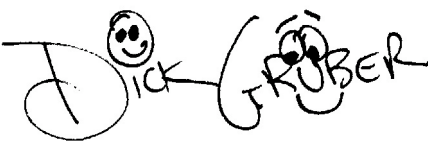


Hallo-What?



Ideas for impacting your neighbors on October 31

By 

Hallo-What?

As Halloween approaches, parents often ask me, “Should we participate in Halloween?” Others ask, “How can we impact our neighbors on this night, this year?”

In answer to the first question, I say follow your convictions. The words of Jesus found in Matthew 5:14-16 can give some direction in this. It reads, ¹⁴ "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."



The observance of Halloween has dubious beginnings at best. The celebration has progressed from its early superstitious roots to the costume and candy gathering event of today. Most children and families in our communities either do not know of its beginnings or in spite of this knowledge, choose to have fun in spite of past practices associated with this day.

Wearing a Costume?

Here are some guidelines to follow should your family and children choose to dress up this Halloween night.

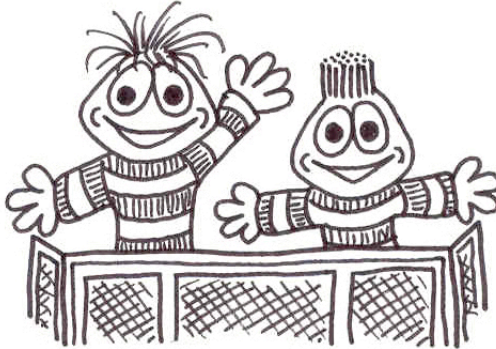
- As a believer, you want to do “everything as unto the Lord.” You also have a desire to honor and glorify your Savior in all that you do. In light of this, avoid scary, embarrassing, or disgusting costumes.
- Make certain that whatever the costume or make-up you look your best for Jesus. Make-up should be neat, clean, and safe. Avoid the thrown together or unkempt look.
- If you are walking the neighborhood include light colors in your costume. In this way, those driving can easily see and avoid hitting you.
- I recommend that you and/or your children can dress in three categories of costumes. These include:
 - Bible person, place, or thing
 - Historical figure, or
 - Clown/animal.
- Write and rehearse a short testimony that goes with your costume. That way when people acknowledge how cute or interesting you look, you can come back with a brief but poignant explanation of what or who you are giving the listener something eternal to think about.
- Have fun. Christians should be the example of joy at any season. Jesus was the kind of guy you would invite to a party. The wedding at Canaan is an example of this. So do what you can to show the joy of the Lord and the fun that a Christian can have.
- You may want to carry a Gospel tract with your costume. This can be given to those who show interest when you explain who or what you are.



Further thoughts

Churches have adapted to this night by hosting everything from “Trunk or Treat,” in the church parking lot to “Light the Night,” events in neighborhoods. Whether we throw a harvest party, or not, children will be combing their neighborhoods asking for a handout on Halloween night. Kids will dress in costumes as cute or scary as their parents allow while neighborhood homes will hand out everything from cheap penny candies to popcorn balls and peanut butter cups.

What is a “Christian” family to do? I’ve known some that turned out the lights and locked the doors. Again, I encourage you to act upon your convictions in this matter. If you choose to do nothing for children on Halloween, turn the light off on your porch so that passing children will not be disappointed when knocking on your unanswered door.



Halloween Outreach Guidelines

Here are a few simple guidelines for those who choose to bless children on Halloween.

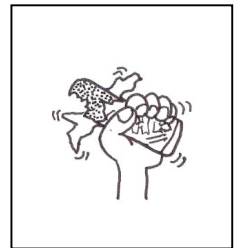
- Pray! Pray for your neighborhood, the children, parents, and strangers that will pass down your street. Pray for God’s anointing on neighboring churches that are hosting outreach events on this night. Pray that God will make you and your home a lighthouse in this darkened world.

Ideas for those who are simply handing out candy:

- At the least hand out extra candy and a Gospel tract. Bible book stores carry some good ones geared just to children on this day. Master reproducible artwork is provided with this writing. Make as many copies as you need. By handing out an extra portion of candy with the message, you are insuring that most children leaving your front step will read the tract.
- Smile, get happy, and hand out genuine compliments with the candy and tract. You want your neighbors to know that yours is a household that loves children. A kind word concerning a costume or behavior will go a long way with the child and their accompanying parent.
- Don’t be too in-your-face preachy. This is the only night all year on which children will come to your door asking for something good. Do not “scare” them off with obnoxious or offensive preaching delivered under the guise of witnessing. Jesus said, “Let the little children come.” He didn’t say, force them, scare them, or trick them into the treat of salvation.”
- You may also want to have some fun Christian children’s music playing on your front porch.
- Happy non-scary decorations on your lawn or porch can have a positive impact on your neighbors.
- Make certain that your sidewalk and porch are well lit and free of debris.

Ideas for those that want to do a little bit more:

- Set up a mini carnival on your driveway or front lawn. Remember, it's your party. You can do as much or as little as time and finances allow. Here some things you can do to set up a mini carnival atmosphere.
 - Set up one or two simple carnival games such as a bean bag toss or rubber duck race in a wash tub. Ideas for these can be found at these websites:
 - <http://www.smalltoys.com/page/st/CTGY/wholesale-carnival-supplies-prizes-novelties>
 - http://www.funattic.com/game_carnival.htm#anchor11
 - http://childparenting.about.com/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm?zi=1/XJ&sdn=childparenting&zu=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.fishersofkids.com%2Fgame_5.htm
 - Serve hot cider or chocolate to those coming to your house. This can be made on the spot or prepared ahead of time.
 - Some people have set up their BBQ and cooked hot dogs for the kids. Be sure to have your cooking area roped off so that children do not get burned on the BBQ. Set up a table with covering to hold condiments. If you want the dogs to be really fun, add food coloring to your ketchup or mustard. Include non-traditional items for the dogs like chocolate sprinkles, caramel syrup, or peanut butter and jelly.
 - Decorate with fun, non-scary decore. Balloons, pumpkins, and other fall type items can be displayed. Keep anything dangerous away from the kids.
 - Set up a TV and DVD/VCR with a fun kid's movie playing. Several chairs or hay bails can be spaced as seating for this.
 - Set up a covered table where children can make their own treats. Cookie decorating is probably the easiest make-your-own treat to set up. Sugar cookies can purchased at a local bakery. (People are less suspicious of store-bought food items.) The children can decorate these with colored frosting, sprinkles, or mini M&Ms.
 - Welcome every child as if he/she was Jesus Himself. Some kids will return to your event again and again throughout the evening. Love on them every time they arrive.
 - Prepare some treat bags ahead of time. These should include a large portion of candy and a Gospel tract.



Things to avoid

- Clowns or costumed characters in your yard will tend to scare off smaller children. If you must have one of these, make certain that he/she is neat, clean, and attractive, and has a human counterpart. Make sure that he/she allows children to approach him/her rather than the other way around. Clowns and large costumed characters should not invade a child's space.
- Hard selling the Gospel on this night will not endear you to your neighbors. Consider this a drink-of-water kind of ministry. Blessing children and families will bring a return. Gospel Tracts, Christian videos, songs, and even puppet shows should be utilized to deliver the Gospel message.
- Making this a complicated event ruin it for you and the kids. Do not stress out over this. You can do as much or as little as time and finances will allow. The point is to have fun helping the children to have fun and to share the love of Jesus with all who come to you.

- Scary costumes, decorations, or entertainment must be avoided. Preschool and elementary children do not need a “Hell House,” kind of experience. Fun spooky games like guess what’s in the bucket are acceptable. (Guess what’s in the bucket is a game in which several buckets hold things like cooked pasta, Jell-o, or oiled grapes. A towel is thrown over each bucket. Children reach under the towel and guess what’s in the bucket.)
- Poorly lit or cluttered walkways. Make sure that when children step on your property that they can get around without tripping over boxes, bags, or buckets. Lighting with construction lights or household lamps will help children to see where they are going and what to avoid.
- Foods that might cause an allergic reaction. We know that most anything could do this, but there are some common foods that rise to the top. Peanuts should not be served in any form. Check with your public school nurse to see what should be avoided in this category.
- Offending the return child should be avoided. Some kids will want to come back to your “fun” yard after trick or treating in the neighborhood. Bless every child with as much love, food, and attention that you can whether they show up once or return five times that night.
- Put away anything that might be deemed dangerous to the health and well-being of children.

Have Fun!

