

FAMILY TOOLBOX



SERIES

**WHAT DO
CHRISTIANS
DO WITH
HALLOWEEN?**



Children's Ministry

Golden Hills Community Church

2401 Shady Willow Lane

Brentwood, CA 94513

925-516-0653

A Note to Families

The Children's Ministry of Golden Hills Community Church exists to "*Glorify God by helping families develop age-appropriate disciples who impact their world for Christ*".

In order to accomplish this task, we at GHCC have attempted to describe the discipleship of a believer, which includes these three elements:

- **Worship**
- **Grow**
- **Serve**

We believe that children, as followers of Christ, can also participate in the discipleship process. We have further identified twelve specific spiritual growth issues within these three elements of discipleship.

It is our desire in Children's Ministry, to create a balanced program, which addresses all of these spiritual growth issues, helping to produce a healthy, age-appropriate disciple.

However, statistics tell us that the national average for children attending Sunday school is 26 hours each year (that's only half of the time). And our church is no exception to this. Our average Sunday attendance is roughly half of our total registration. What does this mean? Well, we could have the best programming, the best teachers and staff (which, by the way, I think we do) and we would still have a very hard time in accomplishing the goal God has set before us. But there is a way.

The way in which we can realize the goal of making age-appropriate disciples is stated in our purpose: "...by helping *families* develop age-appropriate disciples..." In fact, the best approach to aiding your child's faith development is *not* in the formal setting of the church, but in the informal, everyday life of your home. God's Word clearly reminds us of this in Deuteronomy 6:4-7:

"Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. The commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress (teach) them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home, and when you walk along the road, when you lie down at night and when you get up."

We encourage you to take advantage of every opportunity to "impress upon your children" spiritual truth. Use dinner conversation, driving in the car, bedtime routines and getting ready each morning as times to reflect and teach about God and his faithfulness.

To help you in these discussions, we have developed a series of tools for you to use. These tools are series of booklets (**THE FAMILY TOOLBOX SERIES**), each addressing the spiritual growth issues. In them you will find information, discussion questions and activity suggestions to help you guide your children on their spiritual journeys.

What do Christians do with Halloween?

Halloween is undoubtedly more misunderstood than any other holiday event. Is it hocus-pocus superstition or truly Christian focused? It can appear to be nothing more than a pagan event dreamed up by some deviant opportunist and/or candy and costume manufacturer, but All Hallows Eve was actually intended to be a righteous opportunity purposed in history past to commemorate old saints. We encourage you to carefully examine the historical development of Halloween. Halloween, which comes from the word All Hallows Eve is tied directly to All Saints Day celebrated on November 1 of each year to commemorate the old saints who have past on. These “saints” were heroes and martyrs for the Christian Faith.

The History of Halloween

The Origin of Halloween: From the Celts to the Romans.

Some historians trace the origin of Halloween back to the Celtic people of pre-medieval Europe. The Celts of Ireland, Britain, and France divided their year into halves: the “light half,” roughly consisting of the spring and summer months when days are longer and nights are shorter, and the “dark half,” roughly consisting of the autumn and winter months when days are shorter and nights are longer. Celts celebrated the end of the light half of the year with the festival of “Samhain” (pronounced sah-wen), which they observed during the October/November lunar cycle. Following the Roman conquest of Britain, British Celts adopted the Julian calendar and fixed the date of Samhain’s observance to November 1. Costumes and treats were a traditional part of the Celtic celebration. And while Samhain began as a strictly Celtic festival, it is probable that aspects of Roman religion were incorporated into its observance over the four centuries of Roman rule in Britain (43-410 AD). For example, Pomona was the Roman goddess of fruit trees and gardens. Her symbol was an apple. Some scholars believe this may explain how candied apples and bobbing for apples became associated with Halloween (as Samhain was later renamed -- see below).

The Origin of Halloween: From Pagan to Christian.

Other historians trace the origin of Halloween back to the ancient and enduring Christian tradition of celebrating the lives of Christian martyrs on the anniversaries of their deaths. When Pope Boniface IV reconsecrated the Pantheon in Rome on May 13, 609 AD, renaming it the “Church of St. Mary and the Martyrs,” he established that anniversary as a day of celebratory remembrance for all of those who have died for their faith. Pope Gregory III later changed the date of remembrance to November 1 when he dedicated a chapel in St. Peter’s Basilica to “all saints.” November 1 became All Saints Day, otherwise known as All Hallows Day. The night before became All Hallows Eve (“Halloween” being a colloquial contraction of that phrase). While Halloween began as a localized celebration, Pope Gregory IV extended its observance to all of Christendom in the 9th Century AD. As the Christian faith spread throughout the world, pagan holidays were either Christianized or forgotten. Samhain was absorbed into Halloween. Costumes and gifts and bobbing for apples were preserved, incorporated into the new holiday. They remain a celebrated part of Halloween to this day, many centuries later.

*The Origin of Halloween: From Sacred to Secular,
from Secular to Pagan.*

The origin of Halloween as a secular celebration in many parts of the world goes back to Europe's rich Christian heritage. European empires conquered most of the world in the centuries following the Age of Exploration, allowing them to export their Christian faith and festivals to the rest of the world. With the Enlightenment of the 18th Century, secularism took root in Europe and spread to her colonies abroad. Christian holidays like Christmas, Easter, and Halloween were secularized in many parts of the world. The celebration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ was supplanted in the popular culture by the Easter bunny. Trick-or-treating eclipsed pious regard for Christian martyrs.

So, What do we do?

Christian Halloween – The Pros and Cons.

We understand that much of Halloween has been manipulated and “tricked” by the secular pagan world and much of what happens on Halloween is far from spiritual. In fact, some of the Halloween traditions have pagan origins.

The Bible doesn’t speak directly about Halloween, but some biblical principles apply. One thing is clear -- all pagan practices are to be avoided. Witchcraft, occult practices, sorcery, etc. are strictly forbidding in the Bible (Exodus 22:18; Acts 8:9-24; Acts 16, 19). It is obvious that a small child dressing up as a princess or a cowboy isn’t involving itself with witchcraft, so what is a biblical stance on Halloween? Parents, the decision is up to you. If you decide Halloween is something fun for your children, make sure they are kept far away from the evil aspects of Halloween. When believers participate in anything (even Halloween), their attitudes, dress, and behavior should glorify Christ (Philippians 1:27).

Christian Halloween – Take Advantage!

Halloween can be a “hands on” learning opportunity about God’s control over Satan and the fallen angels. God keeps them held powerless according to His will. Christian Halloween and All Saints Day come together in purposeful unity as the one protects and covers the other. It is a time for the Gospel to devour the ghouls.

Find stimulating and fun ways to reach out to kids and adults in your community who might not normally be contacted through out the year. Our church’s Harvest Carnival is a great way to reach out into our community in this way. Consider involving your whole family! Many parents would rather their children be inside and away from danger. Use this outreach as an opportunity to tell these families about Jesus and about your church.

The Spiritual Growth Issues:

Worship

- Salvation
- Worship

Grow

- Bible knowledge/Application
- Bible Memory
- Stewardship
- Healthy Relationships
- Using Gifts, Talents and Skills
- Church Commitment

Serve

- Outreach
- Missions Involvement
- Christian Service