

Deeper meaning of Halloween

Dan Nelson - pastor

Calvary Chapel of the Ojai Valley

Growing up, Halloween was one of my favorite times of the year. I loved getting dressed in costume and going through the neighborhood, house to house, to collect candy. The anticipation and preparation was half the fun. Planning our dress, cutting into pumpkins, and counting who got the most candy (that we hadn't already eaten) kept us in full "sugar rush" for an entire day. I was an incorrigible "trick or treater." The last year my friends and I went throughout the community, I drove! It's true! We didn't stop going out each year until people stopped giving us candy. They quipped something like, "Aren't you a bit old for this?" Hiding our already deep voices of adolescence, we finally decided to call it quits and grow up.

Early on we were exposed to a little of the dark side of Halloween. I remember our parents clearly mandating that we did not eat any candy until it was first inspected and approved by them. We had heard of numerous reports of evil people making Halloween their day of deed. There would be villains so heinous that they would sneak razor blades into the candy to be chewed upon and bring severe harm to a child. These types of evil conspirators exist today, and remain in costume. Their disguise is the smiling face and normal dress that hides their blackness of heart, and they harm innocents in any way they can imagine. Our frustration and disappointment of returning home to find our pumpkins smashed in the street and against the house pales in comparison to what victimization some people experience on Halloween and other times throughout the year.

It wasn't until I was older that I was exposed to the more harsher realities of this day. For me, it was more light-hearted and innocent fun and not the very serious spiritual celebration of evil that some revere it as each year. I have discovered that most families are as naive as we were. Even here in the Ojai Valley, where spiritual deception is significantly pronounced and darkness lurks in corners throughout, it seems that most well-intentioned people are completely unaware.

These days, my family does not celebrate Halloween at all. But, Oct. 31 is still one of the "funnest" times of the year for my wife and I and our four children. We do not "trick or treat" now that I know what that means. But we do get into costume and throw a community party. We don't do gruesome, grotesque or scary stuff and I no longer frequent the haunted houses, now that I understand a bit more. We don't celebrate evil alongside those who take it quite seriously. But we do celebrate the last day of October and I want to tell you why. It is also Reformation Day!

It was on Oct. 31, 1517 that Martin Luther posted his "95 Theses." A list of 95 grievances against the established church. He chose this day because it was All Hollows Day (aka: All Holy Day, All Saints Day) and the entire community would be at church in the next 24 hours to read his ideas. In essence, it was a call back to the Bible. Although imperfect and fallible, Martin Luther became a

hero in standing against the establishment for the cause of getting the Holy Scriptures into the language and hands of the common person. It is this event, along with a myriad of other heroic efforts by genuinely faithful men and women, which we have to thank for the fact that you probably have at least one copy of the Bible in your possession today. People died to get you that. There have always been strong forces to keep God's word out of your hands.

This Wednesday celebrates an anniversary of the momentous occasion that brought on what we call the reformation of the church, helping Western civilization say goodbye to the dark ages and welcome an age of enlightenment. The very founding of our nation is directly tied in with the results of this glorious occasion.

Now again we are in an age where efforts are significant to remove God's word from you, the very message people allowed themselves to be burned at the stake to uphold. While there are concerted and organized efforts to restore the age of spiritual darkness, today I believe the biggest battleground is not in the public square, the university classroom, or in the courtroom, but it is taking place at your home, on your couch, in your heart. To have a Bible is wonderful. To pick it up and read it is smart. To allow your life to be transformed by God through it is wise.

I want to close with my own posting of a thesis, this one is not on the door of a German church but on the door of the American church. Let's get back to the Bible again. In a day of confused leadership, philosophy pundits, and psychology pulpsters, let's allow God's word to be a light unto the path of his people once again.

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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.



P.O. Box 1443
Ojai, CA 93024
(805) 640-9498
www.calvaryojai.org

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

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