

Authors Jamin Goggin and Kyle Strobel apply this point to ministry in *The Way of the Dragon or the Way of the Lamb*. In an interview with Marva Dawn, they identify the power of personality, the love of money, and a reliance on “technique” as demonic powers tempting church leadership to effectively abandon the call of Christ. As Goggin and Strobel summarize, “We are dealing not merely with uncritical adoption of the cultural values around us, but with spiritual warfare.”

The danger here is that this “way of the Dragon” so often *works*. It can gain us an audience, a revenue stream, and a lot of praise. But the call to follow Christ is a cruciform call from beginning to end. If we do not follow him on the road to the cross, we do not follow him. That means that if we are devoted to any way of ministry that is not the way of Christ, we are not just being foolish nor are we being sinful only; we are also being deceived and put to work by evil spirits.

What Goggin and Strobel warn about in ministry is possible for all of us. When our work environments are so cutthroat that we sense that we need to cut corners or trample on others to get to the top, we are not merely surviving a toxic job; we are being used by a spirit of greed. When we create factions in our church devoted to preferences, we are not merely undermining unity; we are being used by a spirit of divisiveness. When our devotion to our own nation results in xenophobia and racism, we are not being overly patriotic; we are being used by a power of hell.

Know Your Enemy

All of this might sound like bad news. But it’s really good news that only sounds like bad news. You see, when we face an evil institution, we are facing *more* than an evil institution (that’s the bad news). But we are facing a problem we know how to overthrow (that’s the good news). We do not overcome spirits through better techniques or wiser social strategy. That way lies the way of the Dragon.

Instead, we overcome the powers of darkness in systemic evil the same way we grow in the mundane work of individual sanctification—through humble reliance on the power of Christ’s Spirit. And we do so with hope, because God has promised that he will not start a work unless he intends to finish it (Phil. 1:6). The cross of Christ proves to us the lengths that God will go in redeeming his creation. And the resurrection of Christ proves to us that no power of darkness, however strong, gets the final say (1 Cor. 15:22–24, 51–55).

There are still spirits of darkness at work in this world. And they do not limit their activity to one evening in late October. But God has armed us with a stronger Spirit, and it is not a spirit of fear (2 Tim. 1:7). So when we consider the enduring problem of racism in our society, or the political fracturing our nation is undergoing, or the prevalence of abuse in our own churches, we need not be naïve to be resolutely hopeful. The dark spirits at work in this world are bigger and stronger than we usually think. The battle we wage against them will take time. There will be losses and casualties along the way.

But we cannot forget that the verdict on the ultimate battle has already been declared. The powers and principalities may continue to wreak havoc, but the apostle Paul reminds us that they are flailing in the death throes of defeat.

The powers were put to open shame by our Savior, who triumphed over them on Calvary (Col. 2:15). So we do not fight for victory; rather, with the cross at our back, we fight *from* victory.

In the end, what irony could be more fitting? When facing the bleakness of death, it is the death of Christ that gives us hope. When overwhelmed at the powers of evil before us, we remember how the greatest powers of evil behind us could only unite to destroy themselves.

So bring on the darkness, the death, and the demons. Our God has seen all three before. And his bruised heel is proof that they don’t stand a chance.

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Happy Hallow’s Eve

The Pumpkin Prayer For Christian Kids

Definition of Hallow: I take a deep dive into the word hallow here, but basically, it means holy, sacred, or greatly honored

Webster says: to make holy or set apart for holy use. To respect greatly/venerate.

We’re used to hearing the phrase “Keep Christ in Christmas”. Well, I’m having a rally call for a new phrase- “Keep Hallow in Halloween!” 😊 When you hear the word “Halloween”, no doubt that visions of Jack-O-Lanterns dance in your head.

Keep “Hallow” in Halloween



Pumpkin Prayer:

Lord, open my mind so I can learn new things about you and the world you created. *(Take off the top of the pumpkin.)*

Remove the things in my life that don’t please you, including my seeds of doubt. *(Pull out the bag of seeds.)*



Open my eyes and help me to see your ways. *(Remove the eyes.)*

Open my ears and help me to hear your voice, so I may learn how you want me to live. *(Remove the ears.)*

I’m sorry for the times I’ve turned up my nose at the things you want me to do. *(Remove the nose.)*

Let everything I say please you, and help me spread your word to others. *(Remove the mouth.)*

Lord, help me show your light to others through the things I do. *(Place a candle inside and light it. Then turn off the lights)*

Amen.

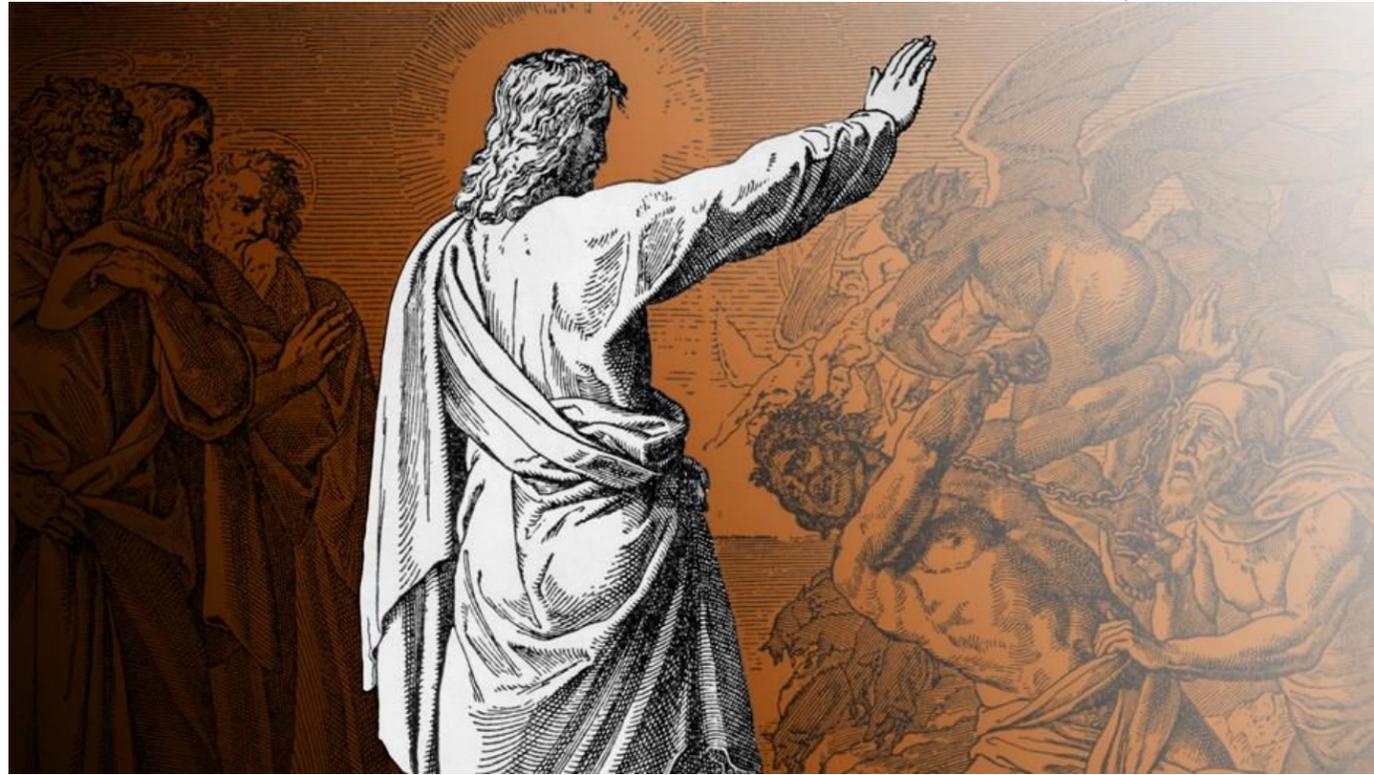
A great song to go with the carving activity would be “Open My Eyes, Lord”. After you light the pumpkin, sing “This Little Light of Mine” with the lights off while you look at your bright shining pumpkin!

<https://www.catholicicing.com/keep-hallow-in-halloween/>

Don't Worry, There Are More Demons Than You Think

What Halloween gets right about spirits and why Christians have nothing to be afraid of.

CHRIS PAPPALARDO | OCTOBER 30, 2018



*“That time of year thou mayst in me behold,
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang,
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
Bare ruined choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.”
—William Shakespeare, Sonnet 73*

Image: [Source: Sky Light Pictures / Lightstock](https://www.gettyimages.com/detail/illustration/118544444)

William Shakespeare recognized that the coming of autumn was an apt time to reflect on his own mortality. We Americans don't usually share in that impulse. We find just about any talk of death morbid and out of place. Most of the time. But then, halfway through the autumn season, we stumble across a holiday that (at least traditionally) relishes in darkness and death—Halloween.

Christians have long debated, and will continue to debate, whether they should engage in the various traditions that surround Halloween. If Halloween were *only* a day for little kids to dress up like their favorite princess or—for the more budget-conscious parent—ghosts (hello old bed sheet!), it's unlikely Christians would raise much of a fuss. What bothers the anti-Halloween crowd isn't current practice; it's the history behind the holiday. But what if the dark side of Halloween has something to teach us? I would go so far as to say that if the only relic left of Halloween is costumes and candy, we miss a dangerous truth—that dark powers are still at work in our world.

A Portal to the Other Side

Though the history of Halloween is a rather muddled affair, certain details are rather uncontested. We know, for instance, that commemorating October 31 is centuries old. As far back as the ninth century, Pope Gregory IV moved the “Feast of All Saints” day to November 1. The evening before this feast became known as “All Hallows’ Eve” and was, for centuries, a time when Christians honored the saints and prayed for the souls of their departed loved ones.

The more ancient history of Halloween, however, is murky. Some claim that the date of October 31 was chosen intentionally to coincide with a Celtic festival called “Samhain,” a pagan holiday marking the end of harvest. Some historians have described Samhain as a time when the locked portal to the world of the dead was briefly opened, allowing spirits, ghosts, and other paranormal beings to walk the earth.

If the church chose October 31 to coincide with Samhain, the question is, *why*? Most likely, this was an attempt at supplanting a pagan holiday with a “Christianized” version. After all, if the coming of autumn is going to make everyone speculate about the world of the dead anyway, it might be wisest to corral and re-direct the impulse.

Many believers today don't approach Halloween like our 9th-century Christian forebears. But in one sense, I think we should. Those believers recognized a pressing question, “Are there spirits among us today?” and did their best to answer it. Halloween raises the same question for us today, but we Westerners tend to dodge it. We make spirits and ghosts into silly games, because—obviously—only the ignorant people of the past believed in stuff like that.

Christians ought to know better. Our holy book contains stories of spirits being called back from the dead (1 Sam. 28:8–19), of men who thought they were seeing ghosts (Matt. 14:26, Luke 24:37), and of demons who did tremendous damage, both spiritually and physically (Matt. 8:32–34, Mark 9:20–22, Acts 19:13–16). In fact, Jesus' ministry can be characterized as an extended battle between his Holy Spirit and the lesser spirits of darkness, a battle that finds its dramatic conclusion in the paradoxical defeat of those spirits on Calvary (cf. Col. 2:15). When it comes to the question of a “portal to the other side,” one night a year might be too modest. If the New Testament is any indication, that portal is never completely closed (Eph. 6:10–18). Our world has far more spirits involved in its affairs than we realize.

So Where Are the Spirits Today?

At this point, you may be worried that I'm going to start talking exorcism techniques. Not exactly. Living with the reality that our world is shot through with active spirits and demons doesn't automatically mean that they prefer “possessing” people as we read in the Gospels. Quite the contrary: As C. S. Lewis pointed out in *Screwtape Letters*, most Westerners are so spiritually deadened that a direct attack would only serve to wake them up. The forces of darkness don't care whether we know they're at work or not; they only care that we're on the broad road to perdition.

Make no mistake: Forces of darkness are at work in this world. The Bible calls them (among other things) spirits, demons, or powers (Eph. 6:12). The names vary, but the reality is all throughout Scripture. And, if we'll open up our eyes, all throughout our world. We talk about the “spirit” of an organization or a nation, and we think we're being metaphorical. But Scripture seems to indicate that dark spirits can work big as well as small (1 Cor. 2:6–8). They seem just as eager to animate an entire nation as they are to possess an individual (Dan. 10:13). There may be no better explanation for some of the more heinous chapters in human history. Something more than human sin was involved in the practice of chattel slavery in the United States, in the dehumanizing punishment of the Soviet gulags, and in the frighteningly efficient mass murder of Nazi death camps.

The examples don't have to be this extreme to be just as relevant. Most of us, for instance, have had the experience of encountering an institution that is rather corrupt but noting that the individuals *within* the institution do not seem to be the corrupting factor. In fact, the individuals involved often sense the distortion but feel powerless to change it. The whole is not merely the sum of its parts. Something bigger seems to be at work. Something bigger *is* at work. As the apostle Paul reminds us, “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Eph. 6:12). The powers Paul talks about are not merely individual demons making individual people do terrible things. He is looking at something more systemic, beyond both the emperor and the empire.

The spirits against whom we battle may be individual. But they may also be found in our ideologies, our institutions, or our political tribes. In fact, the most devious powers at work today are probably not the ones that possess people, but the ones that animate and control power structures like governments, schools, or economies.