

Halloween

Trick...or treat?

Author and Date Unknown

As a parent, do you have the answer if your child asks, “Where did Halloween come from?” What is the purpose of Halloween? Why do our children dress up in outlandish costumes? Why do they go trick-or-treating?

What Is Halloween?

Though Halloween has become prominent in America only within the past two or three generations, its origins are ancient. Halloween was originally *Samhain*, a pagan celebration in honor of death. The heathen Celtic tribesmen of Europe believed that ghosts and other spirit-beings visited the land of the living on Samhain Eve, October 31, so they presented offerings to them on that night.

Understandably, Christians rejected and detested this idolatrous festival. To provide a Christian alternative, churches began to celebrate the Feast of All Hallows, or All Saints, at the same time as the pagan holiday. Samhain picked up the name “Halloween” from the feast of All Hallows, but it didn’t pick up anything else from Christianity! All of our popular Halloween activities actually come from paganism.

Where Do Our Halloween Customs Come From?

- **Jack-o’-Lanterns** were originally carved images of demonic beings.
- **Bobbing for Apples** began as a method of divination.
- **Ghosts, Goblins, and Ghouls** were thought by the pagans of Europe to have special freedom to travel about among the living at Halloween.
- **Bats and Owls** have been associated with Halloween since ancient times; the pagan Celts believed they’re able to communicate with the dead.
- **Skeletons, Skulls, and Corpses** belong to Halloween as a festival celebrating death.

Why Do Americans Celebrate Halloween?

Many parents are uncomfortable with the gruesome aspects of Halloween, but feel reluctant to deprive their children of a holiday that seems so much a part of American life. But Halloween is not really an American holiday at all.

The little Pilgrim children never learned to say “Trick or treat!” When he was a boy, George Washington never went out hunting for candy on October 31, and Abraham Lincoln never dressed up as a pirate or a robber to celebrate Halloween. This holiday was not nationally known and observed until the middle of the 1800s, when a large wave of immigrants from Celtic areas of Europe brought the old Halloween customs with them.

Which Witch Is Which?

Many of us were raised to think of witches as mythological characters, found only in fairy tales and cartoons. And that was close to the truth. Until the last half of this century, there was relatively little interest in witchcraft

in the United States and other industrialized nations. Unfortunately, this is no longer the case. Some Halloween witches are for real! In fact, Halloween is one of the most important days for witches. So before you send your little ones off to celebrate with make-believe witches, pause to reflect: actual witches are celebrating the same holiday in earnest.

Halloween May Be Hazardous to Your Children's Health!

Even before the current resurgence of witchcraft, Halloween was a day to focus on death, violence and the grotesque. Yet parents who ordinarily treat these sensitive topics very carefully sometimes assume that a callous attitude suddenly becomes harmless on this one night of the year. They wouldn't think of letting their children watch gruesome "slasher" movies, but on Halloween night they'll allow them to live out their own slasher fantasies, sauntering forth as Freddy Krueger, or as Jason from the movie "Friday the Thirteenth."

Of course, Halloween is also a time dedicated to senseless vandalism and random crime. In recent years, this tradition has taken an alarming turn, as malicious adults have occasionally hidden drugs and razor blades inside Halloween treats. Our calendars should come with this label pasted on the page for October: "Warning: Halloween may be hazardous to your children's health!"

What's a Parent to Do?

There are several biblical principles that can guide you as a parent in deciding how your family should look at Halloween.

Hate evil-don't delight in it.

God views witchcraft and all other occult activities as evil (Galatians 5:17-21). He despises them. So the question is, "How much do I hate the things God hates? And if I really hate what He hates, just how often will I want my children to celebrate what He calls an abomination?"

Recognize Satan's power-don't make fun of it.

Celebrating Halloween can encourage children to take lightly the forces of darkness. That's a serious mistake (see Jude 8-10). We should always take the occult seriously.

Be transformed-don't be conformed to this world.

Christians belong to God; the world is in rebellion against God. So we're not supposed to fit in here. God very clearly tells us to be different from our neighbors (see Romans 12:1-2).

Protect weaker believers-don't provoke them.

Even if you are confident that exposing your children to occult influences will not harm them, what about other young believers? Can you guarantee the continuing spiritual health of Christian children who may be encouraged by your children's example to participate in a satanic holiday? Consult Romans 14 and I Corinthians 8.

If You Decide to "Just Say No"

If your children were accustomed to celebrating Halloween and you decide, as a parent, that your family should not participate in the festivities this year, you can expect opposition and complaints. To avoid making Halloween a bigger issue than it needs to be, explain the reasons for your decision, and remember the following principles:

Don't apologize for honoring God.

Some parents express their opposition to Halloween so apologetically that their children are encouraged to believe that something's wrong with Mom and Dad, rather than with Halloween.

But there's nothing wrong with a child standing apart from the crowd, standing alone for the truth, like young Daniel (Daniel 1:8-20). And there's nothing to apologize for when you challenge your children to honor the Lord.

Challenge your children to spiritual growth.

Use the Halloween season as an opportunity to educate your children spiritually. Describe the spiritual battles being waged in the world today (see Ephesians 6:10-18). Help them gain a discerning and godly perspective on Halloween, and challenge them to take a personal stand.

Don't discourage your children.

It's good for children to have fun. Having fun is not what's wrong with Halloween! If you provide plenty of enjoyable family activities for your kids, they will be less likely to feel cheated when you say "no" to Halloween (see Colossians 3:21).

Consider Creative Alternatives.

- Throw a bowling or ice-skating party.
- Teach your children about Satanism and witchcraft and the effect they are having today.
- Celebrate the anniversary of the Reformation, which began on October 31, 1517, when Martin Luther posted his 95 Theses on a church door in Wittenberg, Germany.
- Lead your children in a Bible study on witchcraft, sorcery, demons, Satan, death, violence, divination, or another Halloween theme. Discuss why there is evil in the world today, and what God is planning to do about it.
- Plan a party around the theme of John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress or John Milton's poem "Paradise Lost."
- Pray with your children for the physical and spiritual protection of classmates or friends who are celebrating Halloween.
- Spend the evening worshiping God as a family by singing great hymns of the faith.