

TYPES OF EVENTS—FALL FESTIVAL

ATTRACTION

This is a popular, safe, fun alternative that children, parents, and teens can be involved in. This concept has many twists and variations, but the basic idea is to offer fun and games on Halloween night. It keeps the children off the streets while ensuring they have safe fun with other children and that the candy or treats they receive are safe.

BRIDGE

This provides a great opportunity to invite unchurched children. Often when you get the children, you get the parents. Church children and adults can dress as Bible characters, creating a natural bridge to sharing the gospel. Halloween carnival-type games can be made available, each with a reward of candy.

COMMUNICATING THE GOSPEL

Time can be set aside during the event to pause and have someone share the gospel, perhaps with the evil aspects of Halloween shown in contrast to the love and salvation of Christ. Christian tracts, including ones with Halloween themes, can be presented as prizes with candy. Games can incorporate Bible trivia or Bible facts.

TIPS

Variety: Ask friends in other churches what they have done in the past, and be creative. The possibilities for a fall festival are endless. One church held a “Holyween” celebration. Children from the church were instructed to come dressed as Bible characters. Church members were instructed to give a genuine, friendly welcome to the occasional guest who will inevitably come dressed in traditional Halloween garb (witches, ghosts, etc.). Games included standards such as booths, a cakewalk, fishing for prizes, a dart throw, bowling, and so on. Another church had a Noah’s ark theme for its “Halloween Hallelujah Party.” A large ark was built in the church fellowship area. Children were instructed to dress as an animal on Noah’s ark. A bearded man in the church dressed as Noah and used the Genesis account as an illustration of how God saves.

Location: It is fine to have this event at church, but consider having it at a “neutral site” if possible, such as a civic organization clubhouse or a community center. Sometimes getting away from the church building draws more unchurched people, though you will want to make clear it is church sponsored.

Decorations: Decorate festively, but not with ghosts, goblins, and spider webs. Use biblical themes and characters as much as possible in decorating.

Promotion: Advertise in the community. This does not have to be high cost, but newspaper ads and radio spots are great if you can afford them. Make simple flyers advertising a Halloween alternative that is safe and keeps children off the street. Cell groups, Sunday School classes, and teens can split up neighborhoods and deliver the flyers, as well as posting them on bulletin boards in public places and handing them out in public places, with appropriate permission. Try distributing flyers in neighborhoods a week before the event—but doing it in full Halloween costume. This will get people’s attention and get them thinking about Halloween and the event. Advertise that there are to be no scary costumes. Be prepared, however, for visiting children to wear them, and have a plan for how to deal with it. The best course of action may be to ignore it. To do otherwise may do more harm than good.

Organization: Booth/activity assignments can be divided among Sunday School classes. Have everyone who enters (including church members) fill out a registration card. Keep it brief, but a record of attendance is crucial for follow-up. A drawing for a prize provides a nonthreatening reason to get everyone’s name, address, and telephone number.

Follow-up: Within a week after the event, someone from the church should visit the home, thanking the family or children for attending. Use this as an opportunity to explain what the church offers children overall.

Entertainment: It is a good idea to mix in a little entertainment—music or skits. Keep it brief, however. Remember that the children came for the games and candy, and an extended “show” will only make them restless.

Evangelism: Besides the special characters mentioned above who can share the gospel, a clown or a Christian magician can use their “act” as a bridge to share Jesus. A creative way to share the gospel is to have an open coffin (so children will not wonder if anyone is in it!). During the festivities, when anyone asks about it, simply answer that someone (pastor or other leader) will explain about it later. As the evening winds down, gather everyone together and have the leader use the coffin as a bridge from the macabre atmosphere of Halloween and our fear of death to Jesus as the resurrection and the life.

Idea: Provide group and individual pictures of the children. Take 35 mm pictures, not ones with an instant camera. Once pictures are developed, you have a reason to visit each child’s family as you deliver their picture to them. Better yet, instruct children that they can pick up their pictures at 9:45 a.m. the next Sunday in their Sunday School class.

Prayer: Set aside a room for prayer and recruit volunteers to staff it throughout the event. Depending on the number of volunteers, you may want to rotate them periodically. Have the prayer warriors pray specifically for each aspect of the festival, especially the sharing of the gospel. Several weeks before the event have families identify unchurched families they want to invite, and ask them to pray daily for them until the event.

PLANNING SHEET— FALL FESTIVAL

STEP #	WHAT	WHO	WHEN
1	Schedule event on church calendar	Pastor	6-12 mos
2	Select and enlist Ministry Teams	Pastor	3 mos
3	Arrange for equipment, decorations	Person(s) designated	4 wks
4	Order NAMB follow-up materials (see Resources)	Person(s) designated	4 wks
5	Promote prayer plan	Person(s) designated	4 wks
6	Print publicity, tickets, attendance	Person(s) designated	4 wks
7	Promote in church newsletter, bulletin	Person(s) designated	4 wks
8	Secure print, radio, TC, sign, and marquee space	Person(s) designated	4 wks
9	Mail attendance plan letter to members	Person(s) designated	3 wks
10	Enlist commitment counselors and encouragers	Person(s) designated	3 wks
11	Distribute publicity	Person(s) designated	3 wks
12	Call prospects	Church members	2 wks
13	Train counselors and encouragers	Pastor	2 wks
14	Implement final physical arrangements	Person(s) designated	Day of event
15	Follow-up with new converts	Church members	Immediately following the event
16	Visit prospects	Church members	Immediately following the event

TYPES OF EVENTS—COSTUME PARTY FOR GROWN-UPS

ATTRACTION

Is every event for Halloween just for children? There is no reason for adults to be left out. A time of fun and fellowship for adults can be planned and be intentionally evangelistic as well. Perhaps a theme for an adult party could be, “Why Should Children Have All the Fun?” The event could be held in various church members’ homes, in the church fellowship area, in or a non-church setting.

BRIDGE

The costumes and the theme of “acting like someone else” both provide a bridge to sharing the gospel.

COMMUNICATION

The host is crucial. The gospel can be presented from the theme of “Who Are You,” or “Taking Off the Mask,” then explanation made as to who we can be in Christ. The costumes in the event may provide the door to sharing the gospel, particularly if one is Jesus.

TIPS

Variations: Variations abound, including a fancier version billed a “Masquerade Ball.” A family costume party where you encourage entire families to come as a theme (basketball team, Noah’s ark characters) is another idea. Your party can have a variety of themes—Wild West, ‘50s—be creative. A biblical theme, however, is not suggested since this is an outreach event. To do otherwise may put some unchurched people ill at ease, not knowing how to dress.

Timing: Be careful of scheduling. The night before or after Halloween is actually celebrated in your community might be a better choice, thus avoiding conflict with youth activities.

Hint: Provide child care. This will require sacrifice on the part of some adults who will miss the party. Or, trade off with the teens—having their Halloween activity one night (parents doing almost all the work) with the adult activity the next (teens keeping the small children, perhaps even serving). A veritable Halloween doubleheader!

Activities: If this is a family event, do not be too “grown up” about the activities; after watching the children bob for apples and other goofy things, give the parents a small taste of it, too.

Evangelism: The gospel can be shared in various ways. If this is being done in several homes as a community activity, the host or hostess might set aside a few minutes in the middle or end of the activity to share his or her testimony.

Promotion: Advertise with flyers door-to-door in neighborhoods several weeks in advance of the event(s), or use neighborhood bulletins. Church families should personally invite neighbors they have met.

Prayer: Have a prayer team ready to meet at the time of the event(s). This team should know the names of everyone hosting an event (if there are multiple events in homes) and be praying specifically for that event. If possible, the hosts could provide the names of people they know will be attending. Prayerwalk the neighborhood(s) once or twice before the event, specifically praying for each household.

PLANNING SHEET — COSTUME PARTY FOR GROWN-UPS

STEP #	WHAT	WHO	WHEN
1	Schedule event on church calendar	Pastor	6-12 mos
2	Select and enlist Ministry Teams	Pastor	3 mos
3	Arrange for food, decorations	Person(s) designated	4 wks
4	Order NAMB follow-up materials (see Resources)	Person(s) designated	4 wks
5	Promote prayer plan	Person(s) designated	4 wks
6	Print publicity, tickets, attendance cards (if needed)	Person(s) designated	4 wks
7	Promote in church newsletter, bulletin	Person(s) designated	4 wks
8	Secure advertising space	Person(s) designated	4 wks
9	Enlist encouragers	Pastor	3 wks
10	Distribute publicity and/or invitations	Person(s) designated	3 wks
11	Call prospects	Church members	2 wks
12	Train counselors and encouragers	Pastor	2 wks
13	Implement final physical arrangements	Person(s) designated	Day of event
14	Follow-up with new converts	Person(s) designated	Immediately following the event
15	Visit prospects	Church members	Immediately following the event

TYPES OF EVENTS—HALLOW-TEEN PARTY

ATTRACTION

At least by age 15 or 16 many teenagers begin to feel too old for typical Halloween activities but too young to give up the fun. Cater to them with a “Hallow-teen” party of a slightly more mature nature. Skip the booths and cakewalk; go light on the candy. Find what is fun to the teens a night of videos they like (music or other), games they enjoy, and so on and advertise something just for them.

BRIDGE

The key is honesty. Have them dress up as the person they admire most. No limitations. The event itself is a natural bridge to sharing the gospel, but the costume approach will open many doors.

COMMUNICATION

Ask, but do not require, each teen to take about 60 seconds to tell why he or she dressed that way. Undoubtedly, in a youth group, you will have several dressed as Jesus or other biblical characters. You can make sure of this by doing it yourself. The teens will probably do most of the communicating for you, but the group leader must succinctly present why it is wise to follow Jesus. It is a natural flow into the gospel presentation.

TIPS

Evangelism: The hosts are crucial here. The costumes will provide many opportunities to make tactful points about what are good and bad role models. Be prepared to comment intelligently on key biblical characters. If you get a Paul, you will want to remark on the good qualities of Paul. The host’s ability to dovetail off the costumes will greatly enhance the educational value of the exercise. You must convince your youth what a good outreach tool this is. You do not want only your church youth attending there. Give them a lot of lead time on this, and let them help prepare the plans for the evening so they feel ownership of it. Strongly encourage each teen to bring at least two unchurched friends. Train them how to approach people.

Hint: When unchurched teens dress up as the person they admire most, it opens the door for some awkward costumes. Do not fret it, but be careful not to be critical. Inevitably, one participant will dress up like a rock star and say, “I did it because he makes a lot of money and all the girls love him.” Realize that teenagers are savvy enough to recognize the shallowness of such a statement without you saying so. This will become apparent later in the evening when the gospel is presented.

Pace: Make the evening crisp; not too much sitting around. When using videos, make them short and snappy (one reason Christian music videos are good). Keep it flowing with activities and food.

Hint: Have parents provide the food.

Promotion: Providing free tickets for your youth to distribute at school and in the neighborhood is a good idea because it makes it seem like a more formal invitation, but be conscious of the size group you may be gathering.

Prayer: A month in advance, have each student in the youth group list the first name of several unchurched friends they would like to see come to the event. Have the list available for them to take home and pray over. Also, post it in the youth room(s) and pray over it aloud at each meeting until the event. Give the parents of your teens a list of specific needs of the evening, and ask them to pray daily for the effectiveness of the outreach.

PLANNING SHEET—HALLOW-TEEN PARTY

STEP #	WHAT	WHO	WHEN
1	Schedule event on church calendar	Pastor	6-12 mos
2	Select and enlist Ministry Teams	Pastor	3 mos
3	Arrange for equipment, decorations	Person(s) designated	4 wks
4	Order NAMB follow-up materials (see Resources)	Person(s) designated	4 wks
5	Promote prayer plan	Person(s) designated	4 wks
6	Print publicity, tickets, attendance	Person(s) designated	4 wks
7	Promote in church newsletter, bulletin	Person(s) designated	4 wks
8	Enlist commitment counselors and encouragers	Pastor	3 wks
9	Distribute publicity	Person(s) designated	3 wks
10	Call prospects	Church members	2 wks
11	Train counselors and encouragers	Pastor	2 wks
12	Implement final physical arrangements	Person(s) designated	Day of event
13	Follow-up with new converts	Person(s) designated	Immediately following the event
14	Visit prospects	Church members	Immediately following the event

TYPES OF EVENTS—REVERSE “TRICK-OR-TREATING”

ATTRACTION

People are familiar with going and getting at Halloween, not coming and giving. Turn the tables in a creative fashion by going into the neighborhoods on Halloween to give candy or a small gift and the gospel message.

BRIDGE

People are receptive on Halloween. They leave the porch light on, expecting to be approached, albeit for getting instead of giving. They have put on their best face. They will be surprised and receptive to your Halloween visit.

COMMUNICATION

Go door-to-door. Dress in nice, casual clothes, or you may dress as a Bible character. Give a gift that can lead into a presentation of the good news (see examples below). Have tracts or other written materials to leave with each home you visit.

TIPS

Variations: One church distributes a marked New Testament at the door. They say, “Hi! We’re not here to trick, but to treat. We’re from [church name] Baptist Church, and we’d like to give you this Bible. If you have a couple of minutes we’d like to show you how it works.” A church in Texas “mugs” their community each Halloween. They give a free mug with the name of their church on it. It is filled with gourmet tea, coffee, and rock sugar sticks. They leave a gospel tract or share the gospel verbally with each home they visit.

Organization: Be creative, but have a firm plan and keep it simple. Disperse the church family into neighborhoods. Be organized, using maps, so there is no overlap. If a majority of the church family is involved, and neighborhoods are chosen carefully, you can touch hundreds or thousands of people in one night.

Evangelism: Perhaps have pre-bagged candy and a gospel tract. There are some ‘Halloween’ tracts available, but be careful that they are not so gimmicky they fail to clearly present the way of salvation. Say something like, “We’d like for you to have this bag of candy and this treat that explains what is most important to us, our relationship with Jesus Christ. If (church name) can ever help you, please call or come see us. The telephone number and address is on the treat.” If an opportunity for you to share the good news presents itself, then do it. Link your gospel tract presentation to the type of costume you decide to wear. For example, “Super Hero” costumes make for an easy transition to the gospel, because it bridges to a discussion about the real “Super Hero,” our “Super” Savior, Jesus Christ.

Servanthood: Halloween is a great time for servant evangelism. Servant evangelism is the concept of doing an act of kindness in the name of Jesus Christ. People are more likely to listen

to your presentation of the gospel after you have done something for them. Servant evangelism ideas include distributing light bulbs door-to-door and saying, "There's probably a light out in your house somewhere. We want you to have this, and we want to tell you that Jesus is the Light of the world." Several weeks in advance of Halloween, you might take candles house-to-house, explaining they are for use in carved pumpkins, then use the candle as an opportunity to explain that Jesus is the Light of the world. If your volunteers are particularly ambitious, have them hold a door-to-door costumed free car wash. Under no circumstances accept money. When asked why you are doing this, the reply should be, "To show the love of Jesus in a practical way." Have several people prepared to share the gospel. Those less willing to share the gospel can wash cars, watch the others witness, learn from it, and grow enthusiastic about doing it themselves. When sharing the gospel in this setting say, "We've just washed your car, but Jesus Christ can cleanse your heart with life-giving water."

Innovation: This suggestion is for the very bold. Get volunteers (the outgoing, dramatic type, obviously) to dress up as Jesus and the twelve Apostles. Be as realistic as possible. Send Jesus and the apostles into neighborhoods in teams. Jesus goes to the door, preferably when no other trick-or-treaters are at the door, and says, "My name is Jesus Christ. I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. This explains the way of salvation through me (Jesus hands them tract). If you have further questions, my apostles (motions toward apostles behind him, in the street) or I will be in the streets." You will definitely get their attention. You were brief. You gave them the gospel. You gave them an immediate follow-up opportunity, should they wish to take advantage of it.

Key: The key to all of the above is simple. Be sensitive. If someone is clearly not interested, politely back away. Care about the one you are talking to. You may be wearing a costume, but do not be fake.

Prayer: Have designated individuals to prayerwalk at the same time, in the same neighborhood, as your Halloween ministers. Have Sunday School classes pray for a different neighborhood that will be targeted for as many weeks before the event as it takes to cover all the areas.

PLANNING SHEET—REVERSE “TRICK-OR-TREATING”

STEP #	WHAT	WHO	WHEN
1	Schedule event on church calendar	Pastor	6-12 mos
2	Select and enlist Ministry Teams	Pastor	3 mos
3	Arrange for candy, Bibles, or gift giveaways	Person(s) designated	4 wks
4	Order NAMB follow-up materials (see Resources)	Person(s) designated	4 wks
5	Promote prayer plan	Person(s) designated	4 wks
6	Print or order evangelism tracts and materials	Person(s) designated	4 wks
7	Promote in church newsletter, bulletin	Person(s) designated	4 wks
8	Mail promotional plan to members	Person(s) designated	3 wks
9	Enlist encouragers	Pastor	3 wks
10	Distribute publicity	Person(s) designated	3 wks
11	Train counselors and encouragers	Pastor	2 wks
12	Implement plan	Person(s) designated	Day of event
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TYPES OF EVENTS—SCARY STUFF

ATTRACTION

This takes the Halloween “haunted house” idea and gives it a redemptive twist. This walk-through presentation depicts life, sin, death, and eternity. Moving from room to room, with possibly of a couple of outside scenes, a drama depicts the life of a pair of teenagers, or a troubled family or homeless people . . . the possibilities are endless. Scenes can be few or many, depending on the resources but can include drunkenness, an auto accident, a funeral home scene, or a morgue scene. Usually, judgment before Christ, or heaven and hell is presented in the last room with a gospel presentation.

BRIDGE

The issues of life, death, heaven, hell, judgment, and mercy make people think about eternity. This theme helps play off the macabre atmosphere of Halloween, but not in an offensive manner. While the drama is entertaining, it is also thought-provoking, raising a question of where someone will spend eternity. Remember to keep the presentation thought-provoking, yet tasteful.

COMMUNICATION

The options to the question are displayed in the drama—heaven or hell. The solution to the question is given in the last scene, with a clear gospel presentation that includes an invitation by response card or by talking to a counselor.

TIPS

Organization: Do not be intimidated by the size and amount of work involved in putting together such an event. Many churches are willing to make the effort because of the evangelistic results these events are garnering. One small church in Georgia conducts an outdoor “Trail of Decisions” each year. Hundreds have been saved through this effort. Also, this is a perfect event to share with other churches. One very successful “Tribulation Trail” in South Carolina involved as many as 20 churches in a recent year. Start early—a year or more in advance—and approach a sister church or your association. While this is a high-maintenance event, it is always a high-impact event.

Resources: An excellent resource is available to use in events such as these. Write to Judgment House, 331 Cleveland St., Clearwater, FL 33755 to order information. There are many other good variations of this theme. A church in Arkansas presents “Hereafter House” based on descriptions of heaven and hell in the Bible. A church in Georgia does “The Chilling Fields,” an outdoor, drive-through depiction of the rapture, tribulation, and second coming of Christ. Your drama can take many forms; be creative, think big, and ask others what they have done.

Hint: Ask for the involvement of local law enforcement and rescue units by using their vehicles in the scenes, if you choose to do a “drunk driving/accident” scenario, especially if you have facilities that allow all or some scenes to be outdoors. The better the props, the better the drama, and by explaining to police and rescue units that your purpose includes deterring drunkenness, you may gain their cooperation. Others doing similar productions have had success in working with law

enforcement organizations in this way. You have probably seen the “demolished car of a drunken driver” display used at high schools. You can use it, too. Working through the police, or going to a local junk yard, find a badly wrecked vehicle to display in a scene.

Promotion: Advertise aggressively. This event can be a big draw. Depending on space limitations and actual physical arrangements, you might want to give away or sell tickets in advance, but leave allowance for “walk-ins” (or “drive ins”).

Caution: Be real without being grotesque. Depending on the nature of the scenes, you might consider an advertised warning, written on tickets, that says, “No children under 10 unless accompanied by adult.” An appropriate warning about the nature of the event may be published. Again, this varies according to the event, but carefully consider this matter. If you deem the focus on death too harsh, or you want an alternative, another idea is to do a room-to-room walk through the Bible. Starting with Adam and Eve, choose crucial Biblical scenes, being careful to clearly present the gospel.

Follow-up: Be prepared for immediate follow-up. While the event is still fresh in people’s minds, have church members visit or call their home. This should happen within a few days. Have follow-up teams educated to answer questions about eternity, and—of course—trained to lead someone to Christ.

Prayer: Be prepared for spiritual warfare. Satan does not want you to do this event. Be prayed up. Before each event, have a brief worship time, praising God and committing all that follows to the Lord. Those who have done this successfully in the past report that they cannot imagine doing it without first entering into the Lord’s presence. Set aside a prayer room and pray specifically for the effectiveness of each scene, redoubling prayer toward the salvation presentation. Have prayer warriors situated at the entrance of the event, enough that they may systematically, but without letting it be known, pick out and pray for each person or carload of people who enter. They should pray that the Holy Spirit would use the drama to open the eyes, minds, and hearts of visitors to their need for Jesus Christ.

Involvement: Total participation is crucial. This is a big event, in terms of personnel and impact. The church body will have ownership of it if everyone is involved—that’s the only way it can be done effectively. Everyone can have a part.

Food: Depending on the number of nights you are presenting the drama, and the actual schedule, it may be prudent to arrange for the actors and crew to be fed on-site. Ask for volunteers in the church to handle this responsibility.

Youth: Teenagers are a crucial part of this effort. Many times, teens make up the majority of the actors. Many teenagers will be reached. Your youth group will likely be committing a lot of time to this event. Communicate with the parents at the beginning about how much time is required, and be prepared for some give-and-take.

PLANNING SHEET— SCARY STUFF

STEP #	WHAT	WHO	WHEN
1	Schedule event on church calendar	Pastor	6-12 mos
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3	Arrange for equipment, decorations	Person(s) designated	4 wks
4	Order NAMB follow-up materials (see Resources)	Person(s) designated	4 wks
5	Promote prayer plan	Person(s) designated	4 wks
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