

Who STOLE Halloween?

I remember as a young person the fun of Hallowe'en. At our church we had a tunnel running from the basement of the church to a house used for extra Sunday school space. During the month of October the youth group spent hours fixing up this damp and eerie tunnel into a haunted house. For young, giggly girls of about twelve or thirteen, the requisite cold spaghetti (guts) and slimy, peeled grapes (eyeballs—who peeled all those grapes, anyway?) produced screams and shudders. As we wended our way along the tunnel, we saw in a corner a "dead" person hanging from a noose who let loose with a groan as we passed. (One year I got to be the hanging "victim").

Thrills and chills were our reward for the trek through the ghostly tunnel. But it was a bonding experience for the youth of the church and after everyone finally escaped from the tunnel, we gathered around for cider and doughnuts and conversation about God with our youth leader.

Hallowe'en also brought with it the fun of dressing up in costume. We always cobbled together our own from ours and our parents' wardrobes. I remember one year as a child I went out as a gypsy. I piled on an assortment of necklaces around my neck but wore Mason jar lid rings for bracelets and earrings. I was a sight! Our children trick-or-treated each year and what a fun time the whole family had as we walked around our neighborhood greeting other strangely dressed characters as the kids begged for treats.

Somewhere along the way, this fun holiday seems to have been usurped by the devil himself and I'm wondering why that's the case. Hallowe'en, of course, goes back to pagan times when the Celts designated November 1st as the beginning of the New Year and the coming of winter. The night before the new year they celebrated the festival of Samhain (sōwēn), Lord of the Dead. When the Romans, who were Catholic, conquered the Celts and Christianized them, the Romans added some of their own traditions such as bobbing for apples and drinking cider. In 835, Pope Gregory IV moved the celebration for all the martyrs (later all saints) from May 13 to November 1st. The night before became known as All Hallow's Eve or 'holy evening.' Eventually the name shortened to Hallowe'en. Being a superstitious lot back then the Catholics felt it necessary on that evening to scare away satanic influences which is where the costumes come in. Interestingly enough, the end result of this exercise was they faced their fears and demons. Not a bad idea when you think about it.

**As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you.
Now remain in my love. John 15:9**

I've examined the Bible closely and don't find anything there for or against Hallowe'en. There are warnings about divination, witchcraft, and demonic activity, certainly, but it would seem to me that we of the Christian community could have some fun on this day without compromising our beliefs. There are quite a few churches that provide alternate activities on Hallowe'en to take the place of traditional activities. I can't help but wonder why: if the trick-or-treating, pretending to be someone else by wearing a funny costume and amateur haunted houses were not wrong just a few short years ago, why are they wrong today? Sometimes, and I'm maybe wrong about this, but it seems that some Christians work hard to squeeze all the fun out of life. As we follow the leading of the Holy Spirit, we find ourselves freer than we've ever been before not bound by superstition or man's rules. When we love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength and our neighbor as ourselves, Jesus said that we will never be led astray.

Don't get me wrong. My defense of Hallowe'en does not mean this holiday has a great deal of importance. I'm just wondering why, of late, it has become a forbidden holiday. Just a few further observations: As the Catholic Church changed the Pagan holiday of Samhain to Hallowe'en, they similarly modified other Pagan celebrations such as Christmas; and another thought, not so long ago movies were suspect and some churches had forbidden them. Then suddenly they were okay so Christians stream into the movie theaters at the same pace as non-Christians. Viewing many of these movies like the *Texas Chainsaw Massacres*, *Saw IV*, and *Chuckie*, etc., I believe, are far worse than donning a costume for Hallowe'en or darkening the door of a haunted house.

Do you suppose it's possible that we can enjoy the festivities of the day while giving God the glory? So, again, I ask the question: who stole Hallowe'en and why?



TEN THINGS IT TOOK ME ALMOST 50 YEARS TO LEARN

1. If you had to identify, in one word, the reason why the human race has not achieved and never will achieve its full potential, that word would be "meetings".
2. There is a very fine line between "hobby" and "mental illness".
3. People who want to share their religious views with you almost never want you to share yours with them.
4. You should not confuse your career with your life.
5. Never lick a steak knife.
6. The most destructive force in the universe is gossip.
7. You will never find anybody who can give you a clear and compelling reason why we observe daylight savings time.
8. Never be afraid to try something new. Remember that a lone amateur built the Ark. A large group of professionals build the Titanic.
9. The person who is nice to you but rude to the waiter is not a nice person. (This is very important. Pay attention. It never fails.)
10. Your true friends love you anyway.



WHEN YOUR HUT'S ON FIRE

The only survivor of a shipwreck washed up on a small uninhabited island. He prayed feverishly for God to rescue him. Every day he scanned the horizon for help, but none came. Exhausted, he eventually managed to build a little hut out of driftwood to protect himself from the elements and to store his few possessions.

One day, after scavenging for food, he arrived home to find his little hut in flames, with smoke rolling up to the sky. He felt the worst had happened, and everything was lost. Stunned with disbelief, grief and anger, he cried out, "God! How could you do this to me?"

Early the next day, he was awakened by the sound of a ship approaching the island! It had come to rescue him!

"How did you know I was here?" he asked the weary man of his rescuers.

"We saw your smoke signal," they replied.
The Moral of the Story: It's easy to get discouraged when things are going bad but we shouldn't lose heart, because God is at work in our lives, even in the midst of our pain and suffering. Remember that the next time your little hut seems to be burning to the ground.

It just may be a smoke signal that summons the Grace of God.



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