

Avoiding the ‘Dark Side’—And Not Just on Halloween

Have you noticed that, even in the middle of an epidemic, our culture is still fascinated with death, demons and things which go “bump” in the night?

I say that because I’m again seeing sad and bizarre decorations around homes and public places glorifying the “dark side.” And retail stores are again obliging (or is it leading?) these disturbing distractions among us, at this season.

Some are even drawn into experimentation with the “dark side” and innocently enticed by fantasy games or even séances, which claim to produce an actual dialogue with the dead. These are dark and dangerous practices known as necromancy or sorcery and are forbidden in the Bible, as acts of witchcraft or black magic.

Even celebrities and well-known politicians have been known to dabble in these “dark side” activities. If the supposed dialogue with the dead was real, they were actually talking to demons!

The apostle Paul told the Ephesians to be careful and not to “give place to the devil” (Eph. 4:27). A few verses later, he warned believers to “not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, in whom you are sealed for the day of redemption” (v. 30). Grieve means to cause injury or distress. The Holy Spirit will let us know if we have caused spiritual distress by our sin or disobedience—even walking too close to the “dark side.”

Pastor Jack Hayford notes in his *Spirit-Filled Life Study Bible* at verse 27 that “the Greek word for place (*topos*) emphasizes that believers can actually give ground in their lives to satanic control. This is a warning against

theologized suppositions that argue against the possibility that demonic vexing or oppression may succeed with Christians. But the surrounding commands balance the issue (v. 17; 5:14) making clear that responsible believers cannot glibly blame the devil for sin they yield to in carnal disobedience."

Black Magic, séances and certain cultural observances (like the Central Amerian/Mayan *Dia de Los Muertos*) are not the only spiritual dangers to avoid. The darkness of false religions has nothing to teach the light. Other religions are designed to deceive people and lead them into spiritual darkness. We can learn enough about other religions so we can witness to them more effectively but don't get caught in a "quid pro quo" relationship: "I'll visit your church if you'll visit mine." Jesus warned us not to fall for false religions, their nonbiblical deceptions nor distractions (see Matt. 24:4-5).

In Ephesians 5:6-8, Paul commands us to "Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them. For you were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord."

Paul goes on to urge us to walk in love, in light and in wisdom. Since we are, in fact, now "children of light" (5:8), we should have "no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them, for it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret" (vv. 11-13). We need to be wise, learn the will of the Lord and live in that light (vv. 14-17.)

Finally, in the first epistle from the apostle John, we learn "If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

Hallelujah! {eo}

Gary Curtis served in full-time ministry for 50 years, the

last 27 years of which he was part of the pastoral staff of The Church on The Way, the Van Nuys' California Foursquare church. Now retired, Gary continues to write a weekly blog at and frequent articles for digital and print platforms. Gary and his wife live in Southern California and have two married daughters and five grandchildren.