

Sessions – Halloween

<http://www.myfishbites.com/sessions-halloween.php>

Halloween can be a very real danger to children and young people. Some info I have gathered to help you..

One year we had what the organisers called a 'Light Party' which is basically a bunch of food and fun for children in mainly Years 4 through 8 in the church and local community. There were disco lights, fun things, and young people (mainly Years 10 and over) will be helping to resource the night.

What We Did one year

On Halloween we actually asked our young people if they wanted to use some of the ideas [below](#) - like decorating cakes with messages etc. (my favourite being 'turn or burn' - thanks Jon!)

Anyway, we hit the local streets around church with 20 young people (12-19) and handed out loads of cakes and biscuits explaining we were from the local church, wanted to hand out positive stuff to people, that we thought Halloween was dodgy etc.

We prayed first then talked about what we could say, getting the young people to think about lines. We also talked about behaviour and attitude towards people, so we stood out and were different. As we were praying, an egg hit the window! Excellent, we thought as I legged it to get the culprit.

We went out in groups of 6 or 7 but quickly decided we needed to make 2 groups of 3 as I was with a bunch of 15-16 year-old lads who would intimidate people by the size of the group. Our group met with around 30 people - children, teenagers, parents and we handed out biscuits to a pretty positive, pleasantly surprised reaction.

What we did previously was to inform the police via the youth affairs officer what we were doing. One group was stopped by police who were amazed and said carry on.

We also encouraged local young people and children to a disco the local police had arranged in a tent in the local park. It was also a great time to chat with local teenagers we hadn't seen for a while.

People in the church were also asked by the Pastor to specifically pray for us as we did this. When we returned we had a debrief which was encouraging for the young people. Then we all went off to the disco!

What could you do? How about a Halloween outreach?!?

What can we do?

1. Get some of those small clear plastic click and shut bags and inside put a small flyer that just fits inside and also some sweets. Again, make the flyer funky with some Christian input on them. Then hand these out to those who ask for candy. Make the message simple. 'Jesus loves you' - 'God hates Halloween' - 'There's nothing cool about Halloween' - 'I'll give you sweets any night but Halloween' - 'Halloween sucks - try youth club on Thursday' or whatever!!!

2. What about using some of the candy with Bible verses on that you can get from the US. No idea if anyone imports it in the UK but pop down to your local Christian bookstore and ask.

3. Alternatively, make your own cakes and candy! Yep, get some cakes, biscuits, candy made and do them really well so they look real professional. Then get someone to write small Bible type phrases on them. When kids come to the door, hand them out instead of regular sweets!

4. Produce your own funky and easy to read flyers to hand to children and young people on the door. Because reading skills may not be very high - do visual drawings. Show Jesus winning against evil in a WWF ring or something similar. Get those arty people on the job!

5. Set up a 'neighbourhood watch' for elderly and vulnerable people in your area. Maybe the young people could help. Sit outside houses, give candy on behalf of the old people. Watch out for them. Do a walk around the neighbourhood, get others praying, hand out evangelistic tracts, flyers that are funky and easy to read or look at.

6. Get people to pray - pray for each other as well for protection - pray against the evil, for the protection of the vulnerable, for Halloween to fail, for heavy rain or snow, for shops not to be able to sell stock and so on!

7. Do an alternative event. alt.halloween or whatever funky name you can come up with. At least get your young people away from Halloween and try to get the local kids away too. You may need to keep events going until 10pm plus to maximise impact. Suggestions - inflatable night, a 'dress up as heavenly beings night', a meal, a prayer walk, a prayer and praise time (includes musical worship etc) and so on!

A quick history lesson..

1 Thessalonians 5.22 says that we should keep away from every kind of evil. But is Halloween evil, surely it's just a bit of fun?

Well, here's the history - October 31 is Halloween, the day before the Catholic/Christian festival of All Saints (or whatever you want to call it).

The ancient druids reckoned that on the evening of October 31, the 'lord of the dead' - Saman/Samhain - called forth evil spirits. The druids lit fires to keep these evil spirits away or to help the spirits find their way.

The ancient Celts saw October 31 as the last evening of the year, a time to look at the future. They believed that the spirits of dead people revisited their old earthly homes on the night. From these traditions we get the ideas about ghosts and witches appearing on Halloween.

The Romans had their own festival of the goddess of the fruits of the trees on November 1st. When they invaded Britain, they combined elements of this festival with Halloween. So from this we get things like apple bobbing (get apples out of water) and the idea of carving out pumpkins and putting candles inside.

The pranks that we see in the US especially and the UK, are all part of this. According to druidic tradition, if the dead approached your house, you would placate them by offering them a 'treat'. This is the history of trick and treat. The druids believed that the dead would wander the streets on October 31 evening, this is where the obsession with 'death' comes from. Witches were supposed to appear flying to the 'witches sabbaths' - itself a corruption of Biblical words.

If the pagans of the ancient day wanted to travel about on October 31, they had to dress up as a ghost, witch, demon or monster in order to blend in with the supposed real demons that travelled about on that night.

So... let's break it all down shall we:

1. The ancient Britons used to have festivals of 'fools' and other similar days. These were times where everything in society was turned upside down. For example, the village idiot would become Lord of the Manor, people made things upside down and so on.

In the Bible, we learn that Satan doesn't do anything new. He simply copies and inverts the Kingdom of God. So God's Kingdom has an order, so Satan copied it and so on. The danger with Halloween is immediately that it is a copy and an inversion of the natural order. So we need to be careful, we're on dodgy ground.

2. Some of the ideology comes from druids and Celts. A druid is a person who has the ancient Celtic religion of druidism. We laugh (well, I do) at the druids who turn up at Stonehenge every year but is it harmless fun? What is behind druidism?

First of all, they do not believe in the Lord God in heaven that we know to be the one true God. They were experts in astrology (itself wrong and occultic) and natural sciences and were described by

contemporaries as 'sorcerers', 'soothsayers' often with medical knowledge. They worshipped in groves of trees, with especially the oak tree being worshipped. Worse still was the druidic worship at special festivals that involved human sacrifice with victims being killed in torturous ways. They are invariably linked to witchcraft and the modern day Ancient Order of Druids.

So, we can see that druidism is linked to worshipping false gods, the occult, with human sacrifice and witchcraft. Not every druid would perhaps do these things but the history is one of satanic evil. The ancient Celts were associated with paganism, having no God/god.

3. We can also see that the day was intrinsically linked with evil spirits. As Christians we are well aware of the reality of evil spirits who are commanded by Satan. We see Jesus, Paul and others doing battle against demons and winning in the name of Jesus, the Lord of all. Today, we see again the rise of the demonic and the church will need to be increasingly equipped in the face of this in the world and in people's lives.

Now some more Bible stuff..

A leaflet by Russell K. Tardo has several other key features we need to note re. Halloween:

a. 'All Saints Day' (a celebration of dead Catholic saints who don't have their own day) was an attempt by the Catholic church to 'Christianize' the October 31 festivals. A good thing but the naming of the day derives from this pagan day.

b. The day does not glorify God. It glorifies Satan. It mimics the occult, the satanic, the evil. However, Paul tells us in Ephesians 5.1 to 'be followers, imitators of God.'

c. The Bible warns us against such practices. We are told 'not to give place, a footing to the devil' in Ephesians 4.27. 1 Peter 5.8 warns us that the devil prowls around trying to devour people. James 4.7 tells us to resist the devil and he will flee from you.

d. It treats the occult as harmless, which it clearly is not. Many ministers, ministries and Christians will testify to the destructive power of the occult. In Deuteronomy 18.9-12 the Lord tells Israel not to follow and be like the other nations. A parallel is that as Christians we too must stand out from the world as God has set us apart (sanctified us) with the blood of Jesus.

Deuteronomy warns us not to do hateful things - don't be part of sacrifices of your children, don't let anyone use magic or witchcraft (notice it says not only don't do these yourself, don't even let others do it), don't let people try to explain the meaning of signs (the Youth Bible

says this means things like astrology), don't let people control others with magic and don't let them be mediums or try to talk to the spirits of dead people. The Lord hates anyone who does these things. Very strong stuff. Nor does God deny these things exist. He does say these are evil in the eyes of God, keep well away.

Because the other nations did these things, God forced them out on behalf of Israel. God does the same today for us. We have been redeemed out of the hand of Satan (Ephesians 1.7), we are covered with the blood of Jesus (see Psalm 107.2, 1 John 1.7), Romans 5.9, Hebrews 13.12). Now we have authority and power invested in us through the name of Jesus (John 14.12). So be assured!

e. Halloween is the appearance of evil. As we started with - 1 Thessalonians 5.22 says 'stay away from everything (from all appearance of) evil.' Anything associated with Halloween is evil. So, the pumpkins carved out, the lanterns inside pumpkins, dressing up as ghouls and goblins, taking part in the direct Halloween festivities means you're on dodgy ground.

Let's be clear - Philippians 4.8-9 tells us to think about (and to do - faith without works is dead!) things that are: (in the words of The Message) - true, noble, reputable, authentic, compelling, gracious, the best not the worst, the beautiful not the ugly, things to praise not things to curse. Halloween doesn't fall under any of these categories.

Witches are very real as is the power of evil that opposes Jesus and his church. One person talks of meeting a witch on a plane with information about Christian leaders. This witch was fasting against Christians. Let's be clear here. We must get protected and covered in the blood of Jesus. Then get on the offensive to whatever level God calls us to. Let's also be clear. We do not want to go into this kind of thing unprotected. Be careful working with young people in this area. Some Christian work in these areas is so sensitive they are kept secret.

If followers of Jesus we need to be more committed to winning the spiritual battle than forces of darkness. Thing is, with Jesus, there really is no contest. Let's not forget that through the blood of Jesus on the cross we have the full victory already.

So what now?

Well, you've seen some of the suggestions at the top of the page. Remember that too much preaching, information and warnings can have the reverse effect on young people. We don't want to glorify evil so it seems cool. Don't overreact - get things in balance, present the facts prayerfully and do something more funky, something Spirit-filled and get people praying.

Remember that as this time approaches, we need to be aware of evil

stuff going on in our place where we live, nation, and world. Open our eyes Lord! Let's be careful and get prayer cover over all of us - don't underestimate the effects of evil. However, remember that God's power is much, much more powerful than anything else.

The Flipside

Some people believe that witchcraft is not all that active - but there are plenty of sites on the internet that don't hold up this claim. Others believe that we overestimate the whole thing about witchcraft and Harry Potter. What do you think?

Harry Potter and Shadowmancer

I've seen some of the Harry Potter movies but haven't read the books. I do know that the books become increasingly dark. I was recently watching one of the latest movies on TV when I felt a real stress about me. I turned over to another channel and felt the stress go away. So I feel that Harry Potter has a demonic influence. Harry Potter is set at a wizard/witch school. At the school there are the usual compliment of good and bad characters - here as witches and wizards. We see a book and movie full of powerful supernatural forces, witches, wizards, evil, spells, magic and trapped spirits/ghouls. We also see evil being overcome, hope, kindness, team work, fun and laughter.

Is this all a bit of fun or does it hide something more sinister? I guess we'll all take different opinions here. What I do know is that The Bible tells us to fill our heads with good stuff - what is Godly, admirable, noble, pure, spiritual. My question would be - is Harry Potter spiritual? Is it something we should be filling our heads with? I leave that to you.

Question - how can we harness what is evil and make it good? How can we make things right? After all it's the evil one who has turned God's kingdom and ideas upside down and created the world around us. How as Christians can we re-invert the world so it's the right way up again!?!

Harry Potter doesn't present us with good versus evil in a traditional sense but rather - good witches/wizards and bad witches/wizards. Question - is there ever such a thing as a 'good witch'. Jesus said that if people are not for him they are against him. We have no middle ground. The source of power that Harry Potter (as a so-called 'good' wizard) accesses is not the power of Jesus but another unknown power. So where does this unknown power come from? Are we taking this all too seriously anyway?

Over to you to discuss..

Shadowmancer - on the other hand is written by an Anglican Vicar called Reverend Graham Taylor. In this book we see the power of God overcome witchcraft. We find something similar in books like 'This Present Darkness.' In these kinds of books we clearly see God at work through his power and Spirit (though they are fictional). My guess would be that reading and then studying Shadowmancer would be a better way to discuss evil and God's victory over evil - during Halloween.

Interesting that the only negative reviews of Rev Graham Taylor's book are those who claim he is forcing his views of Christianity on them! I find it amusing that the same readers of Harry Potter don't direct allegations of pushing views of witchcraft against JK Rowling! Same in the world. Christians who recently wanted to help fund a school were criticised because they'd be teaching creationism and evolution ([click here](#)). Yet the same people won't criticise schools for teaching secularism (also a religion in many ways). Where God is involved, Satan will always try to stir opposition. Usually it ends up with God getting more glory, just like the death and resurrection of Jesus!