



A collection from the archives of  
Effective Church Communications

# Halloween & Fall Festivals

*A great time for evangelism and  
community outreach.*

**BY YVON PREHN**

# ABOUT THE BOOKS WITH THESE LABELS

A collection from the archives of  
Effective Church Communications

A collection from the archives of the  
website [www.effectivechurchcom.com](http://www.effectivechurchcom.com)

*As to methods, there may be a million and then some, but principles are few. The person who grasps principles can successfully select their own methods. The person who tries methods, ignoring principles, is sure to have trouble.*

Ralph Waldo Emerson  
(slightly modified quote)

Good communication principles are timeless.

Formats and delivery methods change and will continue to change in ways we cannot imagine.

In the course of working with church communications for decades, I've seen many formats and delivery systems come and go. I've created and taught communications using typewriters and mimeograph machines and through the years moved on to websites, social media, video, and podcasts. They were all useful to help churches fully fulfill the Great Commission and I'm excited about every new opportunity our creative Lord brings our way.

Along the way, I wrote about and documented all I learned in many formats as well. This book is part of a series of books that gathers together my archives on various communication topics. All are currently available through <https://payhip.com/Bibleverseshop>.

Some are clear book excerpts or reprints from the Effective Church Communications website. Some are bad copies of material I thought would be helpful, but the only ones available, some exceptionally funky layouts, but maybe good for a smile on how we've changed (and why did I ever think that hairstyle or glasses looked good?) Some have typos and various small errors that were not possible to go back and correct. Some links may not work and I apologize for the trouble.

Though much remains the same, we obviously do some things differently and I left in some perhaps dated material to illustrate how we've grown, developed, or maybe even gone backwards in some areas. The historian in me finds that record of change worth recording.

Regardless of the format, I believe the content all in all is useful. All of it has helped many churches around the world improve their communications, reach their communities for Jesus, and grow disciples. My prayer is that the useful and timeless communication principles here will continue to help you do that also.



**There is no neutral ground in the universe; every square inch, every split second is claimed by God and counterclaimed by Satan.**

*Christian Reflections, C.S. Lewis*

**We put up with anything rather than hinder the gospel of Christ. . . . I make myself a slave to everyone to win as many as possible. . . . I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some.**

*(1 Corinthians 9: 12,19, 22)*

**There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence.**

**The other is to believe, and to feel and excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors.**

*Screwtape Letters, C.S. Lewis*



# Overview of this Halloween Outreach book



Churches seldom fail in the events they do for outreach. The events themselves are almost always a success, (church folks put on great events!) at least for the church members who put it on and the church members who attend.

Where churches are sometimes less than successful, if they are honest with themselves, is with the impact the church had on the community that goes beyond providing a good time. Here are the questions that are sometimes hard to answer:

- Did people start coming to the church because of the event?
- Did people ask questions about the church based on the kindness of the people hosting the event?
- Did people check out your website? Email the church asking for more information?
- How many people came to church in the weeks following the event because of either experiences at the event, or the church follow up after it?
- How many people made progress on the road to getting to know Jesus as a result of your event?

If you find yourself asking these questions and you aren't happy with the answers, this book can help your church make a radical change in what you do at your Halloween Outreach events, how you prepare for, and follow up from them.

We have an extraordinary opportunity to connect with our communities and to connect our communities with the church this Halloween season. Following is an overview of the sections in this book that can help.

## Section One: Articles

Over the years I've written quite a few articles about how to plan, host, put on, and follow up for a Halloween Outreach and the most useful of them are reprinted here. Because these are reprints (with some modifications) there may be a bit of repetition, but usually of recommendations worth repeating.

PLEASE take time to read and discuss them as a staff. It will make an unimaginable difference in the success of your outreach if your staff is united in vision and purpose for all you do in your communications surrounding the outreach event. Consider options and then pray together in your planning times.

You have my permission to make as many copies of the PDFs or articles as you want to share them with staff and volunteers.

You can also copy and pass around the communication files within your church and to your volunteers in print and on your website. I created these materials and I'm giving you permission to make as many copies as you want.



## Section Two: CASE STUDY

Many churches think they are doing a great job organizing and promoting events or recruiting volunteers to help at the event and then when they don't get the turnout they want at the event or the volunteers they were counting on, they wonder what happened. This case study uses a real promotional piece from a not-very successful church Halloween outreach.

It goes into detail on what went wrong, how to change it, and shows you the kind of PR you need to do for success.

## Section Three: PDF Gallery

I don't just tell you why you should do things and then leave you with how to figure out how to do it: this section contains an overview and advice for using all the materials I talk about, plus full size images of all the items I tell you to create: invitation cards, postcards, bulletin inserts. There is also a sample of the brochure from the Case Study.

The current versions of these materials, that may be somewhat different than what is pictured, but accomplishes the same purpose are on the Effective Church Communications website at: <https://www.effectivechurchcom.com/templates/templates-harvest-festival-and-halloween/>

The link above also has Templates for Fall Festival outreach for churches that don't want to use the term "Halloween."

This collection of materials will give you many resources and combined with hard work and lots of prayer should result in your most effective Halloween or Fall Festival outreach ever.



# **section one**

# Articles

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# Halloween—a great time for evangelism—REALLY

## *or how to use everything that is bad about Halloween as a tool to share the gospel*

If there is a holiday that causes controversy in the church, it is Halloween. Some churches welcome it as a great time to do community outreach with alternative Halloween events; others shake their fingers and condemn churches that even mention the term.

It's always easier to curse the darkness than to flood it with light, but taking our cue from the Apostle Paul who used the pagan idols in Athens as his bridge to sharing the gospel, Effective Church Communications challenges you to use this time of year to share the gospel. This article are others that will provide motivation for looking at this time of year as an outreach opportunity, articles how to make special events in general more successful, plus overviews of the resources we have available on the Effective Church Communications website, [www.effectivechurchcom.com](http://www.effectivechurchcom.com).

### Turn dislike into outreach

There is a lot to dislike about Halloween—its emphasis on and even glorification of evil, its focus on death and the macabre. At the same time, the topic of death is not something that most people in our pleasure and prosperity-obsessed world consider very often. Instead of running away from this, we can use this focus on the afterlife during the Halloween season as a bridge to share the gospel of Jesus, our Savior who conquered death.

This approach of taking whatever interest and approach was important to his audience and using it as a bridge to the gospel was the one taken by the Apostle Paul, as he wrote to the Corinthians:

*To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some.*

*1 Cor. 9:20-22*

We might paraphrase this today to say:

*To those who celebrate Halloween I will offer an alternative celebration; to those who want to focus on death, I will offer the consideration of the Savior who conquered death; to those afraid to share the hope that is within them, I will share tools and opportunities to engage their friends in a consideration of Jesus. Our church will do whatever we can during the Halloween so that by all possible means we might save some.*



We don't put on alternative Halloween events because the staff is bored or has run out of things to do. We spend the time and trouble to put on these events as a way we can reach people who might never come to our church for any other reason and use this time to introduce them to Jesus.

*The next article discusses the Apostle Paul's approach in more detail and gives examples for how we might follow his lead.*

# **The Apostle Paul, his biblical example for Halloween Outreach and why it is OK for us to follow his example**

Halloween is huge—in marketing dollars spent, in candy sales, in the immense mind share it captures for almost two months prior to the actual day. Halloween stores, costume shops, many aisles in your local discount store—everywhere you go, Halloween confronts you. Though as Christians we might have genuine concerns about this, we can also make the most of this time and use Halloween as a time to connect with people and share the gospel.

To do that we first need to establish a biblical basis for the church to be involved in Halloween. Church leaders need to carefully consider this topic and carefully explain it to your congregation. If our people have genuine spiritual concerns about the appropriateness of Halloween outreach activities, we want to respect and answer those concerns.

## **Consider the Apostle Paul's example**

When Paul got to Athens in Acts 17, before he shared the gospel, he took time to look at what people already worshipped. In Athens this consisted of many idols of pagan gods and altars to them. I'm sure many were beautiful and appealing (think of the Greek statues you see in museums) and since the worship of these gods was based as many of them were around feasting and sexual excess, they were appealing to many people.

The idols and all they represented were not appealing to Paul.

He had grown up with "Thou shalt have no other God's before me." Conservative, former Hebrew of Hebrews that he was, I'm sure these statues, altars, and what they represented were repulsive to him. But he didn't let his inner revulsion stand in the way of noticing the "altar to an unknown god."

I wonder what went through his mind as he considered how he might use it as a bridge to sharing the gospel message. I wonder if he stood and stared at it; I wonder if he walked quickly past and slowly returned as the Holy Spirit perhaps prompted him for a second look.

He would later use that most likely initially repulsive altar as a bridge to share the gospel.

In a similar way we can use Halloween if we look closely at it.

## **Consider also that he didn't do**

Paul did not berate the Athenians for having so many idols. He could have. Like an Old Testament prophet, he could have loudly screamed, "Abomination, abomination! You are all evil, wicked sinners for having so many idols!"

He didn't do that. His focus was not on condemnation, but on redemption. With the focus of wanting to do something that would lead people towards salvation instead of merely insulting them,

he could say “What you worship without knowing it, the ‘unknown god’ I want to tell you who is he is and how you can know him.” Paul looked past the obvious and offensive in the idols themselves and saw people who were searching for God.

**Like the Apostle Paul we can take elements of our culture and use them as a bridge to share the gospel message.**

At its core, Halloween is about life after death. Our culture may have twisted and trivialized this holiday, but there is no denying that at this time of year people are thinking about death and the afterlife probably more than at any other time. It may be a totally distorted view, but it is a topic of conversation.

At the core of the Christian faith is also a focus on death and life beyond the grave. Though we may have the same core subject, the Christian view is not about fanciful demons and goblins or grotesque witches: our core belief is that Jesus died a real physical death and three days later physically rose from the dead. He conquered death. And he offers the same extraordinary gift to us: a freedom from fear of death and life everlasting to those who trust him as Savior and follow him as Lord.

Halloween brings up the topic of life after death into the cultural conversation. People are already talking about it; we simply need tools and activities to turn them to looking at the Christian view of these topics.

**All of this makes Halloween a fantastic opportunity for evangelism!**