



Halloween - What Does it Mean to You and Your Family?

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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When I was a little girl, in small town Saskatchewan, Halloween was something we looked forward to celebrating. We planned for weeks ahead about our costume. Would it be beautiful princess, cowboy, or ghost? The school party would involve a parade from classroom to classroom where we would enjoy seeing how others were dressed.

My mother would haul boxes of potato chips into the back kitchen and when the supplies were depleted, would resort to giving out dimes, fruit or anything else she had that was appropriate. Children were required to sing a song in front of my parents before they would be rewarded with a treat.

I usually chose a pillowcase over a paper or plastic bag - because it held more and didn't rip. Sometimes I would have to run home between houses to dump my load of goodies. Everything had to be done quickly because our town had a nine o'clock curfew which was announced by the firehouse alarm.

We would sort our treats into categories and then, after trading with siblings was completed, would store the items in containers. For weeks, we had treats to enjoy!

Then, as I got older, I started to hear horror stories about people who would put needles in apples, drugs in handouts or other mean and demented actions.

By the time my children were old enough to go out, I was VERY cautious. I would accompany them to homes where there were people we knew. Still, I would check their goodies to ensure they were safe.

Sometimes I would hear people talk about Halloween being evil and the work of the devil. Some of the churches I attended would not allow their children to participate in Halloween activities and some schools stopped recognizing the day.

Television channels often full their viewing schedule with horror movies or documentaries about covens and witches and vampires.

Well, this week I have been thinking about how important our beliefs can be and how they affect our behaviours.

History claims that Halloween was a Christian festival known as All Hallows' Eve - the evening before All Saints day which is November 1st. Through much of Europe it was observed with masses and prayers at the graves of deceased relatives. The practice of children dressing up in costumes and going from house to house to receive candy was mostly in the United States and Great Britain.

Some people in Canada continue to look forward to Halloween. They may dress their children up for trick or treating at homes, plan activities that will result in destruction of property, have adult drinking parties or just make cupcakes that are decorated like pumpkins to share with friends.

Isn't it amazing how one tradition can be observed in so many different ways? Beliefs do affect behaviours.

No matter what you believe about this holiday, I do hope that your Halloween will be a safe and happy one!