

View

Christians and Halloween

BY MARY FAIRCHILD, ABOUT.COM

This article will tackle the controversial question, "Should Christians observe Halloween?" With no direct references to Halloween in the Bible, resolving the debate can be a challenge. How should Christians approach Halloween and is there a biblical way to observe this secular holiday?

The dilemma over Halloween may fall under the category of a Romans 14 issue, or a "disputable matter." These are matters that lack clear and specific direction from the Bible. Ultimately, Christians must decide for themselves and follow their own convictions regarding the observance of Halloween. Together we will explore what the Bible has to say about Halloween, providing food for thought as you decide for yourself on the issue.

Current Status

Christian perspectives on the observance of Halloween are strongly divided. Some believers feel complete freedom to observe the holiday, others run and hide from it, many boycott or ignore it, a number celebrate it through more positive and imaginative observances or Christian alternatives to Halloween, and still others choose to take advantage of Halloween's evangelistic opportunities.

History

Halloween has pagan roots stemming from the ancient Celtic festival, *Samhain*. This harvest festival of the Druids ushered in the New Year, beginning on the evening of October 31, with the lighting of bonfires and the offering of sacrifices. As the Druids danced around the fires, they celebrated the ending of the summer season and the beginning of the season of darkness. It was also believed that at this time of year the invisible "gates" between the natural world and the spirit world would open, allowing free movement between the two worlds.

In the 18th century, Pope Gregory III moved All Saints Day to November 1, officially making October 31 "All Hallows Eve," as a way of claiming the celebration for Christians. However, some of the pagan beliefs and practices associated with the celebration have persisted.

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Services

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9:30 AM

Sunday Evening: 5:00 PM
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What Does the Bible Say?

Ephesians 5:7-12

“Don’t participate in the things these people do. For though your hearts were once full of darkness, now you are full of light from the Lord, and your behavior should show it! For this light within you produces only what is good and right and true.

“Try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the worthless deeds of evil and darkness; instead, rebuke and expose them. It is shameful even to talk about the things that ungodly people do in secret.” (NLT)

Many Christians believe that participating in Halloween is a form of involvement in the worthless deeds of evil and darkness. However, many consider the modern-day Halloween activities of most to be harmless fun.

Are some Christians trying to remove themselves from the world? Ignoring Halloween or celebrating it with only believers is not exactly an evangelical approach. Aren’t we supposed to “become all things to all men so that by all possible means” we might save some? (1 Cor. 9:22)

Deuteronomy 18:10-12

“For example, never sacrifice your son or daughter as a burnt offering. And do not let your people practice fortune-telling or sorcery, or allow them to interpret omens, or engage in witchcraft, or cast spells, or function as mediums or psychics, or call forth the spirits of the dead. Anyone who does these things is an object of horror and disgust to the Lord.” (NLT)

Well, these verses are pretty clear on what a believer should not do. But how many Christians are sacrificing their sons and daughters as a burnt offering on Halloween? How many are calling forth the spirits of the dead? The verse does not say that “trick or treating” disgusts the Lord.

However, what if you have come to the Christian faith from a background in the occult? What if, before you became a Christian, you did practice some of these deeds associated with

witchcraft and sorcery? Perhaps refraining from Halloween and its activities is the safest and most appropriate response for you as an individual.

Rethinking the Issue

There are many other Bible verses similar to these two, but nothing that specifically warns against observing Halloween. Rather than providing an answer, the purpose of this article is to cause you to ask yourself questions and think about your convictions on this issue.

As Christians, why are we here in this world? Are we here to live in a safe and protected environment, guarded against the evils in the world, or are we called to reach out into a world filled with dangers and be the light of Christ? Halloween brings people of the world to our door step. Halloween brings our neighbors out into the streets. I can think of various creative ways to seize this opportunity for developing new relationships and sharing my faith.

Is it possible that our negativity toward Halloween only alienates the people we seek to reach? Can we be in the world, but not of the world?

Resolution

I close with a recommendation to give serious thought about the appropriateness of judging another Christian for observing or not observing Halloween. We do not know why another person participates in the holiday or why they do not. We cannot accurately judge the motivations and intentions of another’s heart.

I believe the most appropriate Christian response to Halloween is to study the matter for yourself and follow the convictions of your own heart. Let others do the same without condemnation from you.

[HTTP://CHRISTIANITY.ABOUT.COM/OD/HOLIDAYTIPS/1/BIBLEHALLOWEEN.HTM](http://christianity.about.com/od/holidaytips/1/biblehalloween.htm)

Additional Thoughts on Halloween

On occasion, I've been challenged to give a reason why it is OK for a Christian to engage in something which has pagan roots. Oddly, I've been asked that question by people who do not observe Christmas, but very actively participate in Halloween activities. While that seems inconsistent on its face, it doesn't make participating in either right or wrong.

My mom was into Halloween when I was a child, mainly, perhaps, because it is also my birthday. It was a perfect time to have a costume party, and "kill two birds with one stone." I remember having lots of fun dressing up as something or someone else; for me, the default character was a pirate (doing so never caused me to loot or pillage, however, as far as I know).

I don't know anyone in the church in my younger years who thought much about these things. I'm sure we were ignorant of the origin of the day and not very keen about finding out. But I also don't remember ever dressing up as ghouls or goblins, although I'm sure I was surrounded by some at my birthday parties.

Halloween is big business: \$7 billion spent annually (with the economic crisis, that figure may be dramatically less this year). Its origin is well-known to most by now — "All Hallow's Eve" celebrated the day before "All Saints Day." Many of the elements are from old pagan rituals, including witchcraft, broomsticks, skeletons, black cats, jack-o-lanterns and the black and orange (the colors of the San Francisco Giants, too, by the way). There are lots of other connections with the pagan rituals — you can find them online if you Google "Halloween and Christians." If you're concerned, Google away.

The question, of course, is whether parents should allow their children to participate in the features of this day, given its decidedly occult and pagan origin. Are we putting our children at risk?

While taking into account the good points made in the article that starts on page 1 —

especially the scriptural warnings — I believe that participating in the enjoyable aspects of the day is not something that is either scripturally wrong or dangerous.

Some get caught up in rejecting anything that has a pagan or non-biblical origin. But that proves too much. That would rule out participating in any holiday and I don't know anyone who goes that far. Just because something has a non-biblical origin doesn't mean it is wrong. Jesus went to Jerusalem during the feast of dedication (John 10:22-23), which the Jews call "*Chanukah*," a human-ordained celebration. But Jesus made no comment about it pro or con. One who rejects something just because of its origin may be committing the "genetic fallacy" (remember when Nathanael said to Jesus, "can any good thing come out of Nazareth"? He was committing this fallacy).

Here's my brief take on Halloween. I've been enlightened by some of the arguments against it and probably would do some things differently with our children today. I wouldn't dress Angie in a witch costume or allow David to dress as a ghost (well, maybe Casper, the Friendly...) I'm not comfortable with the witch, goblin or other occult-type costumes.

However, I'm not the least bit offended if others do it (it won't cause me to embrace occultism) and I don't know anyone who thinks, even a little bit, about the pagan and occult origins of the day, any more than they think of the pagan practices of the winter solstice during "Christmas."

Obviously, we want to avoid doing anything, that may smack of a religious or "new age" spiritual observance. Perhaps we can use these secular holidays to reach out to people who are not Christians and help them find the One who will help us overcome death (a common theme in the Halloween feature set).

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