

Re-thinking HALLOWEEN:

from Darkness to Dollars

How faith, fear and consumerism shaped a festival

- All Hallows Day Eve is on 31st October.
- New learning: It has two (or three) meanings.
- The suggestion: Our witness can be strengthened if we can discover the 'segue' that exists for storytelling.

A starting-point:

Light Parties (or similar events) are a positive and creative way many churches in New Zealand have responded to the rise of Halloween. Many parents and grandparents have appreciated the non-scary alternative provided.

There is, however, more to this story.



New learning: 'Halloween' has three histories

Some may not know that the word 'Halloween' is from a **Christian** festival. To tell the story, we have created:

- 3.30min **video** of the story [HERE](#)
- Written **summary**
- **Booklet** for church members and public.



Please **watch** the video - or **read** the written summary.

Then check out the suggested 'application' and 'resources' below.



A written summary of that history:

As a synopsis, the story is as follows:

"From darkness to dollars - How faith, fear and consumerism shaped a festival."

1. The pagan festival of Samhain - This festival was held amongst the ancient Celts. They sought to appease the gods of darkness who they believed came out for the winter, offering sacrifices - including of humans, while also seeking spiritual insight as the demons passed by. However, they then embraced Christianity and the festival began to lose its meaning (exactly like Christmas has for many people today, and yet families still gather).

2. All Hallows Day / All Saints Day: With annual celebrations continuing - like Christmas does today for many people - Christianity had been widely embraced. Values and thinking were changing. To make a long story short, it was suggested that the occasion be re-purposed to celebrate the saints who brought the light that had replaced that prior darkness. Called 'All Hallows Day' - it existed to 'hallow' (revere / recognise as holy) the saints. Celebrations started on All-Hallows-Day-Eve - which is where the name 'Halloween' comes from.

3. Money: The Irish Potato famine (1845-1852) resulted in many fleeing to America. There in the port cities, struggling with a loss of cultural identity, there was a re-awakening of the festival - though motivations were now more about fun and community. A number of decades later, some businessmen saw an opportunity for profit. From the early 1900s onwards advertising began (while the same started here in NZ around 2000 onwards). Only then did 'Halloween' as we know it today come into existence. Of note, almost nothing of its origins in Samhain remained - noting costumes worn are usually of villains or characters from popular movies and children's cartoons. However, its public image is clearly an echo of superstitions associated with the once-abandoned Samhain festival.

All these meanings are therefore true to its history.

The application:

All THREE stories are authentic to our cultural Halloween!

While noting all three stories - the question is: What did the 'Saints' bring that was so great that our ancestors wanted to celebrate it?

- A tradition that celebrates the answer to this question is 1400 years old!
- The answer, of course, is a belief system that valued human life (Genesis 1:27), leading to a new view of human value, new love, integrity, new prosperity, new human care, new charity, new equality, new views of power (the limitation of government powers) - and more.

This is the story we could begin to build into our communications at this time.

Summary:

With all three stories noted (Samhain, Halloween, Money)
- what does that mean for us today?

Answer:

Every day we get to choose between light and darkness
- and the light truly can overcome the darkness.

No matter your situation, there is always hope!

People move toward Jesus one step at a time.

Our story-telling matters!

Resources to note

- > New booklet
- > New video resources
- > Get tips on how to run a Light Party

> NEW BOOKLET

"Unwrapping Halloween" tells the above stories in a simple and creative way.

- Give to church members as education
- Give to parents at Light Parties / kids 'trick or treating'
- It does not include the gospel - but does contrast light with darkness, and the benefits our ancestors saw in the Christian faith.
- It is a 'bridge' to a more positive view of the Christian faith.



[View PDF online and purchase HERE](#)



> NEW VIDEOS

1. Share this [3-minute video](#) with your congregation. It concisely summarises 'The Three Stories of Halloween'



2. 6 x 1-minute long videos

These tell the same story in smaller pieces, created for online media, found here at our [YouTube Halloween Playlist](#) or via the 'Festivals - Halloween' tab at HopeProject.co.nz/A-Minute-In-History

3. 6 x 1-minute audios .

Created for Radio Rhema / Life FM, these are similar to the videos, found via the 'Festivals - Halloween' tab at HopeProject.co.nz/A-Minute-In-History

An early blog by Dave Mann on possibilities, written prior to our creation of the above - AllTogether.co.nz/Halloween



> RUN A LIGHT PARTY

Comprised of multiple game-stations, with brief upfront games, story-telling, and invitation to other church activities / community services - these aren't a difficult event.

Get ideas / a copy of plans from someone who has run one.

Who could run it? Some parents, the youth group or the children's church leaders... might all be open to running an event.

What would the cost be? If you have a building, your key cost will be a 'truck load' of lollies.

Consider: Where is the gospel or church connection?

- (1) Consider how you might extend invitations to church programmes or community services amongst local churches.
- (2) Consider how you might tell a positive story or two in the mix of the event - noting the above history. 'There is light and hope to be found - even while darkness affects us all. We all get to choose. There is always hope.'

Get specific ideas from those who have run one:

Contact someone you know. We note C3 City Church Tauranga, Whakatane churches as a united effort - contact any pastor, Alexandra Baptist, Hastings via Peak Vision Church, Crossroads Presbyterian (North Waikato), CityWest Church (NP), Manukau City Baptist, Whitianga Baptist, NorthCross Church, Greenlane Presbyterian, Inspire Church Albany (Auckland), Dunedin Elim.

Many others will also. Some are combined-church efforts. Some are individual church efforts.

From the Scriptures

A closing challenge

Psalm 78:1-8

1 My people, hear my teaching; listen to the words of my mouth.

2 I will open my mouth with a parable; I will utter hidden things, things from of old—

3 things we have heard and known, things our ancestors have told us.

4 We will not hide them from their descendants; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, his power, and the wonders he has done.

5 He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our ancestors to teach their children,

6 so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children.

7 Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands.

8 They would not be like their ancestors— a stubborn and rebellious generation, whose hearts were not loyal to God, whose spirits were not faithful to him.

Those who tell the history write the future - *because history stories inform our perception of identity.*

A story we need to tell more of as churches is not of God's work in Israel (while that is also of value); ***it is God's work in our own history and culture.***

Specifically: How did we become one of the most free, prosperous, equality-based and charitable nations on planet-Earth as also in all of human history? In telling the wider history of 'Halloween' it is valid that we tell some of 'God's story', helping people see the connection between Christianity and our culture of freedom, charity, equality and more.

--- To close in prayer ---

May the story of Jesus in our history be known.

May the hearts of all New Zealanders be gradually turned back toward their Creator, as they discover the 'wonders he has worked' in our own cultural history!