

Halloween—Should Christians Still Participate?
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“No thanks, I’m fasting” a man said as the flight attendant offered him a meal. Moments later the person next to him asked, “I couldn’t help overhearing you say you’re fasting; are you a Christian?” “Oh no! I’m a Satanist,” the man replied. “This is Halloween, which is a high holy day for us, and this year we’re praying for the breakup of Christian marriages.”

This true interchange comes as no surprise to many who have investigated the pagan roots of this annual fall event. Nor is it surprising that this same paganism is still being practiced and being given official public recognition.

Witchcraft, a practice of the ancient religion, Wicca, is on the increase among adolescent girls. Hollywood’s growing portrayal of the practice in both the movies and on TV is considered a key factor in this increase. “In a poll of the top 60 interests of teen-age girls, witches are No 1,” according to Phyllis Currott, who is a civil rights attorney in New York City. The *Journal* of the American Family Association, which reported this statement, doesn’t comment on the source of the poll, which can be questioned since Currott has a vested interest; she is also a Wiccan high priestess.

Wicca and other occult practices will surely continue to make much of a decision by the U.S. Army to recognize witchcraft as an official religion. The move places witchcraft alongside and in the same category as Christianity and other major religions throughout the world. As with other religions, chaplains have also been appointed for witchcraft.

School authorities have found Satanic symbols and paraphernalia in and around their buildings. Satanists are pressing to establish After School Satan Clubs in schools throughout the country. Police have documented many crimes, including murders, associated with Satanic practices and people who have become involved with Satanism.

Therefore, many are saying, “Halloween isn’t what it used to be. Since it has become too imbued with evil and is now considered by the occult as a high holy day for them, we shouldn’t diminish our witness, confuse our children, and mislead people by participating in Halloween. It’s not only spiritually dangerous but in other ways as well.” Others reply, “Aw, lighten up. Isn’t Halloween just a lot of fun? The kids love it! In fact, doesn’t Halloween even have a Christian basis (All Hallow Even, the eve of All Saints’ Day)?

I would like to suggest an approach to Halloween that comes between and includes insights from both of those polar opposites on the spectrum of ways to deal with this annual fall event. I like to think of this approach as a healthy balance which enables us to use a teachable moment, a time when children are receptive to what we want them to know, in order to help our children and grandchildren to grow from acorns to oaks of righteousness. (Isaiah 61:3; Ephesians 4:11-16)

Throughout history the church has chosen to eclipse pagan celebrations by holding its own celebrations on the same day, e.g., Christmas, Easter, and, since the eighth century A. D., Halloween. At that time Pope Gregory III (d. 741) dedicated a chapel in St. Peter's basilica to honor all the saints who had died in the faith during the past year.

We can perform such an eclipse in our families. The children have a readiness, a special receptivity, a motivation to what you have to say that is linked to Halloween. Instead of telling them they can't participate in Halloween, consider discussing with them the problems concerning Halloween, and ask them what Jesus would like us to do differently at Halloween. Remind them of their special relationship to God signified by their baptism and such passages in the Bible as Acts 1:8 (Jesus said, "you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."). Pray together as a family. Some families may sense that it is God's will for them to do something entirely different on Halloween, and that of course would be good.

If you're still uncertain, continue to pray, individually and together, and ask your family some related questions. Of course, this procedure is easier with young children, but if you have teenagers and are just becoming concerned about this issue and other spiritual matters, it's not too late to start. Keep in mind that God has given us parents (e.g., Deuteronomy 4:9; 6:4-9) and grandparents (e.g., Deuteronomy 4:9) the authority to teach his Word to our children, who are primarily God's children, and he will hold us accountable for doing so.

It will help you to know that as your children see your leadership firmly grounded in God's Word and authority, they will sense comfort and security, especially in this day when they see so much evil all around them. They need the confidence that there is right and wrong, and you are showing them how to determine which is which. A society that is oriented to postmodernism, which eschews any criterion standard of judgment, offers no help, only confusion. Furthermore, we have God's help to carry out this vital responsibility he has given us. Therefore, ask these questions:

1. We hear a lot of talk about identity. What is our identity? (Read 1 Peter 2:9-12.) What does this text say about who we are, to whom we belong, how we should live, and why we should live differently from pagan people?
2. What does it mean to be holy? (The Biblical word means set apart [for and to God].) How, then, should we live?
3. Pertaining to Halloween, how could we dress differently? You may have to exercise your God-given authority as parents to simply disallow certain costumes, such as Satan, witches and demons.
4. How can we avoid the element of greed in Halloween?
5. How can we deal with the fright/love issue?

Remember that little children and others can be terrified by scary masks. In this regard read together Philippians 4:8-9 (“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. ⁹Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.”) and 1 Thessalonians 5:21-24 (“Test everything. Hold on to the good. ²²Avoid every kind of evil. ²³May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.”).

Correct the grave and widespread misconceptions of the demonic seen in such expressions as “the cute little devils.” Make no mistake: demons are neither cute nor little. They are thoroughly evil, have the ability to empower a man they possessed to break the chains with which guards had bound him hand and foot (Luke 8:29), and are completely opposed to God and God’s people. (Cf, e.g., Matthew 4:1-11; 1 Peter 5:8-9)

This is all part of the spiritual warfare in which we’re involved, e.g., Ephesians 6:10-18; Revelation 12-20. We must engage this war with our eyes wide open, fully prepared, and equip our children to do so. With fewer people today actively attending to their spiritual nurture by daily reading God’s Word and praying, individually and with their spouse, and at least weekly in corporate worship at church, our children are now entering a society where Satan and the demons have more access to people in the United States and in other Western countries than previously.

The Good News is that this spiritual war has been won by our Lord Jesus Christ, who has conquered Satan. (Genesis 3:15; John 16:33; Revelation 20:2) Yet, though the war has been won, there are many “mopping up” battles to be engaged between now and the Lord’s Second Coming when the final judgment and the new heaven and earth will be manifest. We need to put on, and keep on, the full armor of God (Ephesians 6:10-18), on ourselves and on our children, teach them how to use it, *and monitor their use of it.*

How do we do that monitoring? For some examples of how to monitor our children’s spiritual development and engaging the spiritual war, let’s take a brief look at Ephesians 6:14-18. The examples are italicized in brackets [] within the text. Add your own. We can reflect on more in our discussion to follow. The Apostle Paul writes,

¹⁴Stand firm then, with the belt of truth [*Are they always telling the truth?*] buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness [*Is their desire to live in accord with God’s Word and will, and does their behavior typically reflect that desire? Are they just and fair in matters pertaining to others?*] in place, ¹⁵and with your feet fitted with the readiness [*Do they speak up and readily act according to God’s Word on matters that arise daily? Do they apply God’s Word to issues in daily life?*] that comes from the gospel of peace. ¹⁶In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith [*Is there any wavering or doubt pertaining to their faith in God? Is their faith strong enough to speak up, “speaking the truth in love,” (Ephesians 4:15)*]

even to their school teachers and peers who express unbelief?], with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation [In corporate worship, do they repeat the words of the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds and in other ways state their belief that Jesus Christ is Lord and that God raised him from the dead? (Romans 10:9)] and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God [Do they read the Bible each day?]. ¹⁸ And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests [Do they pray throughout the day pertaining to specific circumstances as well as in a daily devotional time?]. With this in mind, be alert [In what ways do they show they are paying attention to and avoiding evil in their social circles, in the broader society, and throughout the world, and are ready to act as God would have them do?] and always keep on praying for all the saints. [Do they pray for others, including fellow brothers and sisters in Christ who are being persecuted, and asking God to give an extra measure of grace to those whose persecution is exceedingly egregious? Do they pray for those who are experiencing other difficulties?]

And now a very important matter that is huge: What, specifically, are we as their parents and grandparents doing to provide a model of the above examples in our own lives that the children can see in operation and learn how to do in their lives? And that our friends and others can see? When we fail, do we ask God, and any others involved, for forgiveness and help to do what's right from now on? When we see the children not doing well in the above matters, do we talk with them about what they've done and not done, how they can do better, and monitor whether they in fact do so going forward?

Thus, in and with the Lord Jesus Christ, we don't have to worry, but we do need to be wise and alert. God and Satan are not peers; Satan is less than a little peanut contrasted with God. "The one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world." (1 John 4:4) Therefore, do not fear the demonic but take this reality in our age seriously, for Satan and his demon followers are the cause of all the evil in the world. We must also be discerning; Satan, whom Jesus revealed as "a liar and the father of lies" (John 8:44), and his demon followers are extremely unwise, but they're smart enough to know that many people would avoid evil if it were presented as it truly is, so they make it look like something desirable and fun, *disguising the death within it*.

We must walk closely with God, daily reading his Word and praying to him, including asking for his guidance and direction, and at least weekly meeting with him and with his people in corporate worship. Let us all remember who we are, what our calling is. Review Romans 12:2, "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will." This is only the beginning, and it is not only for ourselves.

Let us also help our children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, other children, and adults to transform and renew their minds in Christ Jesus. In so doing, be careful, do all in accord with God's Word and will, and you can have a good time at Halloween and throughout the year.

There is much more to know about this subject. For more crucial information, see the articles, "Satan, Demons, and Halloween: History, Satanic Influence, and Christian Response," "Satanism: The Occult and Satanism in America," and "Satanism: The Little Girl Satanist Next Door," on either my [general Website](#) or my [academic Website](#).

DISCUSSION

1. First ask, "Are there any questions or comments?"
2. If time remains ask, "What additional behavioral, observable, indications could you look for as evidence that your children are preparing themselves in each of the ways the Apostle Paul cites in Ephesians 6:10-18?"