

Halloween | Preparing, Observing, Discipling

I. Preparing

- Prepare Your Spaces
 - There shouldn't be any skeletons or werewolves or ghosts or other contemporary Halloween icons on that board. The Wall is for remembering God and God alone.
 - It's appropriate to decorate your Wall with seasonal beauty. We have a garland of dried leaves around our Wall since Autumn is the Season of Mercy. And — if you're following the idea shared on the Day of Atonement episode — you have a semi-opaque black veil covering the wall which will come off on November 1st.
 - If you chose to cover your Celebration Wall with a veil, it would be appropriate to not add anything new to the Wall until after October 31st.
 - You could post any of the verses I'm going to include on this year's suggested reading list.
- Prepare Your Hearts
 - Visit CelebrationOfGod.com to find our suggested reading list.
- Prepare Your People
 - The Scripture we share is designed to do four main jobs.
 - We meditated on it to tune our hearts and prepare us to give Christ the preeminence during the Celebration. We should be encouraging those around us to do the same.
 - We post it on our Celebration Walls as a memorial and reminder.
 - We read it and talk about it during the Celebration. And . . .
 - As we read it and talk about it during the Celebration we're also using it as part of the discipleship of those in our lives.
 - Don't ever neglect this step. It's too easy to celebrate the wrong things when you didn't prepare yourself to celebrate the right things.

II. Observing

- The Day of Atonement, Halloween, and the Crucifixion are the main Observances of The Year Long Celebration of God.
- Remember, we don't want to celebrate any events without celebrating the God of the event. But the Day of Atonement and Halloween in particular have a very specific focus of reminding us of the consequences of sin. That is not something to celebrate.
- However, pain and ugliness always finds its opposite in God. We can definitely celebrate God's plan to place the consequences of sin on Christ. We can celebrate the fact that we desperately need mercy and God is generous to supply it.
- You can not only celebrate the goodness God applies to the world's pain, but you can also continue to Anticipate celebrating God's plan of redemption. Use this time to look forward to Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter, and Consummation.
- Any opportunity to remember what God has done, see at what God is doing, and look forward to what He will do is time well spent.
- As you can see, observing the painful and celebrating the glorious is a two-edged concept for sure. Focusing on one side to the exclusion of the other is dangerous regardless of which side you prefer. Focusing only on God's goodness can blind us to our need for holiness. Always focusing on our sin and forgetting God's grace is humanistic.

- This season presents a foundational principle necessary to appreciate the rest of the year. Just like no one will follow Christ unless they first acknowledge that they are a sinner incapable of saving themselves, so we too should be reminded that — even if we're born again — we daily need God's provision. We need His mercy for our sins. We need His grace to live a life that pleases Him.
- It's all important, and this month is a valuable time to remind ourselves why the Father had to send His Son in the first place . . . which encapsulates the major holidays of the year.
- So, definitely take time on Halloween to observe the effects of sin. It won't be difficult with images of death and fear being used by the world to decorate their lawns.
- But you are also free to celebrate. Just make sure you're celebrating the right things. We shouldn't be celebrating death. Jesus died and rose again to conquer death! We shouldn't be celebrating fear. God has not given us a spirit of fear!
- We can celebrate God's gift of fun and pretend and yummy flavors and crisp weather and socializing. We can thank the Lord for the fact that he has a plan to save men from the consequences of sin. We can definitely worship Him for His daily mercy.
- But you have to be intentional. You need to focus your mind and the mind of your disciples.

III. Discipling

- Conversation is a huge part of discipleship. We need to not only talk about God, but we need to engage their minds in imagining how we can find new ways to celebrate God.
- Find members of your church willing to brainstorm new ideas for community outreach. Maybe others would like put together a care package for college students.
- Students might all agree to collect a percentage of their treats to give to child who can't walk the neighborhood.
- Maybe someone you know would find joy in worshipping God by hosting a candy exchange where kids can learn to glorify God with their eating by trading some of their sugary delicacies for delicious healthy options.
- The sky is the limit for any God-worshipping, people-loving Christian who wants to find a way to redeem Halloween by pointing people's minds to the God Who wants to have a relationship with us and — consequently — rescue us from sin and its consequences.
- In the end, a party — whether a personal family gathering or a community event hosted by a church or a class party — is always a good idea. Just make sure you take time to guide people in their thinking. You don't necessarily need to "do" something that looks or feels "religious." The key is not to substitute one kind of superficial self-worship for another.
- The goal should be to make conversations about God natural and normal. On Halloween you have many natural opportunities to share with people that you're not as fearful about life as you once were because of your relationship with God. And then you can give that comment feet by giving a personal example.
- No normal, average, regular conversation on Halloween is going to intentionally glorify God and celebrate His goodness. You need to work at it.
- And the more we do this the more we'll find that it comes easier, the more we'll experience a closer and closer relationship with the Lord, the more His will will take preeminence in my life, and the more other people will be drawn to God because of their relationship with us.