

The Treasures of God's Love

A Year of Family Celebrations

Keith Evan Schubert

October 26, 2016

Contents

1	The Cross and Resurrection of Christ	5
1.1	Outline	6
1.2	Palm Sunday	9
1.3	Passion Week: Monday	9
1.4	Passion Week: Tuesday	9
1.5	Passion Week: Wednesday	9
1.6	Passion Week: Thursday	9
1.7	Passion Week: Friday	10
1.8	Passion Week: Saturday	10
1.9	Resurrection	10
1.10	Resurrection Chests	10
1.11	Game	11
2	Pentecost	13
3	Reformation Day	15
4	Thanksgiving	17
4.1	First Day (Tuesday): God	18
4.1.1	God Knows All Soduku	19
4.2	Second Day (Thursday): Guilt	21
4.2.1	Change my ways oh Lord Candles	22
4.3	Third Day (Saturday): Grace	24
4.4	Fourth Day (Tuesday): Gratitude	26
4.5	Week 5: Thanksgiving	27
5	Christmas	29
5.1	The Seed of the Woman	29
5.2	Isaiah's Prophecy	29
5.3	The Saviour Prefigured	29
5.4	Announcement	29
5.5	The King's Comming	29
5.6	Three Magi	29
5.7	Praise in the Temple	30
6	First Week of Advent	33
6.1	The Hope of Immediate Fulfilment	33
6.2	The Need for a Prophet	34
A	Jesus at Hanukkah	37

B	Easter Isn't Christian	39
B.1	History of Easter	39
B.2	Requirements of God	39
C	Why I Don't Celebrate Halloween	41
C.1	History of Halloween	41
C.2	Modern Practice	42
C.3	God's view of Participating in Other Worship	43
C.4	Answers to Objections	48
C.5	What I Do	49

Chapter 1

The Cross and Resurrection of Christ

Note that your construct is what determines how you interpret the visions, thus since the constructs are of human origin, we must always challenge them to make sure they line up with scripture. Do not so tightly hold to a construct that you bend the text to meet it. Let's look at some prophesies with interpretations to see how this works. Read Daniel 7:1-14. What do you think it means? Read Daniel 7: 15-28. How close were you? Now Read Daniel 8:1-14. So what do you think this means? Now Read Daniel 8:15-27. How did this square with history? Note: if you ever want a great way to show the truth of the scriptures look at how prophesy in the Scriptures are fulfilled, like the exacting details in Daniel 11:2-35, which reads like a history book without the names.

1.1 Outline

Day	
What happened	Significance
Thursday-Friday, Abib(Nisan) 8	
Jesus Arrives at Bethany	
Friday-Saturday, Abib(Nisan) 9, Sabbath	
Feast at Simon house	Jesus was honored at a feast, in the home of Simon the leper (likely healed by Jesus earlier). Lazarus was prominent as Jesus had just raised him. Word spread that night of Jesus's presence.
Anointing of Jesus by Mary	Jesus Prepared for his death by having his body anointed 1 week before he is placed in the tomb. Possibly, the perfume (spikenard) was originally from the burial of Lazarus, but now it is for the one who raised him and will take his place (and ours). As Flashbacks: Matthew 26:6-13, Mark 14, In Sequence: John 12:1-11.
Jesus stays in Bethany	Crowds come to Jesus and see risen Lazarus. Many believe and the priest plot to kill Lazarus.
Saturday-Sunday, Abib(Nisan) 10, Palm Sunday	
Triumphal Entry	This was the day that the Passover lamb was selected, and though the people sang messianic songs to him and lay the palm branches they did not understand. The date is per Daniels prophesy of the 70 weeks. Matthew 21:1-11, Luke 19:28-44, John 12:12-19
Weep for Jerusalem	After Jesus leaves Jerusalem, he weeps for Jerusalem, who so foolishly wanted a different type of savior.
Sunday-Monday, Abib(Nisan) 11	
Curse fig tree	Rejection of apostate Israel, which bore no fruit, is prefigured. Matthew 21:18-22
Meet with Greeks	Gospel goes to the gentiles, who are to be part of the church along with the faithful of Israel. John 12:20-26
Cleans the Temple	Warning to the Jews of their uncleanness. Matthew 21:12-17, Luke 19:45-48 Church will be new temple and will be clean.

Day	
What happened	Significance
Monday-Tuesday, Abib(Nisan) 12	
Fig tree found withered	Ending of apostate Israel in AD 70 prefigured as follow through on cursing of day before.
Challenge of Christ's Authority	Matthew 21:23-27, Luke 20:1-8
Parable of the Two Sons	Matthew 21:28-32
Parable of the Tenants	Matthew 21:33-46, Luke 20:9-18
Parable of the Wedding Banquet	Matthew 22:1-14
Paying Taxes to Caesar	Matthew 22:15-22, Luke 20:19-26
Marriage at the Resurrection	Matthew 22:23-33, Luke 20:27-40
Greatest Commandment	Matthew 22:34-40
Whose Son is the Christ	Matthew 22:41-46, Luke 20:41-47
Widow's Gift	Contrasts with with religious leaders. Luke 21:1-4
Seven Woes	Jesus condemns the false religion of the Jews of his day and weeps for Jerusalem. End of public ministry. Matthew 23
Olivet Discourse	Prophecy of the ending of apostate Israel in AD 70. Matthew 24, Luke 21:5-38
Tuesday-Wednesday, Abib(Nisan) 13	
Parable of the Ten Virgins	Matthew 25:1-13
Parable of the Talents	Matthew 25:14-30
Sheep and Goats	Matthew 25:31-46
Arrangements for Betrayal	Jewish leaders reject God and make their own religion culminating in changes after temple destruction. Matthew 26:1-5
Judas Takes Money	Matthew 26:14-16
Wednesday-Thursday, Abib(Nisan) 14, Passover Lamb Killed	
Preparation of Passover	Matthew 26:17-19, Luke 22:1-13

Day	
What happened	Significance
Thursday-Friday, Abib(Nisan) 15, Passover Meal, Good Friday	
Passover	The Last Supper This started the Lord's Supper, and showed the significance of the sacrifice. Matthew 26:20-30, Luke 22:14-23, John 13
Who is greatest?	Shows the weakness and humanity of the disciples, changes attitudes which were like religious leaders of the day. Luke 22:24-38
Path to Mt. Olives	Matthew 26:30-35, Luke 22:39
Gethsemane	Matthew 26:36-46, Luke 22:40-46
Arrest	Matthew 26:47-56, Luke 22:47-54
Caiaphas	Matthew 26:57-68
Peter's Denial	Matthew 26:69-75, Luke 22:55-62
Priest's Guards Beat Jesus	Luke 22:63-65
Sanhedrin	Luke 22:66-71
Judas Hangs Himself	Matthew 27:1-10
Pilate	Matthew 27:11-26, Luke 23:1-7
Herod	Luke 23:8-12
Pilate part 2	Luke 23:13-25
Soldier's Mock Jesus	robe, crown of thorns, spitting, staff, beating. Matthew 27:27-31
Simon from Cyrene carries cross	Matthew 27:32, Luke 23:26-32
Jesus Crucified from 9am to 3pm, darkness for last three hours, earthquake, curtain torn, Burial	Jesus died at the exact time that the sacrifice for the sins of the world was slain in the temple, again the people chose the wrong lamb
Crucifixion	Matthew 27:33-35, Luke 23:33
Casting Lots	Matthew 27:35-36, Luke 23:34
Charge	Matthew 27:37, Luke 23:38
Two Thieves and insults	Matthew 27:38-44, Luke 23:35-43
Darkness	From 6-9 Jerusalem Time (12-3pm modern counting). Matthew 27:45, Luke 23:44-45
Forsaken and wine-vinegar	Matthew 27:46-49, Luke 23:36
Tetelestai	Matthew 27:50
Death	Luke 23:46-49
Temple Curtain, earthquakes, graves open	Matthew 27:51-56, Luke 23:45
Burial	Just before the end of the day. First Day in tomb. Matthew 27:57-61, Luke 23:50-55

Day	
What happened	Significance
Friday-Saturday, Abib(Nisan) 16, First Day of Unleavened Bread, High Sabbath	
Guards, stone, seal	The evening (i.e. shortly after Jesus placed in the tomb. Matthew 27:62-66
Second day in the Tomb	Fulfilment of prophesy and the day in the week God rested from making and now saving man. Luke 23:56
Saturday-Sunday, Abib(Nisan) 17, Second Day of Unleavened Bread, First Fruits	
Jesus rose from dead, first fruits of the dead	This was to consecrate the harvest to the Lord, so one symbolic sheaf was brought up, just as Jesus' resurrection promises that to all believers. Matthew 28:1-10, Luke 24:1-12
Guard's Report	Matthew 28:11-15
Road to Emmaus	Luke 24:13-35
Inner Room	Luke 24:36-49
Great Commission	Matthew 28:16-20
Ascension	Luke 24:50-53

1.2 Palm Sunday

Triumphal Entry (John 12:12-19, Luke 13:31-35)

Weep for Jerusalem (Mat 23:37-39, Luke 13:34-35)

1.3 Passion Week: Monday

Curse fig tree (Mat 21:18-19, Mark 11:12-14)

Meet with Greeks (John 12:20-36)

Cleans the Temple

1.4 Passion Week: Tuesday

Fig tree found withered

Challenge of Christ's Authority

Olivet Discourse

1.5 Passion Week: Wednesday

1.6 Passion Week: Thursday

The Last Supper (John 13:1-17)

1.7 Passion Week: Friday

1.8 Passion Week: Saturday

1.9 Resurrection

Mark 16:1-13

Luke 24:13-35

Psalm 115

1.10 Resurrection Chests

1. Perfume: preparation for burial
2. Donkey: Jesus came riding on a donkey (Matthew 21:1-9)
3. Palm Branch: triumphal Entry (Mark 11:7-8)
4. Tears: Jesus Weeps for Jerusalem
5. Tree: cursing fig tree
6. : meet with greeks
7. Scourge of cords: cleans temple
8. dead branch: withered tree
9. challenge authority
10. olivet discourse
11. Silver Coins: Judas' 30 pieces of silver (Matthew 26:14-16,46-50; 27:1-5)
12. Soap: Washing the Disciple's Feet (John 13:4-10)
13. Passover Cup and cracker: Last Supper (Matthew 26:17-19, 26-28; Exodus 12:23)
14. Musical note: sang egyptian hallel
15. Praying Hands: Garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14:32-42)
16. Sword: Peter cuts off servant's ear
17. Rope: Jesus arrested (John 18:12)
18. Rooster: Peter's Denial(Luke 22:61)
19. Fist: Jesus Beaten
20. pillow: Pilot's wife's dream
21. Ping pong ball: Jesus's back and forth trials
22. Leather Whip: 39 Lashes (John 19:1-15, Matthew 27:26-31)
23. Crown of Thorns, Purple Cloth: Mocking Jesus (Matthew 27:29-31, John 19:2)

24. Bloody Hands: Pilot and Jew's guilt
25. INRI: Roman Charge
26. Nails in Cross: Jesus's Crucifixion (John 19:16-22)
27. Dice: Gambling for Jesus's Robe (John 19:23-25)
28. Laughing mouth: mocked Jesus
29. Eloi Eloi lama sabacthani
30. Darkness: from noon till 3pm (Luke 23:44-45)
31. stick with rag: offering gall (John 19:28-30)
32. Roman Shield: Quadrigga of soldiers (John 19:32)
33. Canceled Debt: tetelestai - the debt is paid in full
34. Spear: Piercing Jesus's side (John 19:31-37)
35. Linen wrapping: Burial (Matthew 27:57-61)
36. Stone: Sealing the tomb part 1 (Matthew 28:1-3)
37. Seal: Sealing the tomb part 2 (Matthew 27:66)
38. Soldier: Sealing the tomb part 3
39. key: Death is defeated
40. Woman: come to the tomb
41. Angel: announce the resurrection
42. empty: Jesus rose (Matthew 28:5-8)

1.11 Game

Make a card with the picture of the item on one side and the name/description and verses on the back. Move on board by seeing picture and correctly stating what is on the back. Kids only need to get part right based on age.

Chapter 2

Pentecost

Chapter 3

Reformation Day

The Solas of the Reformation

Today is October 31, and while to most people this means celebrating the pagan holiday of Samhain (pronounced Sow-in), under the name Halloween. For my commentary on what the false holidays not to celebrate, see Appendix C. This is reformation day.

On this day in 1517, Martin Luther Nailed the 95 Thesis on the Church door of Wittenberg. The Protestant Reformation was launched. Why is this so dear to us? To answer this we have to see what the fight was over. Many different formulas exist, but I will use the one that they used, the solas. Sola is Latin for only or alone. The solas are:

1. Sola Scriptura - Scripture Alone
2. Sola Fide - Faith Alone
3. Sola Gratia - Grace Alone
4. Solo Christo - Christ Alone
5. Soli Deo Gloria - To God's Glory Alone

I have chosen this order to emphasize the two main points of the reformation: the formal cause (Sola Scriptura) and the material cause (Sola Fide).

A formal cause is the one which outlines or plans what is to be - it describes the form of things. Protestants believe that only the Bible fits this bill. It alone is binding on the conscience. Let's look at some Scripture:

But **thou** hast been thoroughly acquainted with my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings: what sufferings happened to me in Antioch, in Iconium, in Lystra; what persecutions I endured; and the Lord delivered me out of all. And all indeed who desire to live piously in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. But wicked men and juggling impostors shall advance in evil, leading and being led astray. But **thou**, abide in those things which thou hast learned, and of which thou hast been fully persuaded, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the sacred letters, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus. Every scripture is divinely inspired, and profitable for teaching, for conviction, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be complete, fully fitted to every good work. I testify before God and Christ Jesus, who is about to judge living and dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom, proclaim the word; be urgent in season and out of season, convict, rebuke, encourage, with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time shall be when they will not bear sound

teaching; but according to their own lusts will heap up to themselves teachers, having an itching ear; and they will turn away their ear from the truth, and will have turned aside to fables. But **thou**, be sober in all things, bear evils, do the work of an evangelist, fill up the full measure of thy ministry. For *I* am already being poured out, and the time of my release is come. I have combated the good combat, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth the crown of righteousness is laid up for me, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will render to me in that day; but not only to me, but also to all who love his appearing.

2 Timothy 3:10-4:8

1 Peter 1:20-2:3

Isaiah 55:6-13

A material cause is one of which the whole thing is made up. In the case against the Roman Church, that was its denial of true salvation. We are saved by faith alone:

Romans 3:19-4:16

Galatians 2:10-3:18

Grace alone

Ephesians 2

Christ alone

John 20:31, 1 John 5:13

God's Glory

Ephesians 1

Chapter 4

Thanksgiving

Thanksgiving is one of the best gifts our country has given to the world. Fall festivals celebrate the bounty of what we have, while Thanksgiving focuses on the giver, God. Thanksgiving is a uniquely God centered idea. Your average person thinks that Thanksgiving is about food and family. Both are there, to be certain, but this is not what it is about. Don't confuse the ones with celebrate with, and the trimmings of the celebration, with the object of the celebration. That would be like saying parties are about cake and presents, rather than the person having the birthday.

I have always had a liking for this holiday, but I have never felt I celebrated it right. A number of years ago my brilliant wife came up with the first major transformation of this day for us, she started having each of us scrapbook what we were thankful for. In order to do this we had to think about it and look through pictures of what God had granted us, and how he had shepherded us. It is now my favorite tradition. Then a few years ago, my family decided we wanted to decorate and start increasing our sense and appreciation. I have always loved candles and sparkly things, and I found this cool fall tree like candle holder with little sparkly gems hung from its branches. It was like a fall oak Christmas tree, with five tea lite holders. I figured I could use it as part of thanksgiving but had no idea of how.

A few weeks ago I was thinking about how to make family worship more consistent in our family and I realized that during the holidays, our kids looked forward to family worship, even reminding us to do it. No guilt, just joy. It brought up this study which I have been working on for years, and I knew I needed to be more serious. We went one Saturday to our local Hobby Lobby to look for decorations, as I find the really set a worshipful mood for us. My wife told us to each pick one thing. I encouraged the kids to think about what we could use to in worshiping God during Thanksgiving. I saw this cool wire pumpkin with leaves and a candle, but didn't think my wife would like it so I moved on. A little later she pointed it out to me and I knew it was something important. As we walked around picking things up and discussing, this idea came to me.

We would use the Heidelberg Confession's¹ famous triad Guilt-Grace-Gratitude as a lead in to Thanksgiving. A heart of gratitude makes for true thankfulness. I realized that that made four things and it was almost my fall oak. I originally planned on putting in a week of praise between triple-G and Thanksgiving, but tonight I realized that Guilt makes no sense without an appreciation for God.

¹While I don't follow a confession, I greatly enjoy reading and learning from them. I just feel God's Word is the only thing I owe allegiance to.

4.1 First Day (Tuesday): God

Light the top candle. We light the top candle as God is the greatest, there is none above Him. As you light the candle read Genesis 1:1-3.

Genesis 1:1-3

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.

Genesis 1:1-3 (KJV)

Pray together

Sing *Immortal Invisible*

Immortal Invisible

Immortal, invisible, God only wise,
in light inaccessible hid from our eyes,
most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,
almighty, victorious, thy great name we praise.

Unresting, unhasting, and silent as light,
nor wanting, nor wasting, thou rulest in might;
thy justice like mountains high soaring above
thy clouds which are fountains of goodness and love.

To all, life thou givest, to both great and small;
in all life thou livest, the true life of all;
we blossom and flourish as leaves on the tree,
and wither and perish, but naught changeth thee.

Thou reignest in glory; thou dwellest in light;
thine angels adore thee, all veiling their sight;
all laud we would render: O help us to see
'tis only the splendor of light hideth thee.

Read Revelation 4

Revelation 4

After this I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this." ² At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne. ³ And he who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian, and around the throne was a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald. ⁴ Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones were twenty-four elders, clothed in white garments, with golden crowns on their heads. ⁵ From the throne came flashes of lightning, and rumblings² and peals of thunder, and before the

²or voices, or sounds

throne were burning seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God, ⁶ and before the throne there was as it were a sea of glass, like crystal.

And around the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind: ⁷ the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with the face of a man, and the fourth living creature like an eagle in flight. ⁸ And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say,

“Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!”

⁹ And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever, ¹⁰ the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever. They cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

¹¹ “Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.”

Revelation 4 (ESV)

Sing *This is my Father's World*

This Is My Father's World

This is my Father's world, and to my listening ears
all nature sings, and round me rings the music of the spheres.
This is my Father's world: I rest me in the thought
of rocks and trees, of skies and seas; his hand the wonders wrought.

This is my Father's world, the birds their carols raise,
the morning light, the lily white, declare their maker's praise.
This is my Father's world: he shines in all that's fair;
in the rustling grass I hear him pass; he speaks to me everywhere.

This is my Father's world. O let me ne'er forget
that though the wrong seems oft so strong, God is the ruler yet.
This is my Father's world: why should my heart be sad?
The Lord is King; let the heavens ring! God reigns; let the earth be glad!

Pray together

4.1.1 God Knows All Sudoku

Look up a sudoku puzzle that is of the appropriate difficulty for your family online (there are tons of sites for this). Print out a blank sudoku for each member of the family and one extra. On the blanks copy a few of the numbers so everyone has some unique values, and some shared. You can also give some partial solutions, such as > 4 for 6 on someone, and even on another, and < 8 on another. The extra should have some unique ones also, and in particular some of the partials should require information from the extra. It should not be possible to solve the sudoku from what the have.

Give each person their own sudoku sheet, and ask them to solve it. When they indicate they can't, tell them so to we can't know everything on our own. Give each a copy of the extra, and explain that God gives us direct revelation in the Bible.

God did not leave us alone, He gave us the Church, so have the family work as a group. They should have some fun working together. Note, everyone is needed. We all share some basic truths, but we all can help each other with what God has taught us. When you put it all together, you should be able to solve it, just like the church with His Word and guidance can lead us to all truth.

4.2 Second Day (Thursday): Guilt

Guilt has a bad rap in our culture, but guilt does not have to be only negative. There is a place for guilt in recognizing what Christ did for us and in motivating us to want to be better.

Light the top and bottom candles.

Read Ephesians 2:1-3

Ephesians 2:1-3

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience³ among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

Ephesians 2:1-3 (ESV)

pray

Sing *Unworthy*

Unworthy

by Mike Bias and Keith Schubert. Sung to Greensleeves (tune of "What Child Is This?")

In days of old Your wrath was shown,
To those who worshiped gods unknown.
Your prophets came to teach Your ways,
The people sent them to their graves.

Chorus

Unworthy I am,
But for the blood of God's Lamb.
Your Spirit and Word lead me,
To praise Your name God Almighty!

They harkened not unto your word,
Your kind reminder went unheard,
Till finally You did send Your Son,
They loved Him not and were undone.

Chorus

But those He chose before all time,
He said you will for'ere be Mine.
When cares do press all around;
I worry not my Rock is sound.

Chorus

Truly, truly, we shall behold,
Your powerful might and gentle hold.
By Grace through faith your safe embrace,
shall bring us to Thy glorious face.

Chorus

Read Romans 3:9-20

Romans 3:9-20

⁹What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, ¹⁰ as it is written:

“None is righteous, no, not one;

¹¹ no one understands;

no one seeks for God.

¹² All have turned aside; together they have become worthless;

no one does good,

not even one.”

¹³ “Their throat is an open grave;

they use their tongues to deceive.”

The venom of asps is under their lips.”

¹⁴ “Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness.”

¹⁵ “Their feet are swift to shed blood;

¹⁶ in their paths are ruin and misery,

¹⁷ and the way of peace they have not known.”

¹⁸ “There is no fear of God before their eyes.”

¹⁹ Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God.

²⁰ For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

Romans 3:9-20 (ESV)

Sing *Psalm 51*

Psalm 51

(2x)

Create in me a clean heart oh God

And renew a right spirit within me.

Cast me not away from thy presence, oh, Lord

And take not thy Holy Spirit from me

Restore unto me, the joy of thy salvation

and renew a right spirit within me.

Pray

4.2.1 Change my ways oh Lord Candles

Take a one inch long piece of toilet paper and write something you do that you wish you didn't. Fold the paper in half so the text can't be seen and then roll it as tight as possible. Dip this wick in a briney salt water solution and place on foil. Put the wicks in the oven at 200° for 20 minutes³.

³or dry overnight

While the wicks are drying heat some old wax in a cleaned out soup can placed in a pot surrounded by hot water. When the wax is melted dip the dry wicks in the wax and remove slowly and place on aluminum foil. They should be cool in a couple of minutes. In a regular candle you would keep re-dipping to make them large, but in our case we want smaller candles that burn fairly quickly, so just dip once.

To burn them, pre-drill one hole for each family member in a 1.5 inch wood disk (the size of a tea light). place each candle in the wood disk and put it in a tea light holder. Light each candle. Read Romans 7

Romans 7

¹ Or do you not know, brothers for I am speaking to those who know the law that the law is binding on a person only as long as he lives? ² For a married woman is bound by law to her husband while he lives, but if her husband dies she is released from the law of marriage. ³ Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law, and if she marries another man she is not an adulteress.

⁴ Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God. ⁵ For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death. ⁶ But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.

⁷ What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, You shall not covet. ⁸ But sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. For apart from the law, sin lies dead. ⁹ I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died. ¹⁰ The very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me. ¹¹ For sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me. ¹² So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.

¹³ Did that which is good, then, bring death to me? By no means! It was sin, producing death in me through what is good, in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure. ¹⁴ For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin. ¹⁵ For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. ¹⁶ Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. ¹⁷ So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. ¹⁸ For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. ¹⁹ For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. ²⁰ Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.

²¹ So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. ²² For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, ²³ but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. ²⁴ Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? ²⁵ Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.

Romans 7 (ESV)

Pass out candles and light them while singing Psalm 51.

4.3 Third Day (Saturday): Grace

Light the top candle then the bottom candle, then the second highest. We light the top candle as God is the greatest, the bottom as our sin is the worst, and the second highest as God's grace reaches down to us.

(ESV)

Pray together
Sing *Amazing Grace*

Amazing Grace

Amazing grace! how sweet the sound,
That saved a wretch; like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
Was blind, but now I see.

Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed!

Thro' many dangers, toils, and snares,
I have already come;
'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.

The Lord hath promised good to me,
His word my hope secures;
He will my shield and portion be
As long as life endures.

Yea, when this flesh and heart shall fail,
and mortal life shall cease,
I shall possess, within the veil,
a life of joy and peace.

When we've been there ten thousand years,
Bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we first begun.

Read

(ESV)

Sing *Psalms* 51

Psalm 51

(2x)

Create in me a clean heart oh God
And renew a right spirit within me.

Cast me not away from thy presence, oh, Lord
And take not thy Holy Spirit from me
Restore unto me, the joy of thy salvation
and renew a right spirit within me.

Pray

I Timothy 1:12-17

¹² I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service, ¹³ though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, ¹⁴ and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. ¹⁶ But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life. ¹⁷ To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

I Timothy 1:12-17 (ESV)

Science Fact #1 - “Total Reflection” This is a situation where ‘light waves’ are reflected in all directions so that you can no longer see a specific object at all. Try this experiment: Put a coin on a table. Now set a clear jar on top of the coin right side up. Pour pure, clean water into the jar and put the lid on. The coin will seem to have disappeared. No matter how hard you try to look through the water, it’s as if the coin is not there. That’s what happens when God makes us “pure and clean.” He no longer ‘sees’ our sin and we can enjoy our relationship with Him.

4.4 Fourth Day (Tuesday): Gratitude

Light the top candle then the bottom candle, then the next highest, and finally the second lowest. We light the top candle as God is the greatest, the bottom as our sin is the worst, the second highest as God's grace reaches down to us, and the second lowest as our gratitude rises up toward God.

(ESV)

Pray together

Sing

Read

(ESV)

Sing *Psalm 51*

Psalm 51

(2x)

Create in me a clean heart oh God
And renew a right spirit within me.

Cast me not away from thy presence, oh, Lord
And take not thy Holy Spirit from me
Restore unto me, the joy of thy salvation
and renew a right spirit within me.

Pray

put pictures in

4.5 Week 5: Thanksgiving

scrapbook your pictures and notes during the day. After dinner, light all five candles and sing aaa. pray. share pages. sing aaa . closing prayer of thanksgiving.

Chapter 5

Christmas

5.1 The Seed of the Woman

Reader: Keith Evan Schubert

Genesis 3:9-15, 12:1-7, Numbers 24:15-19

(Right) Mary Did You Know

5.2 Isaiah's Prophecy

Isaiah 7:14, 9:1-7, 11:1-10

(123) O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

5.3 The Saviour Prefigured

Genesis 49:8-12, Jeremiah 31:15-17, Micah 5:1-6

(145) O Come All Ye Faithful

5.4 Announcement

Matthew 1:18-25, Luke 1:26-56

(137) What Child is This?

5.5 The King's Coming

Isaiah 49:1-13, Luke 2:1-20

(132) Angels We Have Heard on High

5.6 Three Magi

Matthew 2:1-23

(166) We Three Kings

5.7 Praise in the Temple

Luke 2:21-40

(125) Joy to the World

Mary, Did You Know?

Mary, did you know that your baby boy would one day walk on water? Mary, did you know that your baby boy would save our sons and daughters? Did you know that your baby boy has come to make you new; and this child that you delivered will soon deliver you?

Mary, did you know that your baby boy would give sight to the blind man? Mary, did you know that your baby boy would calm a storm with his hand? Did you know that your baby boy has walked where angels trod? And, when you kissed your little baby you've kissed the face of God? Oh, Mary, did you know? Mary, did you know?

The blind will see, the deaf will hear the dead will live again. The lame will leap, the dumb will speak the praises of the Lamb.

Oh, Mary, did you know? that your baby boy is Lord of all creation? Mary, did you know that your baby boy would one day rule the nations? Did you know that your baby boy was Heaven's perfect Lamb? And, the sleeping child you're holding is the great I Am? Oh, Mary, did you know? So long ago?

©1991 Word Music/Rufus Music ASCAP Mark Lowry & Buddy Greene

Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. (Isaiah 7:14).

Nevertheless the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterward did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined. Thou hast multiplied the nation, and not increased the joy: they joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil. For thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian. For every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood; but this shall be with burning and fuel of fire. For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this. (Isaiah 9:1-7).

And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD; And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea. And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious. (Isaiah 11:1-10).

123 O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

Michah 5:2 145 O Come All Ye Faithful

Listen, O isles, unto me; and hearken, ye people, from far; The LORD hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name. And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me, and made me a polished shaft;

in his quiver hath he hid me; And said unto me, Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified. Then I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain: yet surely my judgment is with the LORD, and my work with my God. And now, saith the LORD that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the LORD, and my God shall be my strength. And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth. Thus saith the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel, and his Holy One, to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers, Kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the LORD that is faithful, and the Holy One of Israel, and he shall choose thee. Thus saith the LORD, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages; That thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves. They shall feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places. They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them. And I will make all my mountains a way, and my highways shall be exalted. Behold, these shall come from far: and, lo, these from the north and from the west; and these from the land of Sinim. Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the LORD hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted. (Isaiah 49:1-13).

132 Angels We Have Heard on High

133 Hark! the Herald Angels Sing

137 What Child is This?

147 Silent Night! Holy Night!

166 We Three Kings

125 Joy to the World

Chapter 6

First Week of Advent

6.1 The Hope of Immediate Fulfilment

14 And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: 15 And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

Genesis 3:14-15

1 And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD. 2 And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.

3 And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. 4 And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: 5 But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.

6 And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? 7 If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.

8 And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.

9 And the LORD said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brothers keeper? 10 And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brothers blood crieth unto me from the ground. 11 And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brothers blood from thy hand; 12 When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth.

13 And Cain said unto the LORD, My punishment is greater than I can bear. 14 Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me. 15 And the LORD said unto him, Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the LORD set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him.

Genesis 4:1-15

6.2 The Need for a Prophet

18 And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off. 19 And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die. 20 And Moses said unto the people, Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not. 21 And the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was.

Exodus 20:18-21

15 The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken; 16 According to all that thou desiredst of the LORD thy God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not. 17 And the LORD said unto me, They have well spoken that which they have spoken. 18 I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. 19 And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him. 20 But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die. 21 And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the LORD hath not spoken? 22 When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him.

Deuteronomy 18:15-22

5 So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD. 6 And he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Bethpeor: but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day. 7 And Moses was an hundred and twenty years old when he died: his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated. 8 And the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days: so the days of weeping and mourning for Moses were ended.

9 And Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom; for Moses had laid his hands upon him: and the children of Israel hearkened unto him, and did as the LORD commanded Moses. 10 And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, 11 In all the signs and the wonders, which the LORD sent him to do in the land of Egypt to Pharaoh, and to all his servants, and to all his land, 12 And in all that mighty hand, and in all the great terror which Moses shewed in the sight of all Israel.

Deuteronomy 34:5-12

43 The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me. 44 Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. 45 Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses

in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. 46 And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see. 47 Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile! 48 Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee. 49 Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel. 50 Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these. 51 And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.

John 1:43-51

17 And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers. 18 But those things, which God before had shewed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled. 19 Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; 20 And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: 21 Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began. 22 For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. 23 And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people. 24 Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days. 25 Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. 26 Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.

Acts 3:17-26

Appendix A

Jesus at Hanukkah

Read John 10:22-42

The Feast of Dedication is the old name for Hanukkah, or the Feast of Lights. It commemorates the rededication of the temple in 164 BC by Judas Maccabeus, after the desecration by Antiochus Epiphanes. Given the timing it seemed an appropriate place to study.

When is Hanukkah celebrated? What does the text say? Since Hanukkah happens the same time every year (25 Kislev), why note that it was winter? Where is Jesus? Does it really matter? What is John trying to get across in verse 24? Do the Jews have an agenda? How can we be sure? Did the Romans allow capital punishment? How did the Jews think they could get away with stoning Jesus? Could the Romans stop an uprising in the temple quickly? Read Acts 21:27-36. Where were the Roman barracks? Where was Jesus with respect to them? Look at a picture of the temple grounds and read John 10:31. Does anything seem odd? Why did the mob take Paul outside? What can be concluded? Since there were no loose rocks in the temple grounds people would have had to have brought them to stone Jesus and pulled them at the appropriate time.

How does Jesus start His answer to their first question? What does Jesus say the Jews do not believe? Why don't they believe? How does a believer respond? What is the gift and the guarantee? How does Jesus end the answer? How does it correspond to the question?

How do the Jews respond to Jesus' answer? What is the purpose of Jesus' question, and the Jews answer? As strange as it may sound, many hold that Jesus never claimed to be God. Do the Jews agree? Does Jesus' reply, seem unusual to you? What does the argument appear to be? Read Psalm 82. What is the context and subject of Psalm 82? How does the Psalm fit the situation? How does Jesus end His statement? Does this support the Arminian position? Did they believe? Why not? What is Jesus really doing here?

How do verses 40-42 compare with the preceding passage? What can we get from it?

Appendix B

Easter Isn't Christian

Why won't I call Resurrection Sunday, Easter Sunday? Why won't I allow my kids to participate in Easter Egg hunts? Why don't I want bunnies and colored eggs as part of the day? Simply put, Easter is not a Christian holiday.

B.1 History of Easter

Easter (Eostre, Ostara) is the German/Saxon equivalent of the Babylonian goddess Astarte (Asherah in Canaan, Aphrodite in Greek). She was the fertility/love goddess (also goddess of fortune, spring, and sometimes war) and was worshiped in many ways including fornicating with temple prostitutes and sacrificing rabbits (her symbol since they are so fertile). Since she is the fertility goddess, the female hormone, estrogen, is named after her. Her worshipers would also give pastel¹ colored eggs on her high day (Easter, the week after vernal equinox- i.e. spring equinox). As fertility goddess, she supposedly ushered in spring, hence why it was so special to them. According to one legend about her, she found a bird whose wings were frozen and couldn't fly. Easter turned the bird into a rabbit, but left the ability to lay eggs one day a year on the day that bears her name, Easter. Her worshipers met in special groves and often worshiped her with the rising sun (her name also gives us the word east, where the sun rises). The traditions of Easter are all her worship. The Easter bunny was her pet (lupus was his name) as recounted above. Egg hunts came about when the tradition of giving her eggs was condemned by the church, but people wanted to give them anyway. They got around it by hiding them for others to find. Sadly, Christians call Christ's resurrection day by the name of a pagan goddess and celebrate with the old pagan traditions. Don't take my word for it, look it up in any reputable history of folktales, holidays, legends, or pagan beliefs. Even do a search on the internet and you will get thousands of sources confirming this.

B.2 Requirements of God

How does God feel about this? What does His word say? What should we do?

The Old Testament has numerous references to the groves (literally "asherah" in the Hebrew), which were used in Asherah (remember Asherah is Easter) worship (1 Kings 15:13, 16:33, 2 Kings 13:6, 17:16, 21:3-7, 23:1-15, 2 Chronicles 15:16). Notice God is never happy about them. He always commands them to be destroyed. God hates the worship of Asherah. Asherah was consort of Baal, and their worship was often done together (see for example Judges 6:25-32). In the Babylonian religion, Astarte (the Babylonians name for her) was the lover of Tammuz, who died each fall and rose each spring (as the god of nature). On Astarte's high day (Easter) they would worship her by

¹Her colors were pastel as they were thought the colors of spring.

crying for Tammuz, the tears symbolizing the water that was supposed to bring him back to life. God speaks against this practice in Ezekiel 8:13-18. Notice the worship of this goddess is spoken against all over the Old Testament. God hates it.

How can Christians participate in the worship of a false God, particularly one so condemned in Scripture?

I am sure many are thinking it is harmless and that I am over-reacting². People don't think of it as Asherah worship anymore, you might be thinking. You might even be wondering about Paul's comments about not worrying about eating meat sacrificed to idols in 1 Corinthians 8. Paul was commenting that since there is no other god, Christians did not have to worry about if the meat came from a pagan temple. Meat is meat. His argument is not applicable here, because it is not either a cheap way to get necessities or an unknown origin of the necessities that are in view. We are talking about participating in pagan practices, not eating food a pagan made. If a non-christian friend invites you over to eat a meal his argument applies, but not in participating in pagan worships, that is covered in 1 Corinthians 10. Paul's argument goes like this:

1. All the Israelites had all the benefits of participating in Old Testament worship, and the miracles of God, but God let them die in the wilderness. (v. 1-5)
2. This is an example for us as they participated in idolatry and God rejected them. Don't tempt Christ to reject you like they did. Don't complain that you can't do something you think is fun. Would you rather have that or Christ? (v. 6-11)
3. If you think you are doing fine, be careful. God does not allow temptation to be too great, and he leaves escapes so flee from the idolatry that tempts you. (v. 12-14)
4. How can you participate in Christian worship and pagan worship? While there is no other god, there are devils and you cannot partake of their practices, it angers God. (v. 15-22)
5. As a Christian we can enjoy the things God made but we need to make sure that we are not hurting others. For instance in chapter 8 you were told not to worry about where the meat came from, but if a weaker brother knows and is bothered then don't eat it. (v. 23-30)
6. Do everything to God's glory. Take every opportunity to share Christ based on your following the above. (v. 31-33)

The whole chapter is against pagan worship. There is no room for "it is harmless" or "everyone is doing it" or even "no one remembers its origins". You know the truth now. God said to flee idolatry. God said you can't follow pagan traditions and his. God said liberty does not mean anything goes. God said do all things to his glory. How can you participate in a pagan ceremony to His glory? Realize that the exhortation to not be unequally yoked in 2 Corinthians 6 was not only about marriage, it is about any participation in the sinful practices of the world. Read Revelation 2, two churches are condemned because they permitted believers to partake of pagan practices (the reference to eating meat sacrificed to idols is not just eating the food but eating it at a pagan feast). If you didn't like the candy, foods, and traditions would you try to defend them? In other words are you really sure God wants you to participate in pagan activities He condemned, or do you just want to have your fun? Be honest, you can't hide the truth from Him. God commands us to obey Him not our own desires.

John 14:15, 21, 15:10, 14-15, 1 John 5:1-5, 2 John 4-6

²I certainly admit I can be wrong on things, but I am not presenting my opinion, I have shown in scripture that God hates the celebration. You must answer God, not me.

Appendix C

Why I Don't Celebrate Halloween

Halloween is the second largest holiday in the United States by the metric of money spent in its celebration. Many people find it strange that I don't want to celebrate something that is so much a part of the national ethos, so I have written this as a brief explanation of why.

Quite simply, I don't celebrate Halloween because it is the holiday of a religion that is not mine. I don't expect Jewish people to celebrate Christmas, or Wiccans to celebrate Pentecost. It would not make sense. Why do so many expect me to celebrate the holiday of a non-Christian religion? To some it will seem strange that Halloween is a religious holiday, because they think of Halloween as merely a time to dress up and get candy. I will spend the next section covering the origin of Halloween in the Celtic festival of Samhain, not as a commentary on Celts, but to establish the origin and hence my desire not to celebrate it.

C.1 History of Halloween

While there are many mysteries in history and the origin of holidays, a few facts stand out about Halloween. Halloween's primary origins are in Celtic tradition and most notably the festival of Samhain (pronounced Sow-in, with sow said like cow). Samhain literally means 'end of summer' and is not a Celtic god as some claim¹. The Celtic year ended in fall, with some disagreement as to what date in the range October 21-Nov 11 it actually occurred on. Most people today claim it was Nov 1, so the last day of the year was October 31, though this is more due to the present date of Halloween than to any real evidence I have seen. I personally believe the real date lay on the autumnal equinox as transition times like the equinoxes were considered particularly special to the Celts, but the actual date is irrelevant.

Regardless, Samhain was the end of year celebration and had elements of harvest and death. This might seem an odd combo, but the Celt's felt that transitions were the most special times — dawn and dusk were the special times of day and the vernal and autumnal equinoxes were high holy days. During Samhain the fairy world was thought closer and so the dead were believed able to return and it was supposed to be easier to tell the future. The Druids held a great feast, which involved at least animal sacrifices and some historical evidence indicates human sacrifices as well². Fires in houses were extinguished to allow them to be rekindled by fire from the Druidic sacred bonfire, which was central in the celebration³. Some sources indicate that there was a fear of possession at this time even going as far as saying that a person believed to be possessed was sacrificed at the ceremony as a warning to the spirits, but I have not been able to confirm this in a reputable source. Whether

¹The point is irrelevant anyway as the problem to Christians is that it is a Celtic religious festival.

²I mention this not as a commentary on their religion, which I do feel is false, but rather as evidence on the religious significance of it.

³Some claim this was also to make the home not as hospitable for spirits.

a belief in possession was part of the Druidic holy day or not, it is easy to see that Samhain was a Druidic religious celebration. A few well established characteristics of Samhain that continue today will illustrate the strong bond.

1. Superstitions around wearing disguises to be mistaken as other spirits or fairy folk are the progenitors of modern costume wearing.
2. Food was left out for spirits as appeasement, and door to door collections of food for the feast were taken⁴. This is one root of the modern collection of candy.
3. Stories and images of the dead, apparitions and such were common. One only needs to look at any Halloween decorations, haunted houses, books, and movies to see how this plays out today.

In Celtic lands conquered by the Romans, some Roman feasts were integrated such as the goddess Pomona's symbol of apples (seen most notably in bobbing for apples). The Roman Catholic church attempted to convert Samhain into one of its holidays by moving All Saints Day to November 1, but this only gave rise to the modern name of the holiday, as Halloween is derived from the Middle English name of the evening before All Saints Day. The Roman Catholic holiday included 'souling', where the poor could beg for a special bread with courant in exchange for prayers on behalf of the giver's family to get them out of purgatory. The practice of souling is the other root of trick or treating, and as a protestant, I am opposed to both purgatory and the ability for any but God to effect someone's place after death.

Carving pumpkins is also of Celtic origin, but is not related to Samhain. It relates to an Irish fairy tale of an evil man named Jack, who amongst other things, tricks the devil and ends up being denied entrance in heaven or hell. He roams the earth lighting his way with a single coal in a carved turnip, and was referred to as Jack of the lantern, hence the modern Jack-o-lantern. Pumpkins were discovered in the new world and have replaced turnips as the carved vegetable of choice. The jack-o-lantern became part of Halloween celebrations because of characteristic 3 above, namely stories of the dead. Again, not something I want to teach my children to do.

In short, pretty much everything done on Halloween are celebrations and extensions of Samhain, a Celtic religious holy day, with a little Roman Paganism and Roman Catholicism for good measure.

C.2 Modern Practice

I am not opposed to imagination, fantasy, or childhood fun, but I do oppose uplifting evil. Think for a moment at what people dress their kids up as, and ask yourself if that is really what you want to teach your children it is fun to be.

- devils and demons - Really this should end it for Christians. How can you partake of any celebration which exalts such a direct opposition to Christ and the Bible. Some even dress themselves or their kids in such blatantly evil outfits. Some might think me to be over-reacting, but honestly can you see wearing such things in Heaven before God? Is that what we want to be a part of?
- witches, warlocks, and cult members - Witchcraft is a religion that is growing in the US. It has been becoming more and more popular in TV and movies, but it's first and still prime advertising to kids is through Halloween. Modern witches think of Halloween/Samhain as their holiday, and this is generally accepted by most in the US. Historically they are wrong, as modern witchcraft was made up in the last fifty years and Halloween is of Celtic and Roman origins, but Paul tells us in I Thessalonians 5:22 to abstain from even the appearance of evil.

⁴Some claim by children but I cannot verify this.

Halloween is openly advertised as a celebration of terror, death, and evil. Christian parents, who would be hurt, shocked, and appalled if their kids followed witchcraft think nothing of dressing them as witches at Halloween.

- Zombies, vampires, ghosts, and dead things - Most of these are evil monsters who kill and eat people, not to mention it glorifies death, which we don't want to do. Many parents are afraid to speak to kids about death and don't want them to go to relatives funerals, but they will gladly dress them up as a dead thing and say to have fun. How warped is that?
- Murderers, thugs, thieves, gangsters, and pirates - a huge number of costumes for kids and adults glorify those who kill, rape, steal, and in general harm others for their own benefits. Most kids know far more about pirates than the apostles and we wonder why the nation is going the way it is.

Some may protest that they are dressing their kids as princesses and knights, and other happy things. Remember that Jesus said a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit (Matthew 7:17-18, Luke 6:43). While Jesus is speaking directly about people who are not saved being able to bring forth good, the general principal is still valid here. Halloween, as a pagan holiday which is very dark even in its modern version, cannot bring good to your child. Further, Paul reminds us that evil company (communication) corrupts good manners. If you put your kids in an evil practice, though you dress them nicely, they will be effected. How can they not? Would you be ok with you kid doing what criminals do, as long as they are dressed nicer? Parents kid themselves because it is hard to say no to their kids. It is hard to be the odd one. God will support those who walk with Him, as he promises in I Corinthians 10, which we deal with in the next section.

Beyond the costumes, add the haunted houses, graveyards, and the like. Some may object that haunted houses are fun. I never said they weren't. People wouldn't go if they weren't fun. Life is not about the world's fun to a Christian, life is about God and having fun in worshiping Him. As mentioned above about costumes, haunted houses also exalt evil, terror, and death. That people find such things fun is a condemnation on humanity, not a justification.

Think seriously on "trick or treat" while everyone accepts and even thinks of it as fun, it is on the surface a threat - give me candy or I will do a trick to you. This is actually how it started being practiced in the United States in the 1930's. Papers all across the US at the time reported threats of pranks like soaping windows being threatened if treats were not given to the "masked wearing ghosts and ghoulies." We think of it as innocent fun because it is accepted, but that was not the case 70 years ago, when many shot at kids for the threats. That is definitely over-reacting, but honestly when else is it ok to demand candy from everyone in your neighborhood? As a side note, even advertisements in the 1930's for candy had a witch on them. Witches have been associated with the modern holiday from the start, even years before the modern religion started.

We could go on, but why? An honest appraisal of the modern practice of Halloween, finds it in perfect agreement with the ancient. While people may try to claim ignorance, the in-your-face nature of the evil celebrated in Halloween should end all support of it from Christians.

C.3 God's view of Participating in Other Worship

There are a great many places in the Bible that speak of the dangers and errors of participating in pagan worship. For the sake of space I will use only I Corinthians 8-10, which has a lengthy discussion about meat sacrificed to idols. I covered this briefly in the chapter on celebrating Resurrection Sunday rather than Easter, but it is worth going over in more detail. The passage might seem irrelevant to us, but it is not. Like it or not, Halloween/Samhain is a religious holiday of a pagan religion. The modernization, sanitization, and lack of understanding by many involved is not relevant (I will deal with more of this later); the fact remain the celebration is pagan. Before we get into the text, let us consider the background.

One question many first century Christians had was how to handle non-Christian ceremonies and the things involved in them. Large celebration meals revolved around the pagan sacrifices, and portions of the sacrifice were usually taken home by the one bringing the sacrifice and the officiant, then the excess was sold in the shambles (meat market). This created a big question for Christians. Should they participate when invited because they knew the other “gods” really didn’t exist? Could they buy the cheap meat, or did they need to find out where it came from? What about when they went to a friend’s house, should they inquire the origin of the meal? The Corinthians asked Paul for what they should do. In I Corinthians 8-10 Paul answers their question. We need to ask the same questions they did. Let’s look through these chapters.

¹ Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth. ² And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know. ³ But if any man love God, the same is known of him.

I Corinthians 8:1-3

Paul starts by reminding those who disagreed that everyone has knowledge, but we are not to rely solely on our knowledge we are to have love (charity) for one-another as the goal is to edify (build up in Christ) each other. He also reminds us that none of us knows everything so we should all be humble because Christians are all still growing in Christ. The important thing is to love God and put Him first. This is a good point for all of us to remember, and I don’t exclude myself from it. I go to God in prayer and study of His word to seek His correction and modification of my thinking, and so should we all. Let us proceed by exalting Christ and not our own will and thoughts.

⁴ As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one. ⁵ For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) ⁶ But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.

I Corinthians 8:4-6

Paul then notes that the other religions are fake. We have nothing to fear from false religions and their practices. I don’t fear ghosts, witches, or any other such things. They are false and my God reigns. We don’t avoid something because of fear of others practice. Many Christians fear the world or its ability to get their children. That is silly, nothing is able to get past God. He is sovereign over everything, which is a point He says over and over again in the Bible.

⁷ Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled. ⁸ But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse. ⁹ But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak. ¹⁰ For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idols temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols; ¹¹ And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? ¹² But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. ¹³ Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.

I Corinthians 8:7-13

Next he tells us that food is not what makes us right with God, so the food we eat or abstain from will not make us more or less spiritual. The idol cannot make good food bad. Note Paul is answering one big question: does the food become defiled by where it comes from or what is used in. The answer is no, it is not defiled. This does not say you can participate in the ceremony, only that the food is not made bad. Putting this in the current situation, we shouldn't oppose candy, even at this time of year. It is fine for kids to eat a little candy, even if it came from someone practicing Halloween. It does not tell us we can participate in Halloween, only that the food isn't tainted.

Paul adds a caveat about eating the food, that must be observed. Putting this in modern terms, he tells us that if someone offers us a snickers, and we go for it because it is tasty and we can, but a Christian friend says, "Hey that was Halloween candy!" I should say, "Oh, no thanks then." I have the right to eat it, but it would hurt one for whom Christ died, and thus without bitterness and remorse I must abstain and be glad I could make brother or sister at ease. Note it does not open up participation, it actually restricts our rights to do something if it will offend a brother or sister. Note in particular verse 10, where Paul gives a hypothetical about sitting in an idol's temple. Paul does not comment on the correctness of going to the temple in and of itself, he uses the extreme case of participation and comments on what effect it would have on a Christian brother or sister. I Corinthians 10:15-22 specifically says you cannot eat at the idol's temple, here Paul is concerned with pointing out that our behavior has an effect on other believers. I can lead a brother or sister into problems by either doing what is permitted or by committing sin. Note that even in chapter 8's hypothetical, it refers to those with "knowledge" of being free as the one sitting in the temple, but Paul had already explained just a few verses ago that their "knowledge" puffs up and is no knowledge as it out to be known. Their "knowledge" was hurting a weaker brother or sister, and thus even in attitude was sinful. Paul never says it is ok, he shows even in attitude it does not reflect Christ. One final point is important: this does not restrict our freedom for non-believers, and it does not restrict God's commands. We can't say that we won't do something God commanded because someone is offended. God's command is more important than man's preferences.

Paul uses chapter 9 to address attitude and freedom in his own life. For length considerations I will just summarize the point that relates to us, and encourage you to read it yourself. Paul notes he has freedom to do good things like have a wife and to be supported by the church, but that he forbear from these things so he could advance God's word and be easier on those he ministered to. He uses his example of giving up good things for God, the gospel, and to build up his fellow believers in Christ as a contrast to committing a sin and causing a brother to be built up in sin.

¹ Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; ² And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; ³ And did all eat the same spiritual meat; ⁴ And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. ⁵ But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

I Corinthians 10:1-5

Paul then picks up with an example from the Old Testament. In the Exodus, the Jews all participated in what God did for them, which was to lead them to Christ the rock. Even with all the participation, they were not all true believers, which can be seen in that God was not pleased with them and they wanted things other than God. They wanted Egypt more. They worshiped the golden calf. Aaron's son's offered strange fire, because they wanted to worship their way and God slew them for it. They complained it was hard. God's way was no fun to them. They wanted things their way. So do we. It is not an accident that it is here in the middle of a section on not participating in pagan worship. People now defend Halloween not in it being God approved, but rather that it is fun for their kids. Jesus said in Matthew 10:37-38, "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy

of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.” That is probably pretty hard for many to hear, but that is what God says and we are to follow. Note He does not say we should not love our kids, you actually can’t love them if you don’t love God infinitely more than them. To do the right thing you must do it God’s way.

⁶ Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. ⁷ Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. ⁸ Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. ⁹ Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. ¹⁰ Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. ¹¹ Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. ¹² Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. ¹³ There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it. ¹⁴ Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry.

I Corinthians 10:6-14

Paul now makes the connection explicit. They were an example in that they lusted after evil, and in the same way Paul says believers should not participate in idolatry as they did in the desert. Paul then mentions about the fornication committed by the Israelites with the Moabite women, which resulted in God sending serpents in to kill thousands of them. Paul is reminding us of God’s tremendous hatred of idolatry. He follows this with a statement of not tempting Christ with our idolatry, or complaining (murmuring) because God does not accept that either. Then we are told it was an example for us, and we are foolish to ignore it. Many, who think themselves to be strong Christians, sadly tolerate sins such as pagan influences, thinking themselves unharmed by it. Paul’s warning should make us all examine our lives again. The verse is famous, but its context is not, and so it is often misused. It is warning us not to think ourselves so strong that we can “handle” have parts of our lives not given to Christ. The next verse is also famous but its context forgotten, for the temptation to do the things of this world and fit in is great. God is faithful, even when we are not what we should be, and He will provide us a way out. First century Christians faced death for not participating in some pagan worship (like the emperor worship required by the Roman government). We face the loss of dressing up like evil things and getting candy. Are we really that shallow that this is a hard choice. God says he will help. Paul then pleads for us to flee idolatry. Halloween is idolatry, for it is a modern, sanitized form of Celtic and Roman paganism.

¹⁵ I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say. ¹⁶ The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? ¹⁷ For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread. ¹⁸ Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar? ¹⁹ What say I then? that the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing? ²⁰ But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. ²¹ Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord’s table, and of the table of devils. ²² Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?

I Corinthians 10:15-22

Paul now gets to brass tacks. He knows they don’t want to listen, just as I am aware most people who read my words will not like them, and will be angry at me. Give Paul’s words some thought.

He then cites the significance of the Lord's Table (or communion). Paul notes that partaking of it is to commune with Christ. He then notes it was the same in Old Testament Israel and the sacrifices. What is the point? He asks that same question in verse 19. Paul's point is that pagan's are making their sacrifices to demons, whether they know it or not, and if we partake of the ceremony we are partaking of the demons just as the Lord's Table is partaking of Christ. What does this have to do with a harmless kids holiday. Nothing. Halloween is not a harmless kids holiday. Be honest, kids dress as demons, witches, lost souls/undead, criminals and so forth. How can I say that it is wrong to participate in Halloween and that Halloween is demonic? Simply because I am stating what is so obvious to anyone who is not trying to justify their own participation. The influence is everywhere and in bold letters, people deny it because they don't want to give it up, just like alcoholics deny they need to drink. Paul says you can't do both. Paul says Jesus is jealous and will not tolerate us playing the harlot with the world as Israel did, and was so often punished. Paul is emphatic that we should not participate in ceremony itself. Do we really think we can take God? That is exactly what Paul says, but still we do not listen. Even churches put on Halloween festivals and "Trunk or Treating". How insulting to God! Near where I live they have even started doing their version on October 30 so people can do both. The truth really shows in that. It is not an alternative, it is another program to make people want to come, regardless of its spiritual bankruptcy.

²³ All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not. ²⁴ Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth. ²⁵ Whatsoever is sold in the shambles, that eat, asking no question for conscience sake: ²⁶ For the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof. ²⁷ If any of them that believe not bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake. ²⁸ But if any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that shewed it, and for conscience sake: for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof: ²⁹ Conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other: for why is my liberty judged of another man's conscience? ³⁰ For if I by grace be a partaker, why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks? ³¹ Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. ³² Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God: ³³ Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.

I Corinthians 10:23-33

Lest people forget what Paul said earlier, he reminds us that there is nothing wrong with the meat. I can in Christ eat any food I want, but there are some things that are not good to do and will harm me and others. At one level idols are nothing, so there was no problem in getting cheap meat in the market (shambles was a meat market) from pagan temples or you could go to a friend's house to enjoy a meal (feast), which has meat they had used in a ceremony. That is like buying candy after Halloween because it is cheap then, which of course there is nothing wrong with. There is nothing wrong with eating some candy from friends, even if it is Halloween leftovers. Paul reminds us though that we are not to be self-centered, we are bought by Christ and we should care for our brothers and sisters. If a brother or sister is troubled by me getting some cheap candy, because they think I am somehow participating in Halloween rather than just indulging my love of chocolate, then I should abstain. Whatever I do I should do it for the sake of Christ, the edification of the saints, and reaching the lost. Can you really say participating in Halloween does that? Is God somehow honored by your participating in the universally acknowledged holiday of evil and terror? It amazes me that I even have to write this refutation of Halloween participation.

C.4 Answers to Objections

Some may still protest that Samhain is not what they are celebrating. They claim they are just having fun with costumes and getting tasty treats. On one level this is true, most people are not aware of the history or significance of the holiday, but is that how someone who is trying to honor Jesus should appraise this? You honestly must face what I Corinthians 8-10 is saying. We are supposed to always behave in a manner which is honoring to God and to follow Christ. If you are convinced that somehow ignorance is an excuse to God, or that maybe three consecutive chapters on one point are somehow being misunderstood, consider the following.

- The first several chapters of Romans indicates that God does not follow an appraisal that ignorance is an excuse for disobedience. The ignorance excuse does not work with God. Ignorance doesn't work with law enforcement, why try this on God?
- I John 2 tells us that love of the world and its practice is hatred of God. Jesus comments you can't serve two masters. Why do you want to get away with sin anyway? Do you love Jesus or the world? This might sound harsh to some, but it is what the Bible says.
- The letters to the seven churches of Revelations contains similar warnings to I Corinthians, such as Revelation 2:14. Failing to heed the warning includes a warning of Jesus fighting against the one who does not listen.

If you are going to follow Christ then follow Christ, if you want to follow the world then dress up and have fun. Don't play the fence.

Others may claim I am being to legalistic or hard nosed on this. It is true that many legalists object to Halloween, but that does not mean that is what I am or that my argument is wrong. I know many legalists who condemn me, because I believe Christians are not under the law but under grace and that we have freedom to serve God. My point is not for legalism, rather it is for pleasing God and growth in Christ. Weigh what I have said. Look at the Scriptures and history then honestly before God see what He wants you to do. Legalism is all about rules you must follow to be holy, which is not my point at all. I am saying don't practice another religion, even if it is unknowingly. Celebrating Halloween is like participating in a Buddhist wedding ceremony, as both are participating in another religion. The Old and New Testaments both condemn participating in other religion's worship. If God says no, it is sinful to disobey. Further it would not be pleasing to God for me to do something He said not to, so I would not be fulfilling my chief end. Finally, we cannot hope to be conformed into the image of Christ if we constantly pursue our own desires and neglect His desires, thus growth is stunted. In short, this is not a minor issue and this is not a legalistic point.

Still others say they have 'Trunk or Treat' or a 'harvest festival' instead of Halloween. I have mentioned this briefly before, but people keep falling back to it. I can sympathize with the desire, but let's be honest. First, where you trick or treat is not the issue, the issue is this is a Celtic and Roman religious festival. I don't care if you celebrate it traditionally or at your church, you are still celebrating it. All that is being done is making the event safer and integrating false worship into your church's practice. Second, Samhain is a harvest festival, so changing the language and name does not alter the event. Dress it up, change the name, whatever, it does not change the fact this is another religion's holiday. Finally, we all know these Halloween alternatives are just that, other ways to celebrate the holiday. No one is suggesting having "trunk or treat" in August or a "harvest festival" in September. Why? Because churches are trying to celebrate Halloween without looking worldly. In a word it is hypocrisy — trying to look holy while sinning with everyone else. If you are going to celebrate Halloween at least be honest enough to admit it. More recent trends are to put it the day before and thus to expand the practice of Halloween to two days, so these efforts are actually making Halloween bigger and more popular and even including an explicit church approval. If the idea ever was to lessen Halloween, then it has predictably backfired.

One final thing I hear over and over again is that my claim just ruins childhood and cuts their imagination. Besides being a patently false and purely emotional argument that avoids dealing with the explicit statements of God, it directly harms children. You might think I am crazy, but think carefully. All Christians claim Heaven is the greatest, best, most fun, most nurturing place possible. God created mankind, and knows best how to raise children correctly. God says not to participate in pagan worship, and because kids like candy and dressing up we are going to say it is better not to listen to God? Are we serious about that? Either we don't believe God is right and Heaven is best, or we should reexamine our commitment to Halloween. Can you imagine haunted houses, witches, vampires, demons, and pirates in Heaven? If God does the best by kids and He does not do Halloween, of necessity we are doing bad by children by participating in Halloween. My children are happy, creative, full of imagination, and none of them want to celebrate Halloween. We have lots of fun without it, and they wonder, like I do, why anyone would want to worship Halloween.

C.5 What I Do

Quite frankly I do nothing, that is my whole point. I am not advocating a different way to celebrate, I am advocating not celebrating at all. I usually take my family out to a leisurely dinner, so I don't have to hear the doorbell while I eat. When we are done we come home and spend the rest of the night as a family doing whatever we feel like. We keep the front door light off, so people know we are not participating, and politely let those who ring anyway know we are not celebrating Halloween. After a year or so, people get the point, and we have not had a doorbell rung in years.

I have occasionally had Bible studies on the truths of the reformation. Years ago when we lived in Camarillo, my wife and I went around and stuck copies of the 95 theses on the elder's doors, as Martin Luther nailed the 95 theses on the church door in Wittenberg on October 31, 1517. The point was misunderstood, and so even though we had fun we decided not to continue that one. I try hard to not let these become a Halloween alternative, as I think the reformation should be celebrated anyway — just not with costumes, candy, and jack-o-lanterns. Whatever you do please don't let it become just an alternative. If you are celebrating Reformation Day to avoid celebrating Halloween, please celebrate nothing. If you could care less about Halloween and trying to provide a fun way to celebrate the great things God has done in preserving the gospel, then please celebrate Reformation Day.