

It's OK for Christians to Enjoy Halloween

We've all done it. Your kids have scored about 12 pounds of candy over Halloween and they think they've hidden it well. But at some point you, as an adult who can very easily go to the store and buy your own candy, sneak into their room while they're sleeping and pull out your favorites.

When they notice the next day (and believe me, they'll notice) you try to tell them you only took candy you knew they wouldn't like. It doesn't work. But you don't care. Because this time of year means everyone becomes a candy obsessed kid again.

Let me just begin by saying that I realize that some people feel a strong conviction to not celebrate Halloween. That's cool. I respect your convictions.

But quite often I hear of Christians who have no such convictions feeling pressure to do the same. And I wanted to write this to show that there may be another viewpoint for Halloween that is not only valid, but may be even biblical. We don't need any more faith bullies.

We do need people who can love each other even when they disagree. And while I have a feeling a lot of people are going to disagree with me, I'll try my best to explain why I believe it's OK for Christians to enjoy Halloween.

When I was growing up, my family didn't celebrate Halloween.

My parents reluctantly allowed me to go to a friend's house across town to trick-or-treat because I was a kid and candy was my love language, but when I got home I distinctly remember the porch light being turned off and the door locked. It was our way of saying that we were Christians and we did

not support this, the devil's holiday. And I didn't really care because I was a kid and I had my candy. But as I grew older, I began to see that this day is a tough one for a lot of Christians to reconcile.

There are really two ways to view Halloween if you're a Christian.

1. It's a night dedicated to glorifying the devil and all things evil. Witches, ghosts, and frightening things are the antithesis of God's kingdom, therefore we should stay as far away from them as possible. But because it's a holiday (and we Americans really like our holidays) and the kids are begging for candy, we'll throw a "harvest party" instead. That way we can still celebrate Halloween without celebrating Halloween.

2. It's a holiday and as long as you're not celebrating the demonic but just having fun, it's not a big deal. I can enjoy dressing up and getting/giving candy without being a Satan worshiper. Everyone just needs to chill out.

Obviously these are oversimplifications and people fall along all different aspects of these spectrums, but hopefully you get my point. But I would contend that there are two other ways to view Halloween that hardly anyone talks about, and how you approach these viewpoints will in many ways color your take on Halloween entirely.

It has to do with whether or not you believe Halloween is a predominantly spiritual or cultural holiday.

If you hate Halloween, chances are you view it almost entirely through the lens of a spiritual holiday. To you, the witches and goblins and spiders and ghosts represent a deeper spiritual reality—that darkness in the world is real and the demonic is not something to be made into plastic and silicone.

You reject the day because you don't want to associate with something that is, below the surface, celebrating evil. You

have issues with the origins of the day, the spirit of the day, or whatever, and you figure it's just best to ignore it completely. And you probably see fellow Christians who like it as "playing with fire" in a sense because they don't understand what they're dealing with.

If you enjoy Halloween, chances are you view it almost entirely as a cultural holiday. Sure there are spiders and cobwebs and ghosts, but it's more of a carnival feel than a spiritual one. You probably get annoyed by the over-spiritualization of the people who don't like it, because to you it's just a fun night to be out with the neighbors, dress your kids up, and get and give candy.

You had fun participating as a kid, and that's all it really is to you, an enjoyable event shared by all. Sure there may be a few neighbors who go overboard, but you just skip those houses and as long as you look out for your kiddos, everyone can have a great time.

More than anything, the spiritual versus cultural viewpoint is the crux of the disagreement between Christians who do and don't celebrate the holiday. And while I fall more in line with it being a cultural holiday, I think there are a few things that the spiritual holiday camp might want to consider before they once again ignore the day completely.

Halloween is literally the one day of the year that an entire neighborhood will abandon its walled fortresses of insulation and, for once, hang out together. This seems to be the very thing so many Christians long for, yet on the one night it happens we lock our doors and turn off our lights because we don't approve of the spirit behind whatever it is they're doing.

Never mind that for the vast majority of people walking around outside, Halloween is just a fun reason to get out, hang out, and dress the kids up—we've heard that Satanists revere this

day more than any other and therefore it is inherently bad and we must do our Christian duty and shun the day entirely. Meanwhile the world continues to spin and everyone else has a good time, and you lose another chance to talk to someone living right next to you.

There is also another thought process among Christians that I find strange, and that is the notion that somehow if you are in proximity of something that is “evil”, the evilness of that something is going to jump on you and somehow taint you.

I remember coming back from various trips filming for my movies, and I would tell people about how we filmed with witch doctors or in occult situations, and how it was obvious that those people were actively trying to curse us or mess with us spiritually.

But of course God overcame all and did a wondrous work while we filmed. And instead of celebrating the power and wonder of God, all they wanted to do was make sure they prayed to “get any critters off” me that might have attached themselves to us while we were there. But of course I didn’t have any “critters” on me because I have the light of the world inside of me, and light drives away darkness.

What you believe will always be your reality. So if you think that the devil is going to jump on you, then you believe that he is in some situations stronger than God’s protection, and, well, yeah, he’s probably going to jump on you. But if you know the God inside of you has already conquered the world, then you will be a terror to darkness wherever you go.

We are often quick to impose the response of Jesus’ admonition to “be in the world but not of it” to situations like Halloween. But I don’t think Jesus was talking about not engaging with the world on its own terms, because that is precisely what He did all the time. He would engage the biggest sinners of his day in their own homes or on their own

turf, and whenever he encountered the demonic He would shoo it away like a pesky fly. The darkness was never his focus; people were.

At the end of the day, I realize that everyone has different reasons for doing or not doing something, and I respect everyone's decisions based on their own conscience. But if you are avoiding something out of fear or stubborn bias, I would encourage you to prayerfully ask God about your conviction.

Is it truly from Him, or might it be from your own upbringing or fears placed on you by others? For some who have come out of extremely dark places, there is a trigger on this night that is probably best left alone. But for many Christians, we consider our separation from the rest of society who needs Jesus as a kind of badge of honor, when in reality it's just Christians acting like a bunch of weirdos in the eyes of the very world we're called to reach.

We recently moved to Greenville, South Carolina, and my wife and I got into a discussion with a friend of ours. The subject of Halloween came up and he mentioned that they didn't really celebrate it, but did the whole Harvest Festival thing at church instead.

But when he learned that it was something our family enjoyed, he did what very few people do: he said that if it meant a lot to us, then he wanted to join us trick-or-treating this year. It was an act of love that said, "If this means something to you, then I want to try to learn why and be your friend even if I don't understand it all." And it mirrored a larger perspective of what we are called to as Christians. It isn't always about "right or wrong", it's about people. It's about displaying His love on the earth to them. Love is active, not passive. It does not shrink back, but is always advancing, never retreating. It doesn't hide to protect itself, but risks itself and engages with others. It is always other focused.

If you still need a spiritual reason to engage in Halloween, how about this: instead of shutting your doors and turning off your lights, join the rest of your neighborhood as a normal person, and each house your children go up to, say a silent prayer for the people there.

Pray for your neighbors. Bless them. Bless each child who comes to your door dressed like a princess or a superhero or a zombie. It's the one day of the year where children who need Jesus will actually be knocking on YOUR door. The least we can do is provide them with the best candy in the neighborhood and a prayer or blessing that no one else may ever give them.

We're not called to run from Halloween. We're called to redeem it.

**To find out more about Darren's films, or to order his brand new movie, Holy Ghost Reborn, visit .*