

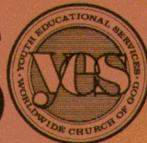
YOUTH



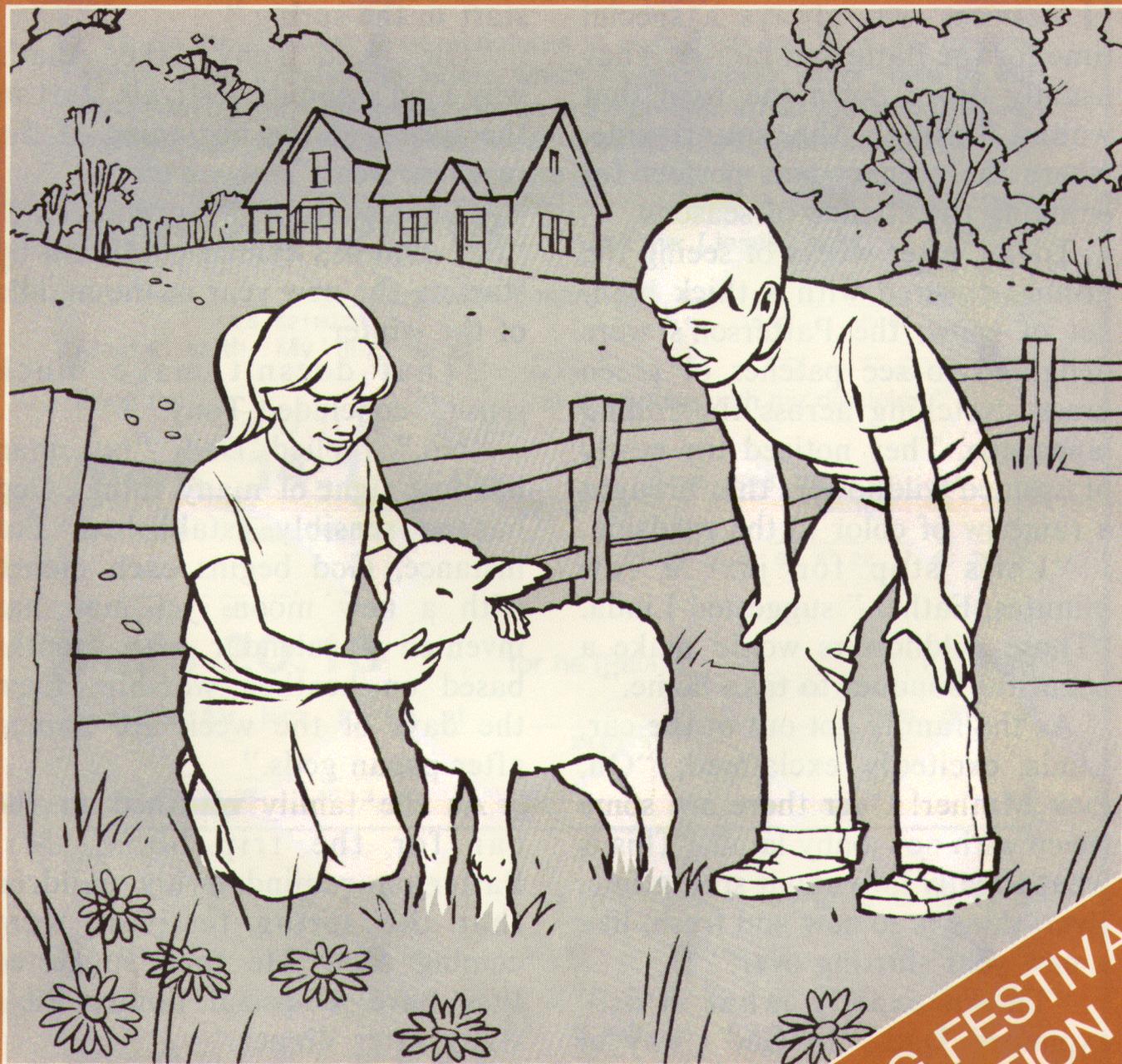
LEVEL 4

BIBLE

LESSONS



SPECIAL FEAST
LESSON



The Spring Feasts

SPRING FESTIVAL
EDITION

THE SPRING FEASTS

The ride home from Sabbath services was always a special time for the Patterson family. They usually drove down the road that wound through the countryside, where the scenery was perfect for enjoying the change of seasons.

Today, after weeks of seeing the ground covered with a thick blanket of snow, the Patterson's were delighted to see patches of green grass stretching across the rolling landscape. They noticed the newly blossomed wildflowers that brought a rainbow of color to the roadside.

"Let's stop for just a few minutes, Father," suggested Linda. "Those wildflowers would make a beautiful bouquet to take home."

As the family got out of the car, Linda excitedly exclaimed, "Oh, look Mother! Over there are some sheep with new baby lambs! This is what I really love about springtime. Everything is so new and fresh, like a new year starting over!"

"That's exactly what it is," explained Dad. "In God's way of

counting time, the new year *does* start in the spring."

"Oh," said Tony, "then that's why God's annual festivals start in the spring at the beginning of the real new year!"

"That's right," agreed Dad. "But man has caused confusion by starting the new year in the middle of the winter."

"That doesn't make much sense," concluded Tony.

"No," replied Dad, "but man has lost sight of many things God has so sensibly established. For instance, God begins each month with a new moon, yet man has invented a calendar with months based on heathen worship. Even the days of the week are named after pagan gods."

As the family returned to the car for the trip home, Mr. Patterson reminded his children that the spring festivals were coming soon. He then suggested they have a special family Bible study after dinner.

GOD'S FESTIVALS FOR US TODAY

Later that evening, the Patterson family gathered together in their living room.

“Do you remember what we discussed this afternoon—how mankind has lost sight of so many of God’s ways?” asked Dad. “Well, not only has mankind confused the months and days, but man has even

WERE GOD'S FESTIVALS JUST FOR THE ANCIENT ISRAELITES?

Look up the following three scriptures in your Bible and fill in the missing words. Then transfer the letters which have numbers under them to the numbered blanks in the mystery verse at the bottom. When you have finished, the mystery verse will tell you if God’s festivals were meant only for Moses and the Israelites, or whether they are also meant for us today.

Matthew 26:18

“And he [Jesus] said, _____ 41,48,57 31,50
into the _____ to such a man, and say _____ him, The
_____ 25 52 30,53 15,32 16 65
Master saith, My time is at _____;
_____ 44,49 27 26 1,39 64 6,37 7,38
keep the _____ at thy house with my disciples.”
_____ 10 42 11 54 23 45,56

Mark 14:1

“After _____ days was the _____
_____ 2 35 19 18 12
of the passover, and of _____
_____ 47,55 59 28,29 9 5 22 17 40 21 34
_____”
_____ 8 20,33 62

Acts 20:16

“... for he [Paul] _____, if it were
_____ 4 13 67 63 60
possible for him, to be at _____ the day of
_____ 24,61 51
_____ 58 66 14 36 46 3 43

“

_____ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17
18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33
34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56
_____” (Leviticus 23:21).
57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67

replaced God's yearly festivals with pagan holidays such as Christmas and Easter."

"Yes," added Mom, "and most people today have never even heard of some of God's festivals. Or, if they have, they think that those days were kept or observed only in Old Testament times. They think that we do not have to observe them anymore. But God tells us differently."

In the activity on page three, there are three New Testament scriptures. They show that Christ and the New Testament Church, hundreds of years after the time of Moses, observed God's festivals.

WHY GOD'S FESTIVALS

God commands us to keep His festivals. But why? Is it because God enjoys telling us what to do?

Does your mother remind you to put on a sweater when the weather is windy simply because she enjoys telling you what to do? No. She does it because she is trying to help you stay warm and to prevent you from catching a cold.

Does your father tell you not to play in the street just to keep you from having fun? No. He is trying to protect you because he knows you could be run over by a car.

In both cases, your parents have

a reason or purpose for giving instructions to you. When God gives His Church instructions or commands, it is because He has a reason for it. He wants to teach us to live His way, the way that will make us happy. Therefore, God also gave us His annual festivals *for a purpose!*

God's festivals remind us of the wonderful plan He has for all mankind. Each festival is like a chapter in a book. Each tells us a part of the story or plan. When we read a book, we don't begin in the middle or at the end of the book, but at the beginning. We read the chapters in order. In the same way, God gives us His festivals in a particular order. The events of each step in God's plan must take place before the next step begins.

Because most people know little or nothing about these special days, they do not know of God's great plan and what their future will be.

Let's now take a look at God's festivals along with the Patterson family and understand what they mean. Only then will you know what *your* future can be!

THE ISRAELITES IN EGYPT

As the Patterson family began their Bible study, Mr. Patterson

UNSCRAMBLE THE PLAGUES

Unscramble the letters to name the first nine plagues. Then write them in the spaces at the right in the order in which they happened. If you need help, read Exodus 7:14 through Exodus 10:23.

- | | |
|----------------------------|----------|
| alsiomhtrs | 1. _____ |
| nrdskase | 2. _____ |
| clei | 3. _____ |
| ulcsots | 4. _____ |
| oibsl | 5. _____ |
| rgfos | 6. _____ |
| lsife | 7. _____ |
| siaedesd
(livestock) | 8. _____ |
| (water turned
to) ldobo | 9. _____ |

reviewed the time when the Israelites were slaves in Egypt.

“For over two hundred years, the Israelites were forced to work for taskmasters,” he began. “They were not permitted to worship God and they were forced to work seven days a week. It wasn’t long before the Israelites forgot about God’s laws, including the Sabbath. Year after year they lived very unhappy lives. Finally, it was time for God to rescue them.

“After God chose Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, Moses

went before Pharaoh, king of Egypt, many times.

“Linda, do you remember what God did to Egypt when Pharaoh refused to let the Israelites go?” asked her Dad.

“He brought terrible plagues on Egypt,” recalled Linda. “But I’m not sure I can name them all.”

Perhaps you can help Linda name the first nine plagues in the puzzle at the top of this page.

God told Moses that there was to be only one more plague—the death of the firstborn of Egypt—before Pharaoh would finally permit the Israelites to leave Egypt.

THE FIRST PASSOVER

“This month [called Abib] is the first month of the year,” God told Moses. “Tell the Israelites that on the tenth day of this month each family should select a perfectly healthy male lamb—one that is less than a year old. Keep the lamb until the sunset beginning the fourteenth day. Then each family must kill their lamb, roast it, and eat it with bitter herbs and unleavened bread.

“Whatever part of the lamb that is left uneaten should be burned. Also on that night, everybody should be dressed as though they were leaving on a long journey.

“When you kill the lamb, take some of the blood and smear it on the top and sides of your doorposts. Then, when the death angel comes to slay the firstborn in the land of Egypt, he will see the blood and *pass over* the marked houses.”

MEANING OF THE PASSOVER

As Mr. Patterson explained God’s instructions to his family, he also pointed out a very important fact. When God teaches His people spiritual lessons, He often gives them physical examples, or *symbols* so they can better understand and remember those lessons.

For example, the Israelites killed a lamb, which is a symbol of Christ. Jesus is often called the “Lamb of God” (John 1:29). He is also called “our Passover” (I Corinthians 5:7). The lamb’s shed blood was also a symbol of an event that would take place hundreds of years later. Let’s understand.

The “Word,” the member of the God Family who would later become Christ (John 1:1-3, 14), the son of God, would be born as a human being and later be put to death. The shed blood of the lambs the Israelites were to kill was a *symbol* of Christ’s blood which poured out of His body when He was cruelly beaten and killed.

Again, even the month and day of that first Passover was special or significant. It was in the same month and on the same day, hundreds of years later, that Christ was killed. Most people today do not realize the importance or significance of Christ’s death.

Christ came to this earth to live as a human being, having been born of the virgin Mary. God was His father through a miracle and therefore Christ was both the “Son of God” and the “Son of man.”



Jesus Christ grew to adulthood living a perfect life—*totally obedient* to God’s laws. Never once did he sin, emphasized Mr. Patterson.

“He didn’t deserve to die, did He?” asked Tony.

“No, Tony, Christ didn’t deserve to die because He never sinned,” replied his Dad. “But it was all a part of God’s special plan so that we all might have the opportunity to one day live forever as members of God’s Family!

“We have all sinned, or disobeyed God’s Ten Commandments (Romans 3:23). Unless our sins are forgiven, we will suffer the result or penalty of sin, which is death. This death would be forever—*eternal* death with no hope of ever living again.

“But Christ’s sacrifice paid that penalty for us, making it possible for God to forgive us of our sins when we repent of them. And so when we commit a sin, if we are truly sorry and ask God for forgiveness, He will forgive us of that sin and regard it as though it never happened.”

THE PASSOVER TODAY

Mr. Patterson went on to explain the special symbols that Christ gave His disciples on Passover night before His death.

During the Passover meal that night, Christ showed His disciples the *new way* He wanted them to keep the Passover from that time forward. The first thing He did was to wash the disciples’ feet. He explained the lesson He wanted them to learn from this—that we should *love* and *serve* one another.

Jesus then took unleavened bread, broke it in pieces and told His disciples to eat it. After they had eaten the bread, He gave them a cup of wine to drink.

At the Passover service in God’s Church today, we continue to follow Christ’s example. We eat broken, unleavened bread, *symbolizing* Christ’s cruelly beaten but sinless body. It was beaten so we could be healed of our sicknesses and diseases when we ask God’s ministers to anoint us and pray for our healing (James 5:14; I Peter 2:24). Then during the service we also drink a small amount of wine, *symbolizing* Christ’s shed blood by which our sins are forgiven when we repent.

Let’s go back now to the events in Egypt. Having eaten the Passover lamb and gotten dressed for traveling as God had instructed, the Israelites waited for word to leave Egypt.

Meanwhile, the Egyptian people

suffered terribly as a result of the last plague when all the firstborn of Egypt died, including the firstborn of animals. Even the firstborn of Pharaoh's own family was killed. The Egyptians were now quite anxious for the Israelites to leave. "Please take of our gold and silver, our clothes—anything you want," they begged. "But please leave before even greater harm comes to us."

During the daylight part of the fourteenth day, the Israelites gathered their belongings and all that they could carry from the Egyptians. Then, on the night of the fifteenth, they began their exodus from Egypt.

THE DAYS OF UNLEAVENED BREAD

God instructed Moses that this night was to be a memorial, a reminder that He brought them out of Egypt. It was a "Night to be Much Observed" every year at the beginning of the fifteenth day of the first month.

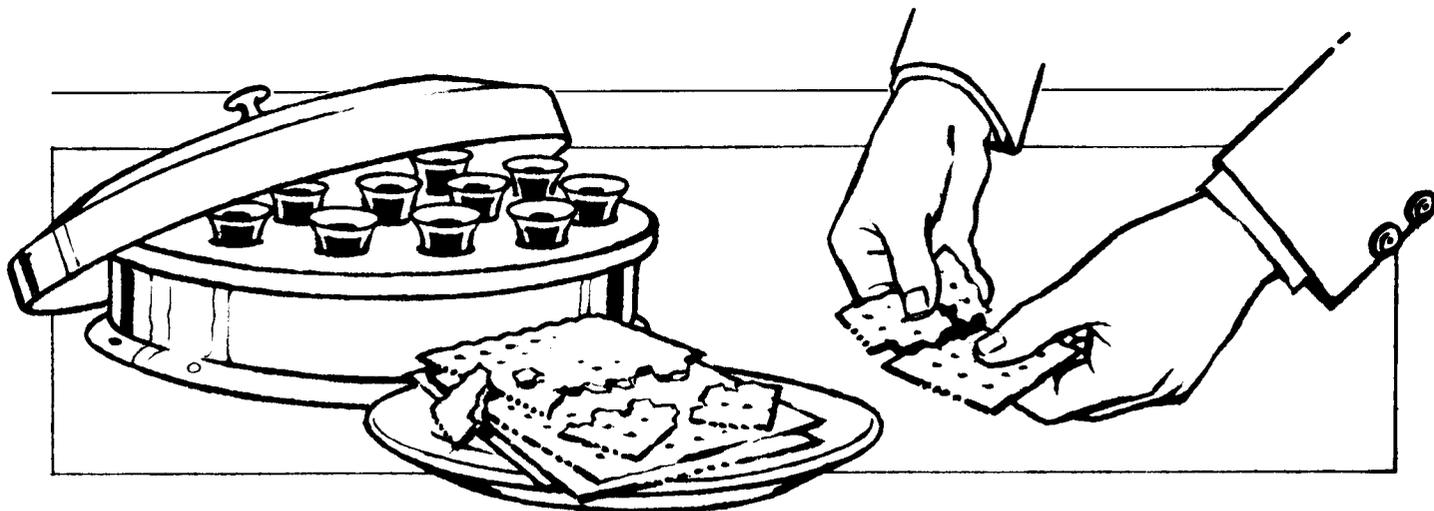
God also said, "Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread: even the first day ye shall [have] put away leaven out of your houses . . . And in the first day there shall be an holy convocation, and in the seventh day there shall be an holy convocation . . ." (Exodus 12:15-16).

These instructions were for observing the Feast of Unleavened Bread. For seven days they were to eat unleavened bread. And on the first and last days they were to have Church services because these were Holy Days.

Notice once again that God uses symbols to teach us. He uses Egypt as a symbol for *sin*. Just as the Israelites came out of Egypt, God's people are to come out of a sinful way of life.

Now *leaven* is another symbol for sin mentioned in the Bible. Therefore, God instructs us to remove all leavening and leavened goods from our homes just before the seven Days of Unleavened Bread, as a symbol of putting sin *out* of our lives. And how do we put sin or Satan's way out of our lives? *By keeping God's commandments!*

Examples of leavening include baking powder, baking soda and yeast. Leavening causes bread dough to rise or "puff up," therefore God uses this example to teach us that sin is similar to leavening. Only a small amount of leaven is necessary to make a large amount of dough rise. In the same way, if we allow even a few sins into our lives, soon our entire life becomes filled with Satan's way of "get." And so we must



really work at putting sin out of our lives.

Mr. Patterson gave Tony and Linda an assignment to do during the Days of Unleavened Bread.

“Think of ways in which you sin,” he said, “and begin to work on and overcome these sins during the Days of Unleavened Bread.”

“I know one I need to work on,” said Linda. “I borrow many things from Tony without asking and I don’t return them. I know that’s stealing.”

“I know one I need to work on, too,” said Tony. “I don’t always tell you and Mom the truth if I think I will get in trouble. I know it is a sin to lie.”

“Those are both excellent things to work on and I’m sure you can think of more,” said Dad. “Then during the Days of Unleavened Bread we can help each other and talk about the results.”

Tony and Linda have quite a challenge before them, but over-

coming is what God tells us we must all do (Revelation 2:26) if we want to be in God’s Family someday. Why don’t you join Tony and Linda in their challenge by sharing their assignment?

Talk to your parents. Ask them what they feel you need to overcome the most. Then at the end of the seven Days of Unleavened Bread, discuss the results with them. We must remember, though, that putting sin out of our lives by keeping God’s commandments is something we must continue all year long and for the remainder of our lives!

PENTECOST

It is impossible for us to obey God’s commandments like we should without special help from God. That brings us to Pentecost or the “Feast of Firstfruits”—the next festival and step in God’s plan for mankind. Pentecost means “fiftieth (day).” It is the only festival that

must be counted to know on what day it is to be kept.

Up until the time of the beginning of the New Testament Church, God called only a small number of people to whom He gave His Holy Spirit. Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses and just a few others between Adam and Christ were included in this number.

But God made His Holy Spirit available to many more people on the day of Pentecost in June of A.D. 31. It was on this day that God began His New Testament Church by sending the Holy Spirit to be in Christ's disciples. But still, the number of people was very small when compared to all those living during the time of the apostles.

Before we learn why it is still the few who are being called by God today, let's see if we can understand what God's Holy Spirit is. First of all, think about a pet you may have—a dog, a cat or any animal. Animals have *instinct*. Instinct means they sense when they are hungry or thirsty, and they know how to take care of their young. No one needs to teach this to them.

Unlike humans, however, animals cannot think. We are aware that we exist, but animals are not

aware of their existence. What makes us different? God has put a special spirit within us, giving us the ability to think and make decisions. That special spirit is called the "spirit in man."

When we become mature adults and God calls us, and when we repent or turn away from Satan's way of life which is the "get" way and begin to obey God and live according to His "give" way of life, we can then be baptized into God's Church.

At that time, God sends His Holy Spirit to unite with the "spirit in man" that is in our minds. At that moment a new spirit life is begotten—just like at one point in time you were begotten in your mother's womb. God puts only a small amount of the Holy Spirit into us at first. But God expects us to grow spiritually. And so the Holy Spirit gives us the power we need to help us put sin out of our lives and to obey God's commandments like we should.

Then, if we have been overcoming sin with the help of God's Holy Spirit, and if we have remained faithful to the end of our lives, God will change us into spirit beings at Christ's Second Coming. At that time, we will be born of the Spirit of God into the Family of God. Our

bodies will then be made of spirit—just like God’s spirit body.

WHY FIRSTFRUITS

Do you know why Pentecost is sometimes called the “Feast of Firstfruits?” God is again using symbolism. You see, there are two harvest seasons in the part of the world where ancient Israel lived. One is in late spring or early summer when only a small harvest is reaped. But in the fall is the much larger harvest.

God uses these harvests to show us that He is calling only a small group of people into His Church *now*, in comparison to the rest of the population of the earth and the number of people who have lived and died before we were born. Those in God’s Church today are a part of the coming small harvest to be reaped into God’s Family at Christ’s coming. And so they are called “firstfruits.”

The larger harvest will take place after Christ returns to earth. Billions of people will be given the opportunity to become a part of God’s Family.

“Those events are pictured by the fall festivals, aren’t they?” asked Tony.

“Yes,” answered Dad, “God very appropriately placed the festi-

vals picturing the larger spiritual harvest at the time of the year the larger physical harvest occurs.”

“But Dad,” wondered Linda, “what about the children in God’s Church who are not baptized and do not have God’s Holy Spirit within them?”

“God puts you in a very special group,” replied Mr. Patterson. “Even though His Spirit is not *in* you, it is *with* you. You are not cut off from God as the children who are not in God’s Church. Because your parents are in the Church, you can learn to keep God’s commandments and God will bless you as you do your best to obey Him and us.

“Even more exciting,” continued Mr. Patterson, “God will also give you the opportunity to become a part of His Church when you are an adult if you then choose to follow God’s way of life.

“I’m sure you both remember what a wonderful time we had during the fall festivals. But remember, the events pictured by the fall festivals could not happen if the events pictured by the spring festivals had not happened first. God’s festivals are all part of a wonderful, orderly plan that God has for all of mankind. What an exciting future you have to look forward to!”

GOD'S MASTER PLAN

Complete the statements by filling in the blanks with the correct answers. Then use those words to complete the puzzle on the right. When you are finished, the letters in the box, when read from top to bottom, will tell you what God's festivals reveal to us.

1. The events of each step in God's _____ must take place before the next step can begin.
2. Christ is often called the _____ of God.
3. God sent _____ on Egypt when Pharaoh refused to let the Israelites go.
4. We eat _____ during the Days of Unleavened Bread.
5. On the first Passover, the Israelites were instructed to put lamb's blood on their _____.
6. Pentecost is also called the Feast of _____.
7. _____ was chosen by God to lead the Israelites out of Egypt.
8. Putting sin out of our lives means obeying God's _____.
9. Pentecost symbolizes God giving the _____ to His Church.
10. God's festivals were not to be observed just in Old Testament times, but are to be observed _____.
11. _____ makes bread rise and

also pictures sin.

12. God brought the Israelites out of _____.
13. During the Days of Unleavened Bread, leavened bread is a symbol of _____.
14. The shed blood of the lamb on the _____ day pictures Christ's shed blood.
15. The Day of _____ follows the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

