

Practice These Things
Philippians 4:1–9
August 30, 2026

Is celebrating Halloween something Christians are able to participate in? (Trick or Treat, pumpkin carving, etc.)

“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have **learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things**, and the God of peace will be with you.” **Philippians 4:8–9**

Keep this **“Framework”** in mind as we read through Philippians 4:1–9 this morning:

- How we should approach our **Differences** (vs. 1–3)
- What’s our daily **Disposition** (inherent qualities of mind, character, attitude) (vs. 4–7)
- Apply this to our **Decision Making** (vs. 8–9)

“Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved. I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord. Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women, who have **labored side by side with me in the gospel** together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, **whose names are in the book of life.**” **Philippians 4:1–3**

Paul isn’t against doctrinal conflict. He has learned what conflict is worth fighting for and dividing over. **What is happening between Euodia and Syntyche does not fall into that category**, so he entreats these two partners in gospel-living to have the same mind by setting aside their personal differences...

- For the good of each other
- For the unity of the church
- For gospel witness to the world
- For laboring side by side on earth, driven by their hope and confidence they will be reunited in heaven for eternity

I appreciate how Gavin Ortlund puts this in his book *Finding the Right Hills to Die On*:

“Pursuing the unity of the church does not mean that we should stop caring about theology (understanding of the things of God and interpreting the Bible). But it does mean that our love of theology must never exceed our love of real people, and therefore we must learn to love people amid our theological disagreements.”¹

¹ Gavin Ortlund, *Finding the Right Hills to Die On: A Case for Theological Triage* (Crossway, 2020), 24.

Our next step in the “**Framework**” as we read through Philippians 4:1–9 this morning is:

- Differences (vs. 1–3)
- **Disposition (vs. 4–7) = Our Attitude or Mindset**
- Decision Making (vs. 8–9)

“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” **Philippians 4:4–7**

Unity in the Body of Christ displays the light of Jesus Christ

- Rejoice in the Lord, always — leaning on the strength of others found in shared joy
- Gentleness is known to all by the grace and comfort given to us by our Savior
- Prayers so deep they are only a groaning grow in clarity when they are joined by a choir of God’s people
- The peace of God will guard your hearts and minds as He is pleased by the obedience

Broken unity weakens Authentic Community. When the people of God live in unity, moving beyond our differences to display a Christ-centered disposition to the world, we will be following Paul’s instruction to practice what we see in his life and experience the peace of God filling our lives. From this peace, we find the strength to live like Jesus, make godly decisions, and “practice these things” that Paul writes about every day.

Which brings us to the last part of our Philippians 4 framework—covering our differences in unity and protecting our disposition to live in godliness, we can now give a direct answer to our question today as we approach **Decision Making**.

- Differences (vs. 1–3)
- Disposition (vs. 4–7)
- **Decision Making (vs. 8–9)**

Is celebrating Halloween something Christians can participate in? First let’s read these last two verses, Philippians 4:8-9:

“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.” **Philippians 4:8-9**

In January of 2020, our elders adopted a position statement to help guide our church specifically through the issue of Halloween. This position paper is just over a page long. I am going to show you this statement, piece by piece.

1) If participation in Halloween activities is done in a sinful manner (anything that promotes Satan, demons, etc.), an opportunity is provided for the devil to enter into someone's life or family (Acts 13:10; James 4:7; 1 John 3:8; 1 John 3:10).

For a Christ-follower, this first statement should be the area we have the most common ground. This is the area that all of us should agree on—no disagreement or division.

Anything done in a sinful manner—including but certainly not limited to participating in Halloween activities—is a dangerous and destructive path, and following Jesus requires us to flee from such things. We don't walk right on the edge of sin, try to find gray areas around it to justify our behaviors, or get as close to it as we can without sinning—we should flee! (2 Timothy 2:22)

This is where the first saying in Philippians 4:8 comes in: "Whatever is true..." There is an ethical truthfulness that is expected here. God's Truth, made visible through the person of Jesus Christ—the Way, the TRUTH, and the Life—and the truth found in His Word, is the foundation that every Christ-follower should be using to make decisions every day.

2. Christian costume or practice should refrain from anything that would confuse the reputation of Jesus or align with evil. Further, parents must accept responsibility for each child's faith development and avoid anything that would hinder this growth (Ephesians 5:11; 1 Thessalonians 5:22; 2 Corinthians 4:2; Ephesians 6:4).

1) Reputation of Jesus

Here's the question: Do we weigh the **DECISIONS** we make each day against how we represent Philippians 4 in our lives? That's exactly what godly decision making and "practice these things" from Paul's example looks like as we consider the reputation of Jesus in every decision that we make.

2) Responsibility for each child's faith.

The lie that is rampant throughout culture is this: If you don't participate in (fill in the blank) Halloween, activities, entertainment, career advancement, financial prosperity...if you don't participate, you'll be left out, you'll be alone, left behind, lost, empty, and unfulfilled.

But that lie that you feel, wherever it applies in your life, is designed to keep you from knowing God's truth and walking in His freedom.

- Maybe for you, that is directly related to Halloween Christian costume and practice.
- Maybe for others, that connects to your time, your calendar, and your activities
- Maybe for others, your wallet—how you steward your finances
- And others, where your identity lies—in your career, your authority, or your reputation.

In every area of your life, this remains the same: The world will always demand a higher percentage of your life than it deserves. If you don't choose where your family will land for the topic of Halloween—and be able to explain why you have made that decision—then someone else will decide for you.

Castine Family: It is your assignment as Christ-followers to make account for the **reputation of Jesus** and **your responsibility for the faith of others** when making decisions about what is true and right and worthy. Philippians 4:8-9 helps us make those decisions.

How you take this into account and live out what is true, worthy, just, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and worthy of praise must never confuse your reputation as a Christ-follower.

- 3. Taking into consideration the above principles established by the Elders, all Halloween participation should be a matter of conscience and wisdom. If a person's conscience is not comfortable with participation, then follow the leading of the Holy Spirit (Acts 24:16; 1 Peter 3:16).**

What area of my life this morning am I try to hold separately from my spiritual life?

I cannot hold sports, entertainment or Halloween separately from my spiritual walk, because my spiritual walk should influence everything I do.

This final statement makes space for differences - different likes and different gifts - and allows for a matter of conscious and wisdom for families across this room. However we answer this question regarding Halloween, the answer must include: How does this decision help me to live like Jesus, make godly decisions, and “practice these things” that are true, just, honorable, pure, commendable, and worthy of praise.

Conclusion

- 1) Pray and discuss how your family will approach Halloween this year.
- 2) Evaluate if the way you live on Halloween is consistent with how you live every other day of the year.
- 3) Consider how Philippians 4:1-9 is shaping the decisions you face each day.