If you don't, you might learn something.

I didn't mention this earlier, but one of the strongest themes in the Old Testament was the harvest theme. They were all harvest festivals, weren't they? Associated with two harvests in Israel. And that theme is carried through into the New Testament, isn't it? It's *everywhere!* *The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. The kingdom of God is like a man who sows seeds.* It's everywhere in the New Testament. And we are that harvest, are we not? We're the harvest. We know that there's another even greater harvest coming through this plan. Let's go to Hebrews 8 and let's read about this harvest. This is what God says:

Heb 8:10 – *"This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after that time," declares the Lord. "I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God and they will be My people. I will be their God and they will be My people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest. For I will forgive their wickedness and remember their sins no more."*

I hope we can read this scripture and I hope we can feel *what God wants* – what He's trying to do here with this amazing plan that He's working.

Let's look at another scripture here in Hebrews – in Hebrews 2, and verse 9.

Heb. 2:9 – *But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, not crowned with glory and honor, because He suffered death, so that, by the grace of God, He might taste death for everyone in bringing many sons to glory. It was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering – both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers.*

So all this stuff that we do that we can learn at the Feast – everything that is tied up in all of the holy days and in everything that God does – from beginning to end – it's all about *connection* to God. It's all about our *relationship* with God and being in that spiritual family, which is eventually going to be the family of humankind, isn't it? We're all going to be in the family of God. So the experience of Israel, the experience of the church, the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and His resurrection, our trials in this life, our obedience to Him, our worship of Him, our understanding of His plan, our living for Him, our doing His work – it's all about bringing everybody into the family of God.

Now is that really true? We said in the beginning that we kept the Feast because God said to do it. What's that really about? That's about faith and trust, isn't it? That's about faith and trust. What's the first thing that a healthy human being has to learn in his life? Well, he has to learn to trust that his parents are going to take care of him. That's the very first developmental task. So that's a great place to start keeping the Feast – because God said to – because that's where we learn to trust God. We have to go, and maybe our boss doesn't want us to, and we have to do it anyway, and so right from the get-go, we learned a fundamental thing. And so even something like that – that sounds just like the four-year-old – is really a profoundly spiritual thing. It's a relationship that is being developed there.

Then we say we come to God to worship. Why are we doing that? Well, that's about our relationship with God, too, isn't it? He's strong. We're weak. That's how we relate to each other.

If we say we come to rehearse the salvation plan, that's knowing what kind of God we worship – one that's fair and loving and not the kind who cares about some and burns others. We worship a *loving* God. It's about respect and awe for God. That characterizes our part of that relationship, doesn't it?

If we say that we keep the Feast for spiritual renewal, what's that? Well, spiritual renewal is drawing close to God, isn't it? It's about enhancing and deepening our relationship with Him – a strengthening of the relationship between us and God.

If we say that we keep the Feast to do the work of God, and our work would be healing the brokenhearted, then again, how exactly do we do that? Well, what does a brokenhearted person need to be healed? In my day job, I sit with brokenhearted people all day long. I was talking to a man recently who was a minister – not in our church, but one of my client – and he told me that for the last five years, every day he thought about ending his life – very depressed. He was very sad, very discouraged, too. He saw no way out – no hope. I was thinking about what this man needed and I think a lot of my

colleagues would have tried to give him a lot of information about how to deal with depression, but that wasn't what he really needed at all. There wasn't really any way to fix him. But the thing that helped in the end was understanding his situation, and kind of relating to him, and just connecting with him, and developing a relationship with him so that he could know that there was somebody else that could understand his situation. Somehow that helped. Even that is all about the relationship. And it doesn't matter what age a person is, it's always the same.

I had a little girl that I was working with a while back who got in trouble at school, and when she was confronted by the police, she was hard and remorseless. She was eight. Her mother was terrified by her reaction – even more than by what she did to get herself in trouble. And I was talking with her. She didn't know why she did what she did. She didn't need me to explain it to her. What she needed was love and care and connection. She told me what was going on in her life, and I would listen and look into her eyes and smile at her. Somehow, over months of just sitting with her for forty-five minutes every week, she's recovered herself out of that really dark place she was in. So a lot less fixing and a lot more understanding, a lot less talking and a lot more listening, a lot less controlling and a lot more accepting, a lot less professionalism and a lot more care. The trauma victims that we encounter after Christ returns – all those disoriented people who are going to be resurrected at the last day – they're all going to need the very same thing. And that's the thing that God offers us – relationship, connection.

My wife asked me recently what I thought about how we would be able to do that work of healing broken hearts. I believe that the answer is in the things that He tells us to do *now* – taking care of each other, fellowshiping with one another, setting an example for our children, taking care of the poor and the widows. That will prepare us. If we can learn those lessons, we're going to be very well equipped to be a priest in the Kingdom of God.

So yes. Come to the Feast to obey God, to worship God with enthusiasm, to rejoice, to rehearse the meaning of the festival, to seek spiritual renewal, to go hands-on with God and do His work while we're here. But also remember everyday, for the rest of your life, that with God – in the end – it's always about the *relationship*.