

Celebrate the Light

Dan Nelson – pastor

Calvary Chapel of the Ojai Valley

Halloween was a tradition that I loved growing up: costumes, jack-o-lanterns, and going door-to-door collecting candy. I remember dressing up as a pirate as a little boy. My dad made me an authentic looking sword and my mom used mascara to apply a fake beard. My sister was arrayed as a princess, and together we scoured the neighborhood trick-or-treating. But even as young children, we were made aware of a bit of the sinister side of the day. One year, our hearts were crushed coming home from walking the sidewalks to find our carved pumpkin smashed in front of our house. But much worse than that, we learned that someone had found a razor blade hidden inside a piece of candy. After that, our parents would not let us eat anything we were given until it had been thoroughly inspected. We didn't understand who could do such a terrible thing. But as I grew older, I learned more about the existence of evil, and those that use this day to revel in depravity.

Knott's Berry Farm's Halloween Haunt became an annual tradition for me starting in the sixth grade. And as a teenager, I refused to let some parts of my childhood go. The last time that my friends and I knocked on front doors and stockpiled candy in pillowcases, I drove us there in my car. After that, we would find the scariest haunted houses to frequent, and ride around wearing horrible masks hoping to frighten anyone we could find. In college, I hosted a party, having decorated our house with tombstones, skulls, and cobwebs. Looking back I am surprised at how naïve I was to the implication of my festivities. I was a born-again Christian, and yet, I was commemorating death, horror, fear, murder, and spiritual darkness. What a contradiction!

As an adult, I acquired more information about the roots of Halloween, and more gravely, how some people these days, even locally, observe the day and night with vile rituals associated with an unholy kingdom. To some heinous individuals, it is not innocent fun but actually quite serious. Conversely, I also learned why so many Christians celebrate October 31 as "Reformation Day". For everyone who appreciates access to the Bible, as "God's Written Word", in one's

own language, this day is an anniversary of a critical event that ultimately got us our own copies of the Scriptures in English.

This Monday we will light up the night with games and candy, costumes and crafts. It's free and everyone is invited! Our Family Fun Fall Festival may resemble a Halloween event to the casual observer, but it is actually a child-friendly, safe alternative. I no longer purposely extol the morbid and glorify what is wicked, but instead, these days, I hope to "celebrate the Light". Jesus is "Light", and we are called to be "Children of the Light." (Ephesians 5:8)

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Dan Nelson is a frequent contributor to the Ojai Valley News and currently serves the Ojai Valley Ministerial Association and community as editor of the Religion Column. Permission is freely granted to reprint the article in its entirety. Dan Nelson is pastor of Calvary Chapel Christian Church of the Ojai Valley.



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Sunday Worship:

9:00 & 10:45am
Calvary Chapel Ojai Valley
195 Mahoney Ave., Oak View

Mid-Week Study:

7:00pm Thursday
Calvary Chapel Ojai Valley
195 Mahoney Ave., Oak View