

**THE MAMA BEAR  
APOLOGETICS GUIDE TO**

*Halloween*

---

(and how we can ROAR through  
costumes, decor, and history)



# Introduction

## Why should Christians care about Halloween?



*Costumes! Pumpkins! Ghouls! Candy!*

The other day, I (Amy) was having a frolic in one of my favorite retailers armed with my favorite accessory: a fresh PSL. I was ready to skim the discount bins for some cute fall decor when I overheard a family's conversation that got me thinking.

The family's 6 year old had grabbed a pumpkin and shared how excited he was for Halloween to be on the way. To which he was then quickly shut down by his older brother.

"Halloween?! Don't you know if you celebrate Halloween you celebrate the devil?!" His mom nodded and the little guy dropped the pumpkin like it was the bat signal to Satan.

**It never fails. When October rolls around, Christians everywhere part like the proverbial Red Sea over the matter of Halloween.**

While we at Mama Bear respect the convictions of our brothers and sisters in Christ, we have to take a moment to gently encourage caution with how we navigate whether we let our kids dress up and go trick-or-treating, attend a trunk-or-treat, decorate our homes with pumpkins, ghouls, and gourds, or watch Halloween-ish type films like Hocus Pocus.

Why? Because how you speak about this holiday can spread lies about Satan, witchcraft, the nature of worship, and God Himself. None of which we want to pass down to our kiddos.

Regardless of where you stand, we ask you to be a thoughtful reader. Let's put our ROAR to work as we look at the history of Samhain, popular reasons why Christians avoid and celebrate Halloween, and what to say to your kiddos.



# Celtic & Pagan History

## Turnips, and treats, and costumes, Oh my!



### Ancient Celtic Origins

Samhain (pronounced sow-ween) was a Celtic celebration held at the end of harvest and the beginning of winter. n During Samhain, shepherds would bring their herds down from the summer fields, take stock of their crops, and throw a big party before winter set in. Like a lot of holidays, it began at sunset on the day before (in this case, October 31) and, depending on which Celtic tribe you were part of, lasted anywhere ‘til the evening of November 1st all the way to the 7th.

Early Celts celebrated by wearing costumes, bobbing for apples, going door-to-door for food offerings (trick or treat!), feasts, music, bonfires, and playing divination games to contact the spirits to figure out who would be their future spouse! (Because the deep magic match.com didn’t exist yet, y’all.)

Large bonfires were lit, symbolic of the sun. Some houses even took a burning amber and lit their home fire with it to bring good luck to their home for the coming year. Carved turnips were used as lanterns and to scare away evil spirits.

It was also believed that during Samhain the boundary between the living and the dead thinned just enough for aos si (fairies, spirits, and sprites) to come through. The people often offered food sacrifices to these spirits to ensure a good harvest and health for the family.

A few members of the tribe would also dress up as these spirits (a practice called mumming) as an interactive form of worship. They would then go house-to-house asking for food offerings. In exchange, they (the gods) wouldn’t curse the home, and they might even see a good harvest next spring. This is where we get the phrase “trick or treat.”

What has apparently been debunked about the festival Samhain is that it was named after a pagan god of the dead. This idea came about when military surveyor Charles Vallancey wrote a series of books about Irish history and mistakenly translated Samhain as ‘god of the dead’ rather than ‘summer’s end.’ This theory was later proven false, which is why you won’t find references to this alleged god in respected historical sources like Britannica.

## From Samhain to Halloween

The shift from Samhain to Halloween is somewhat of a mystery. Some believe that the word Halloween is a blend of the Celtic Samhain and the Catholic All Hallows' Eve, from the church-established holy day of All Saints' Day, November 1. However, the evidence for this is rather slim. The same goes for the claim that All Hallows' Eve was created by the Catholic Church to give an alternative to the Celtic/pagan holiday of Samhain.

What is agreed upon is that Pope Gregory III established All Saints' Day in honor of Catholic saints somewhere between 731-741 A.D. Also generally agreed upon is that Martin Luther nailed his 95 Theses to doors of Wittenberg Church on October 31, 1517, subsequently creating Protestantism and Reformation Day in one fell swoop. Fun fact: this is why on Halloween you'll see pictures pop up on your social media feed of theology students taping 95 "Reece's" (those delicious peanut butter and chocolate candies) to the office doors of their professors (that's Seminary humor for you!).

## Trick-or-Treating in America

Halloween has always had its share of tricks and pranks, but they weren't always as wholesome as the Reece's. If you've ever seen the film "Meet Me in St. Louis," you no doubt remember the hilarious scene of the neighborhood children dressing as homeless people, gathering scrap wood to burn in a bonfire, and pranking the neighbors with fists full of flour. This wasn't just clever storytelling. Scenes like these were happening in real life.

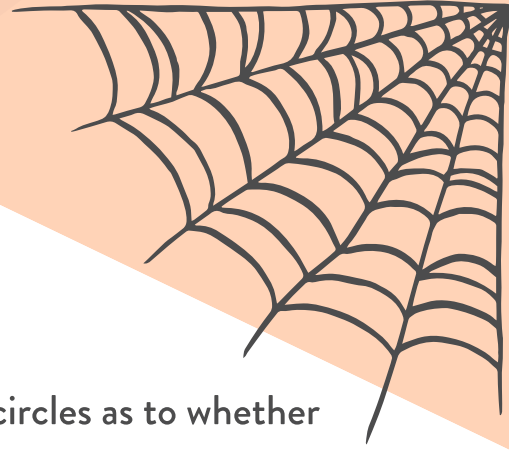
By the early 1900's, Halloween had become a sort of night of destruction, which eventually got on the nerves of one Mrs. Krebs of Hiawatha, IA. She was tired of her beloved flowers being the annual victims of such Halloween shenanigans, so in 1914, Mrs. Krebs decided to offer an alternative way for the youth to blow off steam. She organized a costume parade that ended at the local opera house, where anyone who dressed up got a treat. The kiddos had fun and American Halloween celebrations changed, all because of a few squashed flowers.

## Modern Wicca and Samhain

What hasn't changed is how Wiccan and (neo)pagans incorporate Samhain as one of seven major pagan holidays. Just like the early Celts, it's a favorite night for ceremonies, fortune telling, and spell casting.

They, too, believe that the veil between the living and the dead thins, so it's easier to contact loved ones who have passed on. Some even attempt to allow those dead spirits to possess them so that those spirits can have a night of partying and enjoying their favorite foods just like when they were living. For those participating in these rituals, the demonic element is very real, and not just an old wives' tale.

# Why some Christians choose not to celebrate



Like many things that matter, there is debate within Christian circles as to whether Christians should participate in Halloween festivities. And like the other in-house debates, things can get ugly. Just today, we saw a Facebook image that accused anyone who celebrated of being a Satan worshiper and a socialist!

It was probably meant as a joke, but we've (unfortunately) seen this kind of vitriol before. Well-meaning Christians, eager to represent Christ to the world, have made Halloween a cause for division. There are good reasons (which we'll discuss in this section) for avoiding Halloween festivities, but there is also room for Christian liberty — and we'll discuss those reasons, too. What we should all agree on is that we need to listen to the Holy Spirit in all our decisions, and we should consider other people around us. In the essentials, unity. In the non-essentials, liberty. And in all things, charity.

## What are some of the biggest reasons Christians choose not to celebrate Halloween?

### 1. Avoiding the appearance of evil

As we saw in the above section, there are a lot of similarities between Halloween and Samhain celebrations — both in practice and in theme. Many of the games and practices found in ancient Celtic celebrations are still used today. Even bobbing for apples has pagan fortune-telling roots! And when it comes to themes, there is no escaping the clear focus on death, gore, and the occult. There are many Christians who see absolutely no redeeming value in celebrating such a day.

Furthermore, witchcraft is strongly denounced within Scripture, and it's no mystery that Samhain/Halloween is one of the most well-known of the Wiccan holidays. Toss in the fact that the late founder of the church of Satan, Anton Lavey, claims it to be the "devil's day," and it's not hard to see why Christians want to put as much space between them and October 31 as possible. (To be clear, we are not saying Wiccans are Satanists or vice-versa. We addressed that issue in last year's blog post about Wicca.)

# Why some Christians choose not to participate



## 2. Demonic activity is real, y'all.

Another reason that some Christians choose not to participate in Halloween is because they believe that even innocent motives can leave us open to accidentally falling into occultic activities. A child may not know what a Ouija board is, but that doesn't protect him or her from the door they open if they choose to participate — and interact with demons while doing so. Some Christians just don't want to take the chance. .

## 3. Some people and/or their kids have an unhealthy fascination with the occult

While some people think too little about the demonic realm (as in the point above), there are some who think too much about it. We should not avoid discussing spiritual warfare or recognizing that there is an angelic or demonic realm. However, if you or your child are fascinated by it in an unhealthy way, then you are more vulnerable to walking through a door that is best left closed. It's like an alcoholic choosing not to even enter a bar. It's not legalism. It's just wisdom for that particular person — and nobody should fault or ridicule any other Christian for having a conviction to stay away from anything which might tempt them. Which brings us to our next point...

## 4. A history with the occult

Christians who may have previously been Wiccans or (neo)pagans may be more sensitive to anything that points back to their former beliefs. Halloween is an especially troubling holiday because so much of their previous disobedience from God was centered around it. To entertain any part of their old worldview feels like spiritual backsliding and disobedience.



# Why some Christians choose not to participate

## 5. Many Halloween costumes and decorations are degrading, over-sexualized, and glorify death

Another big reason some Christians aren't keen on Halloween is many decorations are an outright affront to the sanctity and dignity of human life. True, some are the standard cutesy spiders and friendly looking pumpkins. But more and more families are opting to stage their yard like a scene from the film "Hostel," complete with blood curdling screams blaring through their Bluetooth speakers. This is more than some spiders and cheap fake cobwebs. Some decor so realistic (and awful) that the police have been called.

Haunted houses, silos, farms, and the like promise 'thrills' by having Jason impersonators chase patrons around with a bloody chainsaw. And many Halloween treats look like severed limbs, body parts, and other stomach-curling delights.

Costumes are another sore spot. Boys' costumes seem to go from superheroes to murderers. Girls' costumes, on the other hand, have them going from pretty princesses to looking like the hired entertainment for a bachelor party even before they hit middle school. No really, take a look at the Halloween aisle of your local store — the costumes are seriously tragic.

**Notice what both of these issues have in common: the focus isn't on beauty, but on the destruction of beauty, especially when it comes to the human person.**

And the more, the better. It's in the death-focused or hyper-sexualized costumes. Then, just to get a fun-sized bag of Skittles from a masked serial killer, you have to walk through a fake blood-soaked nightmare displayed next door? It's no wonder why so many parents are giving Halloween a hard pass.

# Why some Christians do



As we saw above, there are legitimate reasons to avoid Halloween festivities. But Christians also have some legitimate reasons for not seeing any harm in dressing their toddler up as an adorable lady bug and parading around the neighborhood for some Twix.

This is best understood by clearing up two major misconceptions about Halloween.

## Reason # 1: No, most aren't engaging in devil worship

As we saw above, there are some noticeable similarities between the way in which Samhain and the modern holiday of Halloween is celebrated. So, what's the difference between how they celebrated historically and the modern practice of going out for a night of candy collecting? It all comes down to worship.

Worship is the act of devotion to a religious deity. It's action taken with the intention of giving glory to the god of one's beliefs.

This is why in 1 Corinthians 8 some people had no problem eating meat sacrificed to idols. The idols weren't real (no deity), and they didn't believe in them (no faith in the nonexistent deity), so eating wasn't an act of worship (no intention). It was just a bunch of people enjoying their freedom in Christ while eating some free food. A similar argument can be made for Halloween.

Think of it this way: would you tell your kids that everyone who wears nice clothes and sits next to them at church is a Christian? Or that atheists who celebrate Christmas are worshiping the birth of the Savior? No! Because actions without faith is dead, and it certainly isn't worship.

That being said, can a person dress up as an act of worship to ancient Celtic gods, witchcraft, or Devil worship? You betcha! But is the child who dresses up like Wonder Woman doing so because she worships her? I doubt it. She probably just thinks swinging around the lasso of truth is fun!



# Why some Christians participate



Did ancient people go house-to-house collecting food as an act of worship to spirits? Sure! Does this mean that the child in the inflatable dinosaur costume is doing the same? You can ask, but I'm pretty sure they're just getting free candy.

What about LaVey's claim that doing anything remotely similar to Halloween places you on Team Satan? Well, if this is true, then everyone is lost. Why? Because one way the ancient Celts avoided the evil spirits was to hide out in the house and pretend they weren't home! Yup, the go-to move of many is just as much a part of Halloween as the costumes.

This isn't meant to overwhelm you, but to show the weakness in LaVey's reasoning. To quote C.S. Lewis's *The Screwtape Letters*, "The reader is reminded that the devil is a liar."

## Reason # 2: There's no such thing as the Devil's Day.

Many people claim that October 31 is "Satan's day" but this isn't entirely accurate for several reasons.

From a calendar standpoint, Samhain was a Celtic/pagan holiday honoring the beginning of winter, which began on November 1. As we saw above, it started at sunset on the day before (October 31) and, depending on which Celtic tribe you were part of, lasted anywhere till the evening of November 1st all the way to the 7th. For some neopagans, it is even said to have begun three days before and extend three days after. So, taking that all into account, Satan would technically have anywhere from Oct 28-Nov 7.

From a worldview standpoint, Satan was never part of the Celtic tradition. Yes, it was believed during Samhain the curtain between the living and the dead was parted. But it was human spirits coming through the curtain, not Lucifer. They didn't even know who he was!

# Why some Christians participate



I know what you're thinking: "Anything outside of God and His angels is part of Satan's realm!" True, but if you're talking with someone who celebrates or knows the origins of Samhain, you'll sound as though you're getting the basic details wrong and making a straw man argument ta-boot. Acknowledging the origins of a pagan belief doesn't mean that you believe that it's true. It means that you've taken the time to respectfully understand another worldview.

Now, from a theological standpoint, yes, people who practice Wicca, paganism, or similar often carry out occult practices on this day. However, God is in control every moment of October 31 just like He is in every other moment of history.

If we tell our kids that Halloween is Satan's day, then we make it sound like God steps out of the picture and, for those 24 hours, Satan rules supreme. That is not the message we want to be sending. (Also, it takes things that aren't inherently evil, like wearing a costume, and makes them bad just because they are done on a certain day.)

**We cannot mislead our children on the role and nature of Satan. He exists, tempts, torments, lies, and leads people astray, but he has never been given a 'day.' As C.S. Lewis said, the only thing the devil has is a nail-scarred footprint on the back of his neck.**

# *What to say (and not say) if you don't want to participate*



If the Holy Spirit has placed it on your heart not to participate in Halloween, we ask that you be sensitive to His leading. There is likely a good reason that He has placed this burden on your heart. You may not even know the reason, but there's a reason.

You can explain it to your children very simply, "God has placed it on my heart that our family is to be separate from the culture in certain areas, and for us, that means not celebrating Halloween. Most of the ways people celebrate today are similar to the ancient Celtic and pagan celebration of Samhain, and it's too close to comfort for us. Some families don't have this conviction, but we do. If you'd like to know more about the history of Halloween, I'd be happy to share with you. But for our family, we'll (insert family activity here) that night instead."

Second, avoid using faulty reasoning to justify your family's stance on Halloween. The two biggest are:

1. Halloween is the Devil's day.
2. If you celebrate Halloween, you're a Devil worshiper.

These lines are tempting because they scare kids into not whining about missing out on free candy and wearing overpriced costumes. But as we saw above, they're also leading them astray about Satan, witchcraft, God, and worship. Plus you're basically saying that all their classmates are Devil-worshippers. And you wonder why they don't want to go back to school?

Lastly, be aware that inconsistency might confuse your kiddos. Some people are sensitive about the pagan origins for Halloween only to turn a blind eye to the fact that some Christmas traditions are rooted in those same pagan soils. If you're going to stand your ground against Halloween, make sure Frosty doesn't get a free pass because he's cuter than the Sanderson Sisters. That anthropomorphic singing snow demon was brought to life with magic too after all!

# How to keep kids aware of spiritual realities if you do

**There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They (demons and the devil) are equally please by both errors.**

**CS Lewis**

One thing we don't want to do is to downplay Halloween so much that our kiddos don't realize that evil, demons, Satan, witchcraft, and the like don't exist. They definitely do. Though amidst all the fog machines and werewolf soundtracks, these spiritual realities can seem fictional and even harmless.

First, kids should know that witchcraft is real. No, it's not like what they see on the Harry Potter marathon. But Wicca is growing in popularity again amongst women and growing with GenZ because of its pluralistic worldview, attractive aesthetics, and promises of power. And you can bet posts and videos promoting Wicca will be making the rounds on social media as we get closer to October 31.

**It's important that our kiddos know the worldview behind witchcraft lest they think, "It's just a bunch of hocus pocus."**

Second, games involving the contacting of spirits (via Ouija boards or other means) should NEVER be played with. Despite what those popular ghost hunter shows want you to believe, we cannot dabble in occultic practices (and yes, it's part of the occult) and expect to find Casper the friendly ghost waiting on the other side to chat. This is Satan's territory after all, and it has very real consequences.

Naturally, this might be troubling to children who have recently lost a loved one, but it's important for them to know that when a person dies, we will not be able to communicate with them again until we join them in heaven.

Mediums and boardgames meant to connect you to the beyond are either fake or connecting with evil instead.

**Remember: we are not meant to seek wisdom, guidance, or assurance from the dead, but only from the one who conquered death, Christ.**

Third, the desecration of human life shouldn't be normalization in front yard Halloween displays. Furthermore, movies like Saw and The Purge have made the brutalization of human beings a cheap form of entertainment that isn't appropriate for even adults to view.

# *What if you do want to participate?*



Instead, remind your kiddos that the human body is a precious image bearer of the handwork of God. Help them to recognize and cherish beauty in all human beings. That when a house that did their best horror set impression comes into view you can easily redirect their attention from the hanging severed heads by pointing out beautiful and cleverly crafted costumes and pumpkins.

Lastly, be respectful of the convictions of your fellow sisters in Christ. Of course, you can respond with truth and grace if your friends ask why you're taking the kids out. But remember: God might be convicting people differently on this issue for a reason. So don't wield this information like a club. It's not loving and you're likely to do more harm than good.

## *Closing Thoughts...*

There is a lot of division in the world right now. People have allowed their differences to divide families and entire communities. Halloween doesn't need to be one of those issues. Instead, be respectful of the convictions of one another. These shouldn't be used as weapons as they are unique the the work God is doing in you. Have fruitful dialogue. Don't assume each other's intentions. Discuss, share, reason! One thing our culture really needs to work on is the ability to engage in thoughtful dialogue without rushing to cancel the other because they don't share your exact view. Sure, there are things we don't budge on in the faith. (Like salvation only coming through Christ.) But for those things that fall in the gray area, let's rest in the Holy Spirit for guidance.

# Recommended Resources

Here's a great guide on how to keep Christ at the center of your Halloween festivities. It's where I got this amazing C.S. Lewis quote :):

[https://homepointe.s3.us-east-](https://homepointe.s3.us-east-1.amazonaws.com/PDFs/HolidaysHALLOWEENTRICKORTREATGAME2019.pdf)

[1.amazonaws.com/PDFs/HolidaysHALLOWEENTRICKORTREATGAME2019.pdf](https://homepointe.s3.us-east-1.amazonaws.com/PDFs/HolidaysHALLOWEENTRICKORTREATGAME2019.pdf)

Lindsey Medenwaldt's blog on Wicca:

<https://mamabearapologetics.com/a-crash-course-in-wicca/>

Our Podcast on Wicca:

<https://mamabearapologetics.com/mba056-wicca-conversation-amy-davison/>

Halloween Statement for Christians:

[http://www.christiananswersforthenewage.org/Articles\\_Halloween.html](http://www.christiananswersforthenewage.org/Articles_Halloween.html)

# Footnote Sources

Neopagan calendar dating was found here: <https://www.archaeoastronomy.com/2020.html>

Want to learn more about Mrs. Krebs? See:

[https://www.hiawathaworldonline.com/special\\_sections/100-years-of-tradition-how-it-all-began-with-mrs-krebs/article\\_ca12522b-5176-5ad8-86f9-a8cd4613f37f.html](https://www.hiawathaworldonline.com/special_sections/100-years-of-tradition-how-it-all-began-with-mrs-krebs/article_ca12522b-5176-5ad8-86f9-a8cd4613f37f.html)

Anton LeVey's comments found in this article that highlights the convictions of those who have been involved in the occult: <https://wsimag.com/culture/58292-why-christians-should-not-celebrate-halloween>



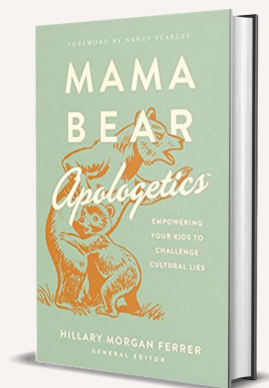


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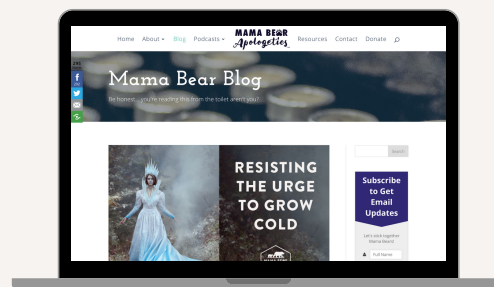


Can be purchased on Amazon and most places where books are sold.

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