

A Holiness Preacher's Arguments for Halloween

I hate scary movies and I have never desired to see a horror film.

Watching human suffering or subjecting myself to fear is not appealing to me. The horror aspect of Halloween is of no interest to me at all. Nevertheless, I am not going to close the curtains, turn off the lights and pretend I'm not home the whole evening.

On the contrary, this day is not anathema to me. I actually look forward to it. Not because of witches, goblins or evil power but because Halloween brings an opportunity to connect with the community as few days do.

During my final year of college, I lived in a rented house in a low-income area with three other guys. Like many Americans, I never ventured across the yard or across to street to greet my neighbors. I did not know their interests, their stories or even their names.

On Halloween night, 2004, we decided to prepare a bowl of candy, pull out the folding chairs, and sit on the front porch to welcome trick-or-treaters. What happened was remarkable. People who lived just steps from my door, whom I had never even greeted, came with their children or grandchildren to my home for a handful of candy and a few minutes of conversation. Though we lived side by side for months, community was formed that night.

Even though we were technically a community before, following the night of Halloween the barriers and guards were removed so conversations could take place and relationships form.

The next year I began working at a church where I helped

organize “trunk or treat” each year. I watched as the parking lot filled with people from the community who had not stepped foot on our campus the entire year. Yet when we offered to give their children and grandchildren a bag of treats and a few hours of fun, they gladly visited. We saw this as an opportunity to facilitate communication and interaction that often led to future ministry.

The push by some in the Christian community to abandon Halloween completely is, in my opinion, a mistake. Indeed, there are elements of the day that should have no place in our lives or society. The horror, the demonic, the frightening are absolutely incompatible with our faith. Yet in the midst of this day are opportunities to share our faith with the community we long to reach.

I understand the complaints and arguments many have against the day. “It’s the devil’s day,” I have heard. How quickly we forget Job 41:11 where God says explicitly, “Everything under heaven belongs to me.”

There is no devil’s day. Those who serve the enemy dedicate every day to him. Likewise, we who serve the living God should commit every day to His glory and concede no day to the enemy. He is defeated every day, including Halloween.

Another argument people use against Halloween participation is that we ought not to interact with the demonic. While I agree that séances, Ouija boards, and communication with the demonic are dangerous and inappropriate, we should not fear confrontation with the enemy. Jesus willingly went into the desert to confront (and even be tempted by) the devil. Paul did not hesitate for a moment to confront the demonic forces he met in Paphos (Acts 13), Philippi (Acts 16), or wherever he journeyed for the Gospel. He did not let the fear of the demonic hinder him from reaching people steeped in pagan worship. The same should be true for us. When we confront evil with the Word and power of God, we will be victorious.

A third argument we hear is that we should avoid Halloween because of its pagan roots. This argument is simply not adequate given the numerous objects of pagan origin that we retain in our lives. Weddings rings, Christmas trees and even the names for the days of the week all have pagan origins. Yet few people are out to remove these things from the Christian community. The apostle Paul did not flee from the pagan world. Rather, he used the pagan pulpit in Acts 17 as a means to share the gospel. Our God is a redeeming God who can take what the enemy intended for evil and turn it into good.

There is much about Halloween to be shunned: the horror, the evil, and (in recent years) the sexuality and substance abuse. But the enemy will certainly use it to its full potential if the Christians ignore and abandon it. The world will not respond to a gospel preached from behind darkened doors and pulled blinds. Engage your community this year. Give a piece of candy or treat in Jesus' name. Participate in a trunk or treat for the glory of God. Let Halloween be a day when people see more of the light of God than the darkness of the enemy.
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