A Christian Response to Halloween

Every October, schools and communities in the US decorate and prepare for Halloween. How should Christians understand and respond to these traditions of trick-or-treating, carving pumpkins, costume parties, and haunted house decorations?

Sincere believers can differ on their views of Halloween. Some see the ghoulish decor and are concerned with this event's connection with the occult. Others consider the holiday a cultural event and within the realm of their freedom in Christ.

It is instructive for us to consider how the early church dealt with eating meat sacrificed to idols (1 Cor 8:1-13). For some it was a stumbling block they refused to participate in. For others, it did not trouble them because the participants recognized that the idols held no significance, and they were not engaging in pagan worship. Either way, always remember that God should be honored in all that we do, and we should not be judgmental or become a stumbling block to others.

Each family needs to discern their conviction and do what honors God and is best for their children. Depending on their children's age and maturity level, parents should take the time to talk to their children about their viewpoints. For parents who believe Halloween activities are not helpful and do not contribute to spiritual growth, tell your children why you believe there are better alternatives to participation in those events. For parents who do not believe Halloween activities to be an issue, teach your children how to have spiritual conversations that point friends back to Christ. Focusonthefamily.com has a number of good articles for you to consider.

In the end, it is important for all of us to recognize that godly Christians may have different responses to Halloween, and each must be respected.
What are some practical ways we can do this while maintaining unity in the body of Christ?

1) **Non-Halloween Events.** For those who don't want to participate in trick-or-treating, consider alternatives such as a Christian church fall festival. This way, your child will have something to talk about with his/her friends. It is also a great opportunity to invite your child's friends to attend alternative events together.

2) **Evangelical Opportunities.** If you or your children plan to participate in school/office/neighborhood Halloween activities, avoid occult-themed costumes. Instead of trick-or-treating, you can collect canned goods for homeless shelters or other Christian ministries. Halloween gives an excellent opportunity to meet and engage your neighbors on spiritual questions. Use this time to share your faith with others and point them to Christ.

3) **Awareness of overzealous reactions to Halloween.** Just because a poster/display at the supermarket has a jack-o-lantern doesn't mean it is satanic. Overreaction and a judgmental spirit can often stumble others and keep them from coming to know God.

4) **Teaching Moments.** Monitor your children's media intake during this time of year. If your child is frightened by TV programs, movies, or ads, use them as opportunities to talk about God and His power. Teach your children to pray and take confidence in God, who is infinitely more powerful than the evil one.

5) **Gospel Treats.** Prepare gospel tracts or attach bible verses to candy for trick-or-treaters visiting your house. Do this with your child and pray together for the trick-or-treaters.

6) **Respect and Sensitivity.** For those who believe in exercising their freedom in Christ and participating in Halloween, be sensitive to those choosing not to participate at all. Those familiar with idol-worshipping cultures have rightful concerns regarding Halloween. Be thoughtful in your online postings so that in exercising your freedom, you do not stumble your brothers and sisters in Christ.