



## Real Big Questions about Halloween

As part of our 2019 Light Party campaign, children from a school in London were given the opportunity to ask questions about Halloween and Christianity.

Scripture Union workers Steve Hutchinson and Terry Clutterham have a go at answering their questions. You may find this a useful read to prepare you for your Light Party or when chatting to your children!

### Halloween beginnings

- Why is Halloween in October? How did Halloween start?

Because the ancient Gaels believed that on this date the boundary between living people and dead people dissolved, and the dead people became dangerous. Costumes and masks were worn at the festivals to mimic the evil spirits, to keep them happy or keep them away.

- Why do we call it Halloween and what does Halloween mean? How is Halloween linked to Christianity?

The church calls the day after Halloween – 1st November – All Saints Day or All Hallows Day. It's the day the church remembers all Christians (saints) who have died. So 31st October was called 'All Hallows (Saints) Evening'. This name was shortened to 'All Hallows Eve' or 'All Hallows Even'. The name changed over time and became 'Halloween'.

- What is Halloween basically all about? What does Halloween symbolise and why?

Most families think of Halloween as just a bit of fun, though many Christians feel uneasy about the celebration of the dark side of life. They believe it's not what Jesus wants them to do. But actually Halloween offers the opportunity to celebrate light. All Saints Day – 1st November – helps people remember that death isn't the end and that our life with God stretches beyond the grave.

- Does Halloween represent death or dead people? Is Halloween real or fake?

It can represent the dark side of life, if we're not careful. Some people dress up in black to pretend that they're bad or evil spirits. Of course they aren't really bad or evil spirits, so in that way it's fake.

### Halloween and the devil

- Is Halloween the devil's (Satan's/Shatan's) birthday?

Well, Satan was never born – he is an angel that rebelled against God. Since he wasn't born, he can't really have a birthday. Even so, some people (not Christians) say that 31st October is the devil's birthday.

- Is the devil real?

Yes, definitely. When he was on earth Jesus spoke about the devil and was tempted by him, so he must be real. Find a Bible, if you can, and look up Luke 22:31 and John 12:31.

- Where did the devil come from?

The Bible suggests that the devil, Satan, was one of God's chief angels, but he wanted to be greater than God. Some people think that this is what Isaiah 14:12–21 is about. Then in Revelation 12, we read about the dragon, called the devil. He and his angels fought against Michael and his angels and were defeated, and thrown out of heaven.

- Does the devil have horns and a tail?

No, the Bible doesn't exactly say anything about the devil having horns and a tail. Revelation 13:1 is a symbol of the devil, or a physical form that the devil takes on, but it's not a description of the devil. This is picture language – the devil isn't a physical being.

Back in Revelation 12:3 we read that the dragon, called the devil, has seven heads, ten horns, and a tail. That may be where it comes from. The problem with all this is it makes people think the devil is just a bit of a laugh, and not real. But let's remember that Jesus is so much stronger than the devil. In fact, Jesus has already won the battle against the devil, and we're safe with Jesus.

- Why are there ghosts? Are they real?

Some people believe in them, and some don't. Some Christians believe in them, and some don't. The word 'ghost' does sometimes appear in the Bible, but it doesn't mean the kind of spirit of a random dead person that people sometimes call 'ghosts'.

Twice the disciples thought Jesus was a ghost – once when he came to them walking on the water, then after God raised him back to life. His friends thought they were seeing a ghost. Jesus said, 'Look at my hands and my feet and see who I am! Touch me and find out for yourselves. Ghosts don't have flesh and bones as you see I have' (Luke 24:39).

## **Halloween practices**

- Why do some people celebrate Halloween and others don't? What's wrong with Halloween anyway? Why is it bad, or evil, or dark?

Some people don't celebrate it because they don't want their children dressing up as ghosts and walking around the streets, knocking on people's doors. Some don't want their children getting involved in things they think might be harmful, or at least annoying or intimidating. Some Christian families don't get involved because they believe the celebrations have something to do with the devil, and they definitely don't want to get involved with him. Jesus is about light and life, not darkness and death.

- Why do people do scary things on this night? Why do people dress up/wear costumes at Halloween?

Most people do it for a bit of fun, though it has its origins in an old Gaelic festival about the spirits of the dead wandering around. Some children and young people love to do things on this night that they can't on any other – like ringing people's doorbells, asking for sweets and scaring people. These aren't necessarily appropriate or helpful things to do!

- Why do people go around looking for candy? Why do people go trick or treating, and why is it called that?

Children dress up in costumes and go from house to house asking for treats, with the phrase 'Trick or treat'. The 'treat' is usually some form of sweet that the person whose house it is hands over. The 'trick' is a threat that the children will do something unpleasant if no treat is given. Some homeowners signal that they're willing to hand out treats by putting up Halloween decorations outside their doors; others simply leave treats on their porches for the children to take freely.

- Why do people carve pumpkins?

From around 750 BC to 12 BC, the Celts were the most powerful people in central and northern Europe. The tradition of carving faces into vegetables dates from the time of the Celts. As part of their autumn celebration, they wanted to light the way to their homes for the good spirits, so they carved faces into vegetables.

## Halloween and God

- Why is God magic?

We use the word 'magic' usually to describe tricks that can, in fact, be explained. But God can do amazing things that people can't, and that no one can explain. We call those amazing things 'miracles'. They come from God's power. There are lots of true stories of miracles in the Bible. God often does them to put things right that are wrong in people's lives. And he's probably doing many more of them than we can see happening around us.

- Is God a person or a spirit?

If you mean, is God walking around on earth as a human, then no, he isn't, though we're made to be like him. Jesus said, 'God is Spirit, and those who worship God must be led by the Spirit to worship him according to the truth' (John 4:24). But whilst being the same as God, Jesus was born on earth as a human baby and grew to become a man, and he wants us to be able to call God 'friend'.

- Why did God create bad people?

In the beginning God created everything good, including people who lived close to him. But people chose to rebel against him, to go their own way and do what he'd told them not to. God gives us all the freedom to choose to do good or bad things, and some people choose bad, or just ignore God. We all do some bad things sometimes – no one is 100% 'good'. But Christians believe that Jesus died to take the blame for the things we do, so that we can be forgiven and be close to God again as his friends.

- Why do bad things happen when God's love is with us?

To be honest, we don't know. God is all-powerful and can do anything, so he could choose to stop bad things happening. But sometimes he chooses not to. We do know though that – as hard as it seems – when bad things happen to people, it's not because God has stopped loving them. God always loves us and is sad when we're hurt. The Bible tells us that God works all things for good for those who love him, so somehow he turns the bad things into something good.