Should Christians Celebrate Halloween?

by Debra J. Hicks

Please check all that apply. This year for Halloween, I'll probably:
1) Dress the little ones up in costumes and escort them around our neighborhood to collect candy.
2) Check out the local haunted house.
3) Get together with some buddies to watch a scary movie.
4) Dress up in a devil suit and scare the neighborhood kids that knock on the front door.
5) Turn off the porch light and hope nobody finds me eating the three bags of Snickers bars I bought for trick-or-treaters.

Most people see nothing wrong with the activities listed above. They consider Halloween festivities to be a harmless way for their children to have an evening of "fantasy and fun."

But does this standard hold true for Christians? Is dressing up like ghosts, goblins, and witches really "no big deal"? Or is it glorifying and empowering Satan?

If we have truly committed our hearts and our lives to Christ, we will set ourselves apart as people who seek to reflect God's goodness and love to the world. Because we become like the things we behold, the apostle Paul in Philippians 4:8 counsels Christians to think deeply about-and to continually fill our minds with-what is good. A careful, honest look at Halloween reveals little or nothing that is good. Instead, it is a day that points toward Satanism, fear, and gluttony.

"For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial?" (2 Corinthians 6:14-15, NIV).

Although the word Halloween means "holy or hallowed evening," history shows that nothing could be further from the truth. Halloween is clearly a relic of pagan times, and it has never reflected true Christian virtues.

The customs connected with Halloween are most commonly traced to a festival celebrated by the Druids-priests of the Celtic tribes that occupied northern and western Europe. This celebration, which dates back several centuries before Christ, began each year on October 31 and was called the festival of Samhain, the lord of death.

As part of their worship of Samhain, the Druid priests built huge bonfires on which both animals and humans were sacrificed. This barbaric practice continued openly for hundreds of years, until Rome conquered Britain and outlawed it.

Years passed, and Rome continued to conquer new territory and increase in power. The people of each conquered nation were forced not only to become Roman citizens, but also to become members of the Roman church. As you can imagine, these new "converts" cared little about Christianity and clung tenaciously to their cherished pagan practices.

So, since the Roman church was unable to get people to abandon their heathen festivals, it decided to "sanctify" some of them. The Druids' celebration in honor of the lord of death thus became All Saints' Day, which was to be observed by all churches. Officially, it was proclaimed a day to honor all the saints who had died, known or

unknown. But in practice, it remained what it had always been-a pagan celebration of the "Day of the Dead."

Throughout its history, Halloween has been thought of as the time when supernatural forces prevail. Anton LaVey, author of "The Satanic Bible" and high priest of the Church of Satan, says that Satanists consider Halloween the most important day of the year. He says that on this night, satanic, occult, and witchcraft power are at their highest potency level, and that any witch or occultist who has been having difficulty with a spell or curse can usually achieve success on October 31st because Satan and his powers are at their best that night.

Divination, or fortune telling, is also believed to reach its highest powers on Halloween, as people are eager to learn what might happen to them in the upcoming year. Even today, predictions of leading psychics and astrologers are generally released about the time of Halloween.

Clearly, the rites and symbols of this holiday reveal that it is still a day that glorifies Satan. Look around you. Though October 31 is still a month away, you can probably see evidences that Halloween is approaching. Pictures of ghosts, goblins, witches, skeletons, and devil-faced pumpkins appear on store windows everywhere. Horror movies are promoted on television and in the theaters, and most bookstores give prominent attention to books dealing with death and the occult.

As Christians, we are not to associate with the things of Satan. Christ Himself said, "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other" (Matthew 6:24).

"For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (2 Timothy 1:7).

Since its beginning, the festival of Halloween has played upon people's fears. The Celtic people believed that on the night of October 31, demons, witches, and the spirits of all those who had died within the past year roamed about freely. Most people were afraid to leave their homes on this night. Those who absolutely had to go out wore grotesque masks and terrifying costumes. They reasoned that if they looked horrible enough, the spirits would think they were one of them and would do them no harm!

Fear is a big part of modern Halloween celebrations, as well. Spooky decorations, horror movies, and haunted houses make a very real impression on little children. Is there any wonder so many youth have nightmares or are afraid to be alone in the dark? Satan delights in filling people's minds with thoughts of fear, death, and destruction. It is a tactic he has used for centuries to keep mankind under his control.

God, on the other hand, longs to give His children peace. He doesn't want us to be paralyzed by our fears. In fact, the Bible says that Christ died "that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Hebrews 2:15, NKJV).

"Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31, NKJV).

Several days before their festival began, the Druid priests would go from house to house demanding food or other items they would use in their worship of Samhain, the lord of death. If a villager refused to give them what they wanted, the priest would put a

demonic curse on the home. It was no idle threat, either. Someone from that house usually died within the year. It is from this abominable practice that our present-day "trick-or-treat" custom evolved.

While it is true that trick-or-treat is no longer primarily about curses, it is about gluttony. Children go from house to house, filling grocery bags full of candy and then returning home to feast on their great treasure. Often, those who stay at home to hand out the candy consume great amounts of it themselves!

Even this element of Halloween, which in comparison might seem harmless, does nothing to glorify God. The Bible says that the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. We should not be polluting that temple with food that clouds our perceptions and draws us away from God.

"Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (Ephesians 5:11).

Satan is no doubt jubilant that such a large portion of this "Christian nation" views a holiday in his honor as something that is harmless fun. Could it be that by our carelessness, we are contributing to the extraordinary power Satan seems to have on October 31?

No matter how fun or exciting it may seem, Halloween is no celebration for a Christian. If we truly seek to glorify God, then how can we devote one day of the year to worshipping Satan? We can't.

The Bible says, "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9)