

Homosexual-Turned-Pastor: What Do We Do With Halloween?

Suddenly, in front of me stood a man wearing a grotesque mask and holding a bloody knife—a disconcerting sight, to say the least. Across the room hung an array of “Hail Satan” T-shirts and other demonic regalia. Nearby was a booth containing “spooky baby” costumes.

It was the 40th anniversary celebration of the release of the initial *Halloween* film, and as one of the original actors, I was there to sign autographs and to hand out my autobiography (*Love Hunger*) in hopes that the Lord would use it to save some. The man standing in front of me was the actor who had played the gruesome murderer, Michael Myers, in 10 of the 11 *Halloween* films.

During breaks, I was able to talk with many of the exhibitors and was surprised to find them exceedingly friendly. One young lady, dressed as a zombie, told me that horror fans were the kindest and nicest people she had ever met.

On the spot, I had to relearn the lesson that as believers, we must be careful to separate who people are from what they do. After all, weren't we all once blind to the horrors of darkness and the unequalled glory of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ?

According to , the celebration of Halloween originated with the ancient Celtic festival of Samhain, when people would light bonfires, wear costumes to ward off ghosts and tell each other's fortunes. It was believed by the Celts and their Druid priests that on Oct. 31, the boundary between the living and the dead became blurred and as a result, the ghosts of the dead returned to earth. This focus on death and occult practices, such as divination and communication with the dead

(necromancy), are practiced to this very day.

Beginning in the 1st century A.D. during the 400-year Roman occupation of Ireland and the British Isles, this Celtic festival was merged with the Roman worship of the goddess Pomona and their commemoration of the passing of the dead. Over the years, trick-or-treating, jack-o-lanterns and the wearing of costumes were added.

In the seventh century, Pope Boniface IV created "All Martyrs' Day," and in the eighth century, Pope Gregory III designated Nov. 1 as a time to honor Christian martyrs and saints ("All Saints' Day"). Later switched to Nov. 2, this festival included bonfires, parades and dressing in costumes as saints, angels and devils. The evening before ("All Hallows' Eve") eventually became known as Halloween.

By the Middle Ages, black cats had been added to the list of fearsome foes because they were believed to be witches trying to avoid detection. By the time of the Reformation, Christians celebrated the holiday as a "harvest festival" or a "Reformation festival." Due to the heavy immigration of the Irish and English, it eventually flourished in the Southern states of colonial America and finally throughout the U.S.

Many Christians are concerned that the occult activities during "Halloween" qualify for the warning in Deuteronomy 18:10-12b, where God declares:

There must not be found among you anyone ... who uses divination, or uses witchcraft, or an interpreter of omens, or a sorcerer, or one who casts spells, or a spiritualist, or an occultist, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination to the Lord.

What a strange holiday is Halloween. It pulls together all of the images of fear and horror that we've come to know—some terrifying (Frankenstein, Freddy Krueger, Michael Myers, Jason

Voorhees, Edward Cullen, zombies and so on)— and others more sensual (Dracula).

But is all of this harmless, or does the demonic realm play a part in any or all cases?

For example, the sensual aspect could be used by the demonic realm to lure someone “just wanting to have fun” into the darker regions of sexuality. It has been said that such a convergence of sex and violence heightens the power of sexual experiences.

Could it be that horror junkies are actually manifesting deep fears and premonitions of a judgment that they know is coming? According to Hebrews 10:27 (NIV), unbelievers live with “a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God.”

Many believers are afraid of the pain that might accompany death, but isn't there something more to it than that?

For some reason, we humans rehearse in our minds the things that deeply move us in some way—things that are important to us, that thrill and delight us or experiences that have brought us great hurt and pain.

As we get older, many of us begin to ponder death, particularly our own—perhaps as a way to mentally prepare ourselves for what is to come. Depending on our personality, this rehearsal can either increase or decrease our anxiety. I've often told the Lord that it's not death that I fear, but the pain of getting there!

If we see ourselves as being under judgment, or if we hate ourselves, this fear of death can be much worse. Curiously, however, the Bible teaches: “There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. Whoever fears is not perfect in love” (1 John 4:18, MEV).

So, fear can be a manifestation of the subconscious mind knowing that we deserve punishment and of what that might look like for us.

In some ultimate sense, our fears can reflect a soul in discomfort over sin not yet taken to the cross, as well as anxiety over the judgment to come. This could be one reason we fight so intensely to stay alive when the specter of death comes knocking on our door. Go online and read some of the last words of famous people. Now that's frightening!

Some who involve themselves in occult activities really believe in dark powers and have been lured into pursuing them for their secrets. Others dabble in them as a form of entertainment, unaware of the supernatural danger they may be putting themselves in. For such people, there is a disconnect between what they've been called to in Christ and what they give their attention to. I well remember the day when the Lord clearly spoke to me as I was watching a violent movie. He said, "Why are you entertaining yourself with violence?" He might well ask the same question about why we entertain ourselves with the things of darkness.

So, what do we do with Halloween? Believers respond to that question in varying ways.

The first group believes celebrating Halloween is OK as long as you replace occult-related costumes and practices with more positive ones such as biblical or historical costumes and celebrations. They fear the popularity of the holiday is so great they risk losing the ear of their kids by imposing prohibitions that need not be made.

A second group believes celebrating Halloween is OK if you have no occult intentions. Motivation is seen as the key. They believe the demonic realm cannot touch you if your motivation is good and does not include any background, interest or bent toward the dark side. Their key Scriptures have to do with

Paul's instructions regarding meat that has been sacrificed to idols (see also Rom. 14 and 1 Cor. 10:14-32).

The third group teaches that believers are to avoid Halloween completely, even when their celebration is non-occult in nature (such as "harvest celebrations"). This includes a number of former Satanists who teach that any celebration of Halloween brings a curse on the celebrant and their offspring to the third or fourth generation and therefore must be renounced and repented of in Jesus' name. They believe that even innocent participation opens the door to demonic powers. In addition to Deuteronomy 18:10-12b, their core biblical support is found in 1 Thessalonians 5:22 (ESV), "Abstain from every form of evil" (ESV) and Ephesians 4:27: "Give no opportunity to the devil."

The difficulty in figuring out which of the three groups is correct is that we do not precisely know all of the factors that allow demons and fallen angels to gain ground in us. We know the obvious ones (found in the Deuteronomy passage already cited), but the three choices above involve more nuance and subtlety.

Does entering the enemy's territory no matter how innocently open a believer to the demonic? Or does it require an intentional searching for things in the spirit realm that God has chosen not to reveal? Does re-engineering the holiday to make it Christian, as previous popes have done, neutralize the dark powers that gave birth to it?

In reality, this question is the same one we need to ask when Christians set out to Christianize other activities that have roots in the occult, such as Yoga, Reiki, non-biblical meditation, contemplative or centering prayer, the Enneagram, mindfulness and a host of other activities that have become popular in many churches.

Given the possibility that such things could be dangerous and

might open us up to demonic influences, why take the chance? It's similar to an argument against those who support abortion. Since there is a possibility that it is a human life, even from conception, why on earth would you even consider abortion? It's the potential consequences that make "saying no" the best option.

Especially compelling are the strong warnings against any participation by former Satanists—people who are very familiar with the demonic realm and how it operates in relation to Halloween. I personally think it wise to heed their counsel. Particularly compelling is former Satanist, Steven Bancarz' new book, *The Second Coming of the New Age*, and his very strong warning to believers *not* to engage in Halloween in any form or fashion.

It's quite possible that people in Groups 1 and 2 haven't encountered or engaged in the things of the occult. They may have never experienced demonic power and felt its chilling, evil presence. In making their decision about Halloween, they may be operating with one hand tied behind their back. Although their position may be wise according to the information they have, perhaps they need more information.

When I was at the end of my acting career in Hollywood, the Halloween film was my final role. Many of my closest friends were involved in making it and I had a great time working with them. There was no sense of foreboding on the set, no powers of darkness anywhere as far as I could tell. No one thought that the film would amount to anything—just another B movie.

I was heavily demonized long before doing the film. Like the demoniac in the Bible, I would rove the Hollywood Hills unclothed early in the morning, darting from bush to bush. When I'd look in a mirror, demonic eyes looked back at me. But when I met God a year later, the first order of business on God's agenda was to deliver me from about a dozen demonic presences. It took about a week, but when it was over, I felt

light as a feather and freed from the dark oppression that had kept me in bondage.

Then as I grew in Christ at John Wimber's church, I saw others find deliverance from demonic possession and oppression. At one conference I witnessed a man slithering on the floor in a way that was impossible for the human body to achieve. He was seriously possessed, and I was thoroughly terrified. More mature believers than I surrounded him and cast the demons out of him, after which, he was led to the Lord.

So the demonic is very real, even in our day. I've experienced it on the inside and the outside and it is nothing to play with. Yes, with the Holy Spirit, you have more power and can see the devil overcome in the name of Jesus. But to willingly enter the devil's dark territory is unthinkable to me. It enables Satan to take ground in your life and opens you up to great deception.

The fact that few people seem to suffer such consequences as a result of their participation in Halloween does not mean it isn't a serious threat. Although demons cannot possess a believer, we still possess a free will. If we enter territory controlled by the demonic realm, even innocently, or out of the darkness that remains in our hearts, they can take advantage of our naive actions.

It appears to me that some demons are better at their job than others, just like humans, which might explain why demonic oppression (demonization) sometimes occurs and sometimes doesn't. But why take the chance?

Why not ask yourself "What would Jesus do?" Would He have adopted a holiday for Molech or Baal and Christianized it? I don't think so. He might visit people entrapped by the powers of darkness, but participate in their celebrations, I think not.

Ultimately, as the Billy Graham organization notes on their

website: "Christian participation in Halloween is a matter of conscience before God." However, it is something that should be given serious thought and prayer lest we end up living by the slogan of Wiccans and other Satanists, "Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law." {eo}

Dr. David Kyle Foster is the author of *Transformed Into His Image, Love Hunger and Sexual Healing* and is the founder/director of *Mastering Life Ministries* (). A major revision and expansion of *Sexual Healing* (The Sexual Healing Reference Edition) is slated for publication in November of 2018.