



The celebration season is around the corner. The Halloween, Thanksgiving, and Christmas holidays are the trifecta of gatherings and celebrations. Every year, I like to pause and think about what these three celebrations are about and discuss with my family what aspects of these days we should participate in?

Let's talk about Halloween.

Halloween originated as a Celtic festival where costumes were worn and bonfires were lit to ward off ghosts. It has changed through years and cultures. But fundamentally it is a celebration of the dead, and things that go "boo in the night."

So is Halloween an evil day? Can I claim to love God and allow my kids to celebrate Halloween? If I am attempting to follow Christ, I should aim to have my actions and behaviors reflect Christ. *1 Corinthians 10:31 Paul writes, "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."* In deciding on my families level of Halloween participation the big question I will consider is whether my actions (or my children's) glorify God.

What's Thanksgiving about?

102 Pilgrims arrived to a cold harsh winter at Plymouth. Almost half of them did not live to see the spring. The Pilgrims were thankful for a friendly Native American named Squanto from the Wampanoag tribe. He taught them how to plant corn and to fish in the new world. On the first Thanksgiving, Squanto and 80 Wampanoag gathered for a 3 day celebration with games, worship, and songs of praise for God's gracious and sufficient provisions. An alliance was made between the Wampanoag and Pilgrims, to protect each other, yet in just a generation the pilgrims would brutally betray the Wampanoag tribe.

Is it insensitive to celebrate Thanksgiving? Since 1970, Thanksgiving has been remembered by some Indigenous people, as a day of mourning. Scripture teaches us how to care for all mankind. *"Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all" (Romans 12:15-19).* As we approach Thanksgiving (and everyday) we should also be humbled to pray and serve our neighbors as Christ did. *1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 says "Rejoice always, pray without*

ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." This Thanksgiving, I will praise God for all he has done and given, I will teach my kids to pray for those who are in need, and I will consider how to serve those who are in need.

Christmas, is it all about Christ?

Christmas is a Christian festival that celebrates the birth of Jesus Christ, the son of God. But did you know that the traditional date of December 25 only goes back as far as A.D. 273. There is an historic tension between secular and Christian beliefs when it comes to Christmas. The day was chosen for two pagan festivals honoring the sun. The Romans and Ancient Egyptians, used evergreen plants and garlands as symbols of everlasting life. St. Nicholas was a 4th century Christian bishop. He was known for being kind and generous. This real man has become a jolly immortal, judging children based on their behavior.

So is Christmas really a holiday I should celebrate if there is so much historic paganism involved? Christians should double check what we are celebrating. Am I celebrating the gift God gave me through his son, or am I celebrating my ability to give? Am I remembering when wise men brought gifts to Mary and Joseph and Jesus while he lay in a manger, or the "Hallmark" quality gifts I send out every year to keep up with my neighbors? Do I consider holiday gatherings as a celebration of the fulfillment of scriptures surrounding Jesus' holy birth, or a way to eat more without the guilt? This Christmas I will intentionally seek ways to talk about Jesus, God's best gift to me! I will remind my family that Jesus is the perfect lamb who takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29).

This year I am going to be deliberate in talking to my family about what it means to celebrate HalloThankSmas as a child of God. Because of Jesus's sacrifice on my behalf, my sins don't have to separate me from God any longer. I believe that there is room to share the gospel, the biggest reason to celebrate this holiday season.