

NBHD

HALLOWEEN EDITION

**ENGAGING
CULTURE**

D. ROSA, MA



At its core, this guide is a roadmap to navigate culture in a way that honors God, exalts Christ, and relies on the empowerment of the Holy Spirit for the glory of God and good of neighbor. We aim to provide clarity and conviction for impactful and seamless engagement that keeps our conscience clear and invites more people into a transformative relationship with Jesus. Embracing this mission often leads us to the uncomfortable but crucial space where our prayer to reflect Jesus reclining at the table with sinners and tax collectors becomes a tangible reality.

Here are the steps we think you ought to take as you think through Engaging Culture during this Halloween season:

A – ACKNOWLEDGE GOD’S SOVEREIGNTY:

As we grapple with the different influences around us, acknowledging God’s sovereignty helps us to discern the good, redeem the distorted, and reject what doesn't resonate with God's truth and love, allowing us to be the beacons of light and agents of transformation in a complex world.

Remember that everything, including Halloween and every other day, comes from God (Colossians 1:17). Understanding the broader narrative of the Gospel, from Creation to Restoration (Genesis 1 to Revelation 21), highlights how God's plan triumphs over darkness and celebrates His limitless power.

It's like *viewing the Gospel through either two chapters or four*. Some see the gospel as solely about two chapters: sin and salvation (Genesis 3 to John 3:16), giving too much credit to evil. But a more complete view of the gospel includes four chapters: Creation, the Fall, Christ's redemption, and the promise of Restoration, showcasing God's ultimate authority.

Realizing this comprehensive perspective helps us navigate not just Halloween, but every aspect of our culture. Whether it's the Santeria in salsa music, the themes of male chauvinism and violence in hip-hop, or the various social agendas in cartoons, our understanding of God's sovereignty guides us to discern the good, transform the negative, and reject what doesn't align with God's love. As we engage, we are called to be bearers of Christ's transformative love, approaching every cultural interaction with wisdom, grace, and a sincere desire to illuminate God's light in the midst of darkness.

R – RECEIVE THE GOOD:

As we discern Halloween, recognize the good aspects of this festivity. Receiving the joy of community engagement, the innocent fun of costumes, and the sweetness of neighborly generosity in the form of candies, we acknowledge the goodness of God in these cultural expressions (1 Corinthians 8).

R – REDEEM THE DISTORTED:

While recognizing the good, we must also critically engage with the distorted. Mark 7:14-25 urges us to discern the heart behind actions. Separating the cultural practices from their negative connotations, we can redeem the festivities. Participating in alternative celebrations or community activities that promote positivity and inclusivity can be ways to redeem the holiday.

R – REJECT THE HARMFUL:

With discernment, we acknowledge that some elements of Halloween promote harmful or unwholesome practices. Rejecting the glorification of fear, evil, or anything contrary to God's character is crucial. This includes refraining from activities that undermine the values of love, compassion, and community, as prescribed in the Gospel (Mark 12:30-31).

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What does it mean to acknowledge God's Sovereignty?

How Does the Gospel Narrative Shape Our Take on Halloween and Other Cultural Festivities?

2 Chapters vs 4 Chapters Gospel: What's the Difference?

Explore the 3 R's of Gospel-Centered Cultural Engagement!

CONSIDERING THE "BAD" ELEMENTS:

It's crucial to discern what exactly within Halloween contradicts biblical principles. Is it the candy sharing, the costumes, or the cultural customs associated with this day? We affirm that these activities, in their essence, are not inherently evil. The issue lies in their cultural connotations, not their intrinsic nature.

PRACTICING GOSPEL HOSPITALITY:

Opening our doors and hearts to the community on Halloween reflects our call to hospitality, mirroring Jesus's welcoming nature (Hebrews 13:2). Shutting off lights and ignoring our neighbors contradicts the essence of the Gospel. Our aim is to foster relationships that can ultimately lead to introducing others to the transformative power of Christ (Romans 12:13).

Embracing Missionalilty: While refraining from explicitly celebrating Halloween, we actively engage with our community, embodying a missional lifestyle. By being present, participating in community events, and initiating meaningful conversations, we create opportunities to share the love of Christ, effectively becoming relatable agents of God's grace (Matthew 5:16).

CALL TO ACTION:

Let's remember that our involvement in Halloween and every cultural event is about sharing the incredible news of the Gospel. It's not just about a single day; it's about showing the world the glory of God and fulfilling the mission Jesus left us with. This means passionately reaching out to those who haven't yet experienced the love of Christ and making sure we're obedient to His call, powered by the Holy Spirit.

We shouldn't let fear guide us. Instead, let's tap into the incredible strength that comes from God. Our goal is to bring hope to those in the dark, to show them the way to Jesus. This journey requires us to be wise, welcoming, and intentional in our approach to everyone, regardless of their background or beliefs. Let's be that shining light, a living example of Christ's love, and a real-life story of how the Gospel can transform lives.

Our words and actions should be a passionate testament to the truth that it's through our love, kindness, and unwavering commitment to sharing the Good News that the world will truly come to know the life-changing power of Jesus Christ.

Finally, as we navigate the complexities of culture, let's remember the powerful lesson from the Book of Revelation. Just like how Jesus conquers all the bad stuff and brings everything under His control, we can have faith that our efforts to engage with culture in a positive way are backed by the ultimate victory of our Savior. This victory gives us the courage and strength to face the challenges of the world, knowing that one day, everyone will recognize Jesus as the ultimate ruler.

When we strive to honor God, uplift Jesus, and let the Holy Spirit guide us, we're essentially showing that Jesus has already won the battle against darkness. Let this truth motivate us to interact with culture confidently, understanding that our genuine and purposeful actions can be a light for others, leading them towards the life-changing power and eternal sovereignty of our winning Savior, Jesus Christ.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Call out the cultural norms that clash with biblical principles. But, what are we supposed to do with these "bad elements"?

Hospitality - it's more than just laying out a welcome mat. But, how do we show warmth and kindness in a world that's gone crazy?

When it comes to engaging with the culture around us, what's our main mission? Let's get crystal clear.

This .pdf has some real truths to chew on. How do they impact your take on culture and, for example, spooky days like Halloween?
