

Halloween

BE THE LIGHT

Featuring:

Where does Halloween come from?

Should Christians celebrate Halloween?

Why we shouldn't be afraid of the dark

Ideas to impact your community



Should Christians celebrate Halloween?

I'm going to show my age now, but when I was a kid, Halloween just wasn't a big deal. I grew up in a Christian home, and for us Halloween was something we definitely shunned and closed the door on. But, now it is big and ever increasing business.

According to the trend surveyor Mintel in 2016 over £300m was spent on Halloween and 40% of

the population bought a Halloween related product.

Team that with the increasing popularity of vampire and zombie related TV shows and literature and this is a trend that Christians can no longer hide from.

So, where does Halloween actually come from? Is it something to take a stand against? What should we do

when it comes to Halloween?

Surprisingly, Halloween is actually incredibly Christian in it's origin!

Halloween is actually incredibly Christian in it's origin

The church festival of All Hallows (Hallowmass, All Saints' Day) remembered those who had died. It was a



time to celebrate heroes of the faith, and could include people dressing as those historic heroes. You can still see this reflected in the word 'Halloween'. 'Hallow' meaning to honour or praise, such as 'Hallowed be your name...' and 'ween' a derivative for evening or night. Literally 'a night for honour'. Historically it was a major Catholic festival on par with Christmas and Easter.

The Reformation of C16th denounced it because of its links with 'purgatory' and 'prayers for the dead' and so outside more traditional Catholic circles it rarely has significance now in church life.

However, somewhere along the way this celebration of heroes has been twisted to focus more on death and all things spooky and scary.

Arguably, much of this isn't actually through the promotion of the Occult and a darker focus on Satan and demons, it's actually through the subtle commercialisation of Halloween and its normalisation in culture.

Much of the growth of Halloween has nothing to do with the occult, but subtle commercialisation

Many people engage with Halloween with little if any understanding of its heritage - it is simply what we do. A first generation might reject a new culture practice, the next allow it, and the third simply assume it as normal.

Where does that leave Christians? Firstly, who better than those that know Jesus to celebrate Halloween?

Acknowledging that death is real and certain, but also knowing that we have a God who conquers death and is the ultimate light of the world.

When the light of Jesus is held up against the dark it only shines brighter!!

Whatever you choose to do this Halloween, don't be afraid of the dark! *"For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

Romans 8:38-39





Reject, Receive or Redeem?

Jesus approached culture in three ways that should help us approach Halloween.

REJECT:

There is plenty to reject at Halloween: scaring each other witless; intimidating the vulnerable; kids high on sugar charging around dark streets.

Jesus rejected loving money over God (Mark 11:15-17) and self-righteous religion (Mark 12:38-40) as simply not options. This is a one approach - to simply say there is nothing here that is good.

However a blanket rejection of everything can often lead to an unthinking or lazy approach. If we go too far this way and we become sectarian, self-righteous, legalistic and judgemental, and end up living in a religious ghetto having no impact on culture or society.

RECEIVE:

Jesus accepted his birth, being a child, dysfunctional family life, manual and intellectual work, friendship and much more. This approach often gives dignity and

purpose to the ordinary of life.

However 'receiving' culture can often be another unthinking or lazy approach and we can become naive, undiscerning, lacking wisdom, and indistinct from anyone and everyone else. Simply receiving everything without question.

REDEEM:

Jesus' general and dominant response was to redeem and restore: whether that was people or sickness or cultural practices. It is the heart of the cross. This approach seeks to be a transforming agent within culture - finding, cultivating and creating good in situations that might seem bleak.

All three are legitimate Christian responses dependent on our own experience, heritage, and relationships.

Different Christians will respond differently to the same situation but both still be right! But, are there opportunities for all of us to glorify God this Halloween? Here are some ideas...

REDEEM

The cheerful door opener

- The easiest way to redeem Halloween is to cheerfully open your door to trick or treaters. These are almost always young children who are just enjoying a fun opportunity to dress up and eat lots of sweets!
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- Redeem this part of Halloween by making your house a welcome place of light, give generously, cheerfully and make use of some of the handouts we have available.
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- Why not.....
- Have a smiling pumpkin light your doorway, or carve a cross in one.
- Decorate the front of your house with fairy lights
- Open the door in costume (non spooky), funny glasses or hat
- Give sweets (or healthy treats!) out generously
- Give out some of the child appropriate Halloween flyers we have available



Redeem - The Light Party

Last year we cheerfully opened our door to trick or treaters (and there was a lot of them!). This year I wanted to take a bit more control over what Halloween might look like for our family. So, this year we, with two other families, are hosting our own take on a Halloween Party. What you could call a light party.

When I was a kid light parties were just for the Church kids so they didn't feel left out, this party is for our community because we want to 'be the light' in what is traditionally a time of darkness.

How will this be different?

- We will be taking the scary out, so nothing will be designed with blood and zombies, but bats and spiders are ok
- With as much light as possible, in the decorations, games and if we are brave enough the sparklers!
- No tricks, just treats
- No knocking on strangers doors, we are holding this outside our houses
- Superhero costumes and encouraging spook free dress up

How else can you redeem your Halloween or light party?

THE INVITES

Take the opportunity to explain very simply why you are choosing to do things slightly different and scare free.

Not sure how to do this? Then why not make use of the invites we've designed (see page 6) and ask the office to edit them with your party time and location. To request this email info@thebeaconchurch.com

THE COSTUMES

Take the lead yourself in the spook free dress up. Why not go for a colourful wig, superhero costume or 70's dress up. Stay away from witches and zombie brides, but celebrate something happier and fun.



THE DECORATIONS

The key to a good light party, is well lots of lights in the darkness! Why not try saving your jam jars and putting battery operated fairy lights inside. Hunting down those IKEA tea lights or popping some paper lanterns over the lights. The lots of colourful options at poundland (perhaps avoiding the blood stained bandages), but you could take advantage of the silly string and colourful spiders webs.



Once the lights are sorted, then there's the pumpkins! Here the world is your oyster! Go for crosses, happy faces, minions, the death star! The only limit is your imagination - and perhaps your carving skills!



FOOD

Depending on the time of your party you might want to feed your guests. Keep it simple (hot dogs and donuts are always a winner). We are just giving away sweets as prizes, but if you'd like some healthier alternatives you could try this fruit kebab pumpkin head or draw faces on tangerines.



CRAFTS

For our party we are asking parents to bring along a pumpkin. This is very easy to do just don't forget lots of spoons for scooping out the inside and somewhere to put them - this can be messy. We've always found it helpful to get kids to draw the carving on first (bring out the sharpie pens) and supermarkets and wilkos do cheap pumpkin carving sets which work well.

GAMES

This is a great way to move away from trick or treat, but instead hand out sweets as game prizes and an opportunity to introduce lots of light into your party.

Why not try adapting some traditional games with glow sticks so that they can be played in the dark? You could try a ring toss, bowling, glow balloons or ball games. Then there's traditional Autumn games such as apple bobbing, jumping in leaf piles or if your very brave sparklers!



Glow bowling



Glow ring toss



Glow balloons



Make glow in the dark wiffle balls

Glow balls



THE GIVEAWAY

An obvious take away for the kids is lots of sweets! But, what about giving away a bag for sweet collection and possibly a small booklet about Halloween and how we want to transform it in to a celebration of light? We are currently getting hold of LOTS of just such booklets for you to give away whether at a light party or for trick or treaters. Register your interest at info@thebeaconchurch.com.

THE PREPARATION

Obviously there's food to buy, invites to give out and games to get ready, but don't forget to pray. This is an opportunity for you to 'shine' in your community (Phil 2:15) as we choose to 'be the light'.

"In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."
Matt 5:16.

Whether you choose to reject, receive or redeem Halloween - don't be afraid of the dark, for we know the KING of the light!

Be the light - Halloween

SAMPLE INVITES



Why scare free? As parents we wanted to steer our kids away from the darker elements of Halloween, but still let them enjoy the sweets & dress up. Expect lots of games, pumpkin carving and fun, but no nightmares!



Why light party? As parents we wanted to steer our kids away from the darker elements of Halloween, but still let them enjoy the sweets & dress up. Expect lots of games, pumpkin carving and fun, but no nightmares!