

## Camp Meeting for Natives

Seabreeze Camp 2019. Older saints anticipate times of spiritual refreshing; children run to meet friends. Northerners look forward to warm weather. Floridians pull out winter coats – it could get down into the mid-40's!!

For those of us who live in Hobe Sound, camp meeting is a bit different. We appreciate the services; we look forward to seeing friends from the north; we enjoy the bustle of activity. But - we still have jobs and the normal activities of life. And the traffic! “Look at that Indiana car parked in *my* space! Doesn't he know that I *always* park there?”

Recently I have been comparing camp meeting with the Jewish festivals. Thousands of Jewish people left their homes and traveled to Jerusalem to celebrate the festivals. Sounds great, right? But what about the Jerusalem natives? How did they handle the festivals? “Honey, traffic was horrible today! Someone needs to teach those Galileans how to drive a donkey in the city!”

So, how do we “natives” get the most from camp? Some thoughts on camp meeting for Florida natives....

### *Seabreeze Camp: A Time for Spiritual Growth*

Many of us can point to a camp meeting where we gave our hearts to God. Many of us remember our call to ministry at a camp meeting altar. Many of us have gone to camp meeting emotionally exhausted and spiritually drained, but have left refreshed for ministry. From early morning prayer meetings through evening altar services, camp meeting encourages us to draw near to God.

We need times of spiritual focus. We need preaching that convicts us and warns us of carelessness. Our young people need to see what we mean when we talk about “the glory.” They need to experience God's presence in a real and personal way. Camp meeting is a perfect time for this spiritual growth.

You might say, “But we have service in the tabernacle every week! Besides, we are too busy to grow spiritually during camp.” I understand. But every year, faithful Jews sacrificed to come to the Temple festivals. It cost money, effort, and sleep.

Just as the Jewish people needed times of special spiritual emphasis, so do we! Despite the busyness of camp time, we must make time for spiritual growth. Let's join in early morning prayer; let's fast a meal; let's give up some other activities to be in service. If we can see God draw us closer to Him, it will be worth missing a day of Facebook updates.

### *Seabreeze Camp: A Time for Christian Fellowship*

I used to think camp meeting was only for spiritual activity. I've heard some criticize those who "come to camp meeting for the food and friends." I understand the concern. But just as God knew that His people needed focused times for spiritual growth, He knew that they also needed times for fellowship.

The festivals provided this opportunity; they were times of celebration! Extended families traveled together to Jerusalem. The groups were large enough that Mary and Joseph could lose a twelve-year-old Jesus in the crowd! Yes, there was worship in the Temple, but there was also feasting, family reunions, and fun!

Read the history of the 19<sup>th</sup> century camp meeting movement. It was a time for spiritual growth, but it was also a time for fellowship. In a time when travel was difficult, camp meeting doubled as family reunions. Children played with cousins they hadn't seen for twelve months. Friends caught up on the news of the past year. Camp meeting was a time for fellowship.

The 19<sup>th</sup> century Methodists knew they needed fellowship with other people who shared their godly convictions. So do we! We should take time for fellowship during Seabreeze 2019. From visits around the cafeteria tables to ice cream in the snack shop, this is an opportunity for fellowship with God's people.

### *Seabreeze Camp: A Time for Giving*

I've heard the groans, "Another offering!" When I first came to Hobe Sound, my camp job was in the bookstore. One morning, a camp guest walked in with a \$5 bill. "This is missions day, so there will be several offerings! Can you break this \$5 for me?" "Sure, would you like quarters or dimes?"

It costs Jewish worshipers to come to the festivals. They brought offerings - and from all accounts, they brought generous offerings.

Offerings are part of camp. And they should be! This is an opportunity to give extra help to missions. A chance to improve camp meeting facilities for the next generation. An opportunity to show our thanks to God. Wouldn't it be wonderful if the camp leadership did not need to push for an offering? If God's people gave willingly and joyfully to support God's work?

As we begin camp, would you join me in praying, “God, what do You want to do in my life during Seabreeze Camp 2019? Please use this camp to give me a new passion for You and a new love for my fellow Christians.”

Yes, camp meeting has its challenges for those of us who live in Hobe Sound. I haven’t always jumped up and down with joy when camp arrived. I’ve felt the pressure of added duties during camp. I’ve grumbled about the traffic on campus. And when I had to vacate my office for two weeks, I’ve responded like Goldilocks and the three bears, “Who’s been sleeping in my office?”

But this is a wonderful time of the year. During Seabreeze Camp 2019, I want to grow spiritually; I want to reunite with fellow Christians; and I want to have a small part in supporting God’s work around the world. Will you join me?

