

Is Halloween OK for the Christian Family?

I've had many discussions, friendly debates and concerns as I've raised three kids through the Halloween season for over 25 years. It's taboo in some corners of the evangelical world and totally acceptable in others. Some families are incredibly strict and others very permissive, but what's the "best" option for your family this Halloween?

It's clear that within the faith community, Halloween has two polarizing factions, two distinct viewpoints on the issue of Christians celebrating this obviously pagan holiday for themselves. Like Republicans and Democrats both claiming to love Christ, these two groups rarely agree on anything or anyone anyway. Halloween is just an example of the ongoing dichotomy in the body of Christ. Rifts of opinion that began with the Pharisees and Sadducees are still happening in our day, and we know how much Jesus resented those guys, so let's keep things in some perspective as we process the options on the table:

1. Halloween is a holiday to be avoided due to its dark influences and pagan origins. No trick-or-treating, it's a satanic celebration that the church and Christians should avoid at all costs.

2. Halloween is OK. After all, it's no different than Christmas or Easter in that they too have pagan origins in their history but are observed by most Christians for the redeemed value and purpose intertwined within those holidays. Trick-or-treating is allowed and permissible provided you educate your kids on what you as a family believe.

I respect both positions on this and recognize that many families have chosen to avoid or skip Halloween out of concern

for the position of point No. 1. I'm not providing this article to push one agenda over another, only to inform and educate everyone on the subject at hand.

I've read the histories, listened to the arguments from significant leaders on both sides of this, and know of those who push for the complete separation of the church and the secular society. Contrasted passionately are those who insist that God would want us to be engaged with and interactive in our communities in these annual festivities, giving every opportunity to grow relationships and even share one's faith in the process. Both sides have definite issues that make sense, each with their own reasons to bolster their positions, but neither has gained the clarity of conviction to convince me to join them on the edges.

Here's where I've landed: If you allow your 6-year-old to dress up as Peter Pan and grab Twix bars from the neighbor's house while screaming gleefully to the next house to score some sour, gummy, corn syrup goo, it's truly a matter of context and perspective. I don't believe it's a make-or-break spiritual decision as a parent.

I'm not nearly as concerned about the sugar rush and pagan holiday as I am for those who allow our kids to consume an average of nine hours of media per day* without batting an eye. If that's true, it suggests the values of our faith are under a subtler attack than the dangers of Halloween, and the risks of trick-or-treating have become a truly moot point.

If celebrating Halloween creates the space in your life to interact with and enjoy one another's company as a family, to draw closer together with each other and your neighbor, then I'm having a hard time finding reasons to "not" do that. For me, I believe if you start down this road of cultural avoidance, it ends badly for the Christian family in the end.

Personally, I believe that non-essential issues like this

should settle into a moderated position of recognizing and respecting both ends of the debate and landing somewhere firmly in the middle of it. Each of us as parents will have to give an accounting to God for our actions, take these concerns to Him and ask the Holy Spirit to guide your decision this fall.

Be safe this year with your kids if you do decide to get out and about with the little ones. Be aware of the issues and respectfully consider the concerns of your conservative Christian counterparts. And if you choose to celebrate the sugar fest, then filter the messages of Halloween as you would any other secular observance or celebration for your kids, and that includes the Superbowl halftime show!

Peace out and take it easy on those “snack size” candy bars ... they do add up!

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