

## Religion Expert Exposes Real Danger of Halloween

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With Halloween just days away, children—and some parents, too—are eagerly anticipating donning costumes and asking for a 'treat' from neighbors as the price for not having a 'trick' played on them. Meanwhile, decorations designed to terrify—from skulls and witches to life-sized graveyards and giant insects—have turned homes across America into virtual haunted houses.

It's all just harmless fun. Or, is it?

Religion and culture expert Dr. Alex McFarland says that while many see Halloween as a chance to dress up and get goodies, there is real danger involved.

"Many of the common activities and themes associated with Halloween provide opportunities for harmless fun and togetherness," McFarland said. "At this time of year, churches often capitalize on the spiritual openness of people, on children's capacity for imagination and on the enthusiasm that Halloween generates. But parents need to know that beneath the costumes and make believe are spiritual realities that should be taken seriously."

As an example, McFarland points to the prevalence of witchcraft and the occult during the Halloween season. Indeed Wicca, which is the prominent religion of witchcraft, views Halloween, or 'Samhain,' as a high holy day, and a day for communicating with the dead.

"Halloween in America has become a celebration of darkness and of the supernatural as it relates to darkness," McFarland continued. "This is compounded by the fact that people long for spiritual experiences, spiritual fulfillment and a place to 'fit in'—all of which are promised by witchcraft and other occult activities. While it used to be that witchcraft was widely viewed as evil, today there is growing mainstream acceptance of it. Much of our

media and culture in recent years has centered on themes of witchcraft, vampirism, communication with the dead and paranormal phenomenon in general—for example, the 'Twilight' books and films; Katy Perry's 'Dark Horse' performance at the Grammys, which had the feel of a satanic ritual; Nicki Minaj's 'Roman Holiday' performance; and more. Halloween annually fans this cultural trend."

McFarland adds that because the supernatural *is* real and not simply a figment of the imagination, playing with the supernatural should not be taken lightly.

"One must use caution and exercise discernment when seeking spiritual reality, meaning and truth," he said. "The Bible clearly speaks out against occult practices and all forms of witchcraft. Today, many dismiss the Bible as outdated or marginally relevant at best, but it contains clear and emphatic prohibitions against occult involvement, in both the Old and New Testaments. This is not because God wants to take away our fun but because He loves us and wants us to be protected from evil spiritual entities whose desires are to deceive and destroy. Could it actually be that there is tangible danger in opening oneself up to certain types of spiritual experiences by participating in a supposedly innocuous celebration of a day devoted to death, darkness and witchcraft? According to the Bible, yes."