

MEFC Community Group Study Guide

For the Week of October 15th - 21st

This article from David Mathis was first featured at the Desiring God website back in 2015. With Halloween just over two weeks away, there's no time like the present to strategize how you might redeem this annual opportunity for the sake of our mission to be and make disciples of Christ. With your family or in your group, combine a discussion of this week's sermon outline with the content below, prayerfully seeking to make the most of this All Hallows Eve.

“Take Halloween Captive”¹

By David Mathis

Halloween is not a threat. It's an opportunity. Those armed with the name of Jesus, and the power of his Spirit, have no reason to be spooked by this night or any other. We can join our King as he haunts the devil and all his minions. Christian, you have both a shield and a sword on Halloween. And we're not talking about a costume here. “Take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one” (Ephesians 6:16). All. Every fiery shot from Satan, including his massive Halloween campaign. And you are not only outfitted for defense, but for offense, too. Uncase “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Ephesians 6:17). We betray the fullness of Christ's power when we cower before the demonic façade of Halloween. Instead, take Halloween captive. Here are five ways to prepare your heart and home for advancing the gospel, dressed with the invincible power of God and his word.

1. Rehearse the Authority of Jesus

All authority in heaven and on earth belongs to him (Matthew 28:18). Not half. Not most. All. Not only is he worshiped and admired by the happy citizens of his kingdom, but he “commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him” (Mark 1:27). No yin yang. No cage match with Satan. One little word shall fell him. This is the Jesus in whom, through whom, for whom all things exist, and in whom all things hold together (Colossians 1:16–17). That includes All Hallows' Eve, and every futile attempt made by the demonic hordes. Not only does Jesus rule them as Creator, but also by conquest at his cross, where he

¹ <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/take-halloween-captive> . Accessed 10/12/23 @ 5:15pm.

“disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them” (Colossians 2:15).

2. Remember His Power at Work in You

Not only is the sovereign Christ stationed invincibly on the throne of the universe, but he also dwells within you by his Spirit. And so we look every Halloween fear or darkness in the face and say, “He who is in me is greater than he who is in the world” (see 1 John 4:4). We are no longer left unprotected under the tyrant of this world, but Jesus “has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son” (Colossians 1:13). And he will not suffer the loss of any of his own (John 6:39). The eternal Son of God took on our flesh and blood “that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery” (Hebrews 2:14–15). In Christ, we are no longer slaves to death, or slaves to Satan, but glad servants of the almighty God.

3. Recognize Who the Enemy Is

We wrestle not against flesh and blood. Your enemy is not the neighbors with the creepy skeletons in the yard. Or the silly teenage trick-or-treaters dressed up as zombies. The adversary is not fellow humans, gruesome or God-belittling as they can be, but the rulers, the authorities, the cosmic powers over this present darkness, and the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places (Ephesians 6:12). We know that “the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ” (2 Corinthians 4:4). We pity them in their deception to Satan. We look on them as Jesus looked on the crowds with compassion, because they are “harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd” (Matthew 9:36). We yearn to be channels of gospel light and truth into their lives. And we remember what we ourselves were by nature: dead in our trespasses and sins, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, living in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind (Ephesians 2:1–3) — more evil and more hopeless than any scene we see on Halloween. But God. No, our enemy is not the souls of man, but the destroyer of souls — the one who “prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8). We take him seriously, but we do not fear him. We will not be outwitted by Satan’s Halloween schemes, “for we are not ignorant of his designs” (2 Corinthians 2:11). We will resist him, and claim the promise that he will flee (James 4:7).

4. Reach Out with Kindness

Because of the authority of Jesus, and his power within us — and remembering that Satan is our enemy, not our neighbors — we lean into Halloween, not away. We turn the porch lights on to chase away the darkness. We have the best candy on the street and give with generosity, not the cheapest fair with a miser's hand. We open the door wide and linger in conversation. We plan ahead about how to make the most of this unique opportunity, when a society of people who increasingly keep to themselves in the neighborhood turn on lights and knock on doors.

5. Recall the Promises of Christ

And as we answer the doorbell, or walk the block with kids in tow, we feed our souls with the unbending promises of Christ. He will build his church, and the ghosts of Halloween will not prevail against it (Matthew 16:18). His gospel will most certainly be preached throughout the whole world, including our neighborhoods (Matthew 24:14). In this world, we will have tribulation, but we can take heart: *he has overcome the world* (John 16:33). And not only has he overcome, but he gives us a role in the conquest. “The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet” (Romans 16:20). And so we say with the apostle to our Halloween cautions and fears, “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 15:55–57)

Sent into the Harvest

The weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh. No, we have God's own power to destroy Satan's strongholds (2 Corinthians 10:4), especially the stronghold of Halloween. We can take this night captive to obey Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5). The Halloween harvest is great, but the laborers are still too few. Pray earnestly that the Lord of the harvest would send out his workers to chase away the darkness (Matthew 9:37–38).