

## TRUNK-OR-TREAT?

In the past several years, a practice known as “Trunk-Or-Treat,” or “Trunk-‘N-Treat” has made its way to the parking lots of many congregations of the Church of Christ. Obviously playing on the phrase, “Trick-or-Treat,” the event is held around or on October 31<sup>st</sup> of each year, Halloween.

There is nothing wrong with eating or handing out candy, dressing up in costumes (as long as they do not promote anything evil), and nothing, in and of itself, sacred about the parking lot or building purchased or rented with Church funds. However, there are a few Biblical principles that should be heavily considered in regards to such an event as “Trunk-Or-Treat.”

First, one should ask if such an event may bring reproach upon the Church. In regards to a man's qualification to serve as an elder, Paul writes, “moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil” (1 Tim. 3:7). In this verse is a general Bible principle that no Christian should do anything that would defame or disgrace the beautiful bride of Christ to “them which are without,” (i.e. non-Christians). One “snare of the devil” is to deceive the world into believing that “one church is just as good as another.” With “Trunk-Or-Treat” being practiced by pretty much all denominations, should Christians fear that such an event would make the Church of Christ look just like “another denomination” in the eyes of the world? Last year (2007), Halloween was celebrated on a Wednesday night. Many denominations and some Churches of Christ **CANCELLED** Wednesday Night Bible Study to have “Trunk-Or-Treat!” There are probably many congregations of the Church of Christ who held “Trunk-Or-Treat” before or after services, but how likely is it that most people driving by simply thought that the Church of Christ was just like the denomination down the street? Some would argue that “Trunk-Or-Treat” is no different than V.B.S. Sadly, in many cases, they are probably right. Many V.B.S.'s have become nothing more than crafts, games, and entertainment. However, many faithful congregations set aside a day or a week of V.B.S. to provide Bible classes with a theme tailored towards young people. Though they may have breaks in which snacks and drinks are provided, the primary purpose of V.B.S. is Bible study. The primary purpose for “Trunk-Or-Treat” is entertainment. Therefore, the attempted comparison is fatally flawed.

Second, can such an event be mistaken to be a Church-sponsored event? As mentioned previously, there is nothing sacred about a parking lot owned or rented using Church funds. However, would such an event as “Trunk-Or-Treat” be perceived as a work of the Church by those passing by? There are many works that are not inherently wrong. However, does that authorize a congregation of the Church to allow all of those works to take place in their parking lot? Exercise is good and needful, but would the Lord desire that His people allow the facilities of the Church to be used as a “Fitness Club” throughout the week? Many worth-while, good deeds are performed every year by civic organizations around the country, but should the meeting place of God's people be the home for such? The Church should be eagerly and zealously doing the works authorized by God, thus doing good for the world and the kingdom of Christ. On the other hand, the Church should not allow itself to be seen as a community or civic organization. Unfortunately, there are many who believe that the Church is merely a social outlet for social functions and this is just another reason that the faithful should be careful.

Third, every parent and elder should ask the question, “What does this event teach our children?” Children soak in all kinds of information, and do so quickly. Christians should teach children at a young age to respect authority (especially the authority of God’s Word), and to be obedient. Moses emphasized God’s desire that Israel teach her children. “And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates” (Deu. 6:6-9). With last year in mind, and the fact that some congregations held “Trunk-Or-Treat” before or after services, let us ask this, “What was on the minds of those children when they were being taken to Wednesday Bible Study?” I am confident that probably every child was so excited about the entertainment that Bible study was the last thing on their minds. Sadder still, I am confident that most parents were more excited than their children and they too did not have Bible study as their Number One priority that evening. If you were to ask, “why should we have ‘Trunk-Or-Treat,’” an honest answer probably would be, “It’s for the kids.” However, if you were to give the children a choice, most likely they would enjoy themselves much more at a local park or at someone’s home rather than in a drab parking lot. I’m afraid that “Trunk-Or-Treat,” is “for the parents” rather than for their kids.

Let us always be careful that we do nothing to bring reproach upon the Church for which Christ died. Let us also be careful not to pervert the Scripture as to justify anything that we want. There is a time for fun and entertainment, but it should not be done at the expense of the reputation of Christ’s Church and should not violate any Bible principle found in God’s Word.

- *Brad Green*