

TRICK OR TREAT

A TeleKETICS Presentation



TeleKETICS Presents A DIMENSION Film

to explore the Christian experience
in religious education and worship

TEACHING GUIDE

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The theological problem today is to find the art of drawing religion out of man, not pumping it into him. The redemption has happened. The Holy Spirit is in man. The art is to help men become what they are.

KARL RAHNER



STORYLINE / PERSPECTIVE

TRICK OR TREAT is, first of all, only a beginning...a brief experience to initiate the process of self-awareness with which moral insight begins. Because sensitivity to the good is gradual and developmental, the film is purposely open-ended, unfinished even. It asks young viewers to consider possible solutions to the dilemma proposed, and then to make a choice, guided by "the truly human thing to do," the basic norm of morality.

TRICK OR TREAT is the story of two pre-adolescent boys, Pete and Sandy, who are too young for the "big kids' " parties, too old for the usual door-to-door Halloween ritual.

Pete's cowboy outfit is too small now; he knows he has really outgrown trick-or-treating. But his pal, Sandy, has talked him into one last fling. Pete's dad extracts a promise that the boys will commit no mischief, and things get worse from there.

An old lady gives them jellybeans (which they hate), two little boys start tagging along after them, and some girls make fun of their costumes.

Finally an old man in a house trailer drives them off with no treat at all. Time for a trick. To keep the letter of their promise, they inveigle little Ronnie (the tagger along) into tying the old man's trailer to a nearby parked car whose engine is running. A moment later, the car starts up, the trailer is yanked off its blocks and crashes, injuring the old man. Pete and Sandy escape, but little Ronnie is caught. The older boys figure that the dark night and their costumes have concealed their identity. By saying nothing, they can avoid all blame, and the little boys will take the punishment. But Pete's sense of fairness is uneasy with this arrangement. What should he do?

To prompt a thoughtful consideration of the issues involved, encourage the students to think of times when they have felt like Pete. Build up a sense of inquiry and response by posing non-judgmental questions; e.g., "What is happening here?" An atmosphere of freedom is the basic "breathing space" for honest moral growth.



THEOLOGICAL ORIENTATION

“Conscience” and “Commandments,” like inevitable touchstones, these terms are certain to dominate the content of any religious education program, new or traditional. And almost as certainly, teachers will search again and again for ways to make these realities something more than over-simplified abstractions...something other than a personal monitoring system programmed to a list of do's and mostly don't's.

Because Conscience and the Commandments are both an expression of man's living sense of what he ought to do — of who he is, it is important for students to discover the communal sense of values at the heart of both Conscience and Law. For the pre-adolescent, the transition between a totally other-directed code of right and wrong and his/her own personal sense of the good option, the truly human response, is just beginning. For this reason, it is vital that students experience a learning atmosphere secure in the freedom to reflect, to ask questions, even to venture a few wrong answers.

A film like TRICK OR TREAT can be an effective catalyst for such a learning experience. It touches upon several key values of the intermediate student. First, there is friendship and the responsibility of friends to help each other realize their own individual integrity...to develop their own consciences. Second, is the sense of fairness, of honesty, and all that the Eighth Commandment implies for an eleven-year-old who has mastered the art of word-for-word literalness, known to adults as rationalizing. Third, there is the human desire to possess “things” and the need for fun — both valid expressions of the human need for security combined with freedom and transcendence. Through its open-ended presentation of these values in a setting of everyday life, TRICK OR TREAT launches the process of distinguishing instinctual, parental, and peer group values from personal moral insights...a basic step in the formation of conscience.

PROCEDURE ONE

(For Young Audiences)

BEFORE VIEWING FILM

1. Distribute the following list of alternatives to each student. Ask them to mark one choice in each set. Explain that their choices are just for each of them to think about. They need not be shared.

- Would you rather

- play a trick on someone, or
- make a surprise gift for someone.

- If the little boy next door asked you to play with him, would you rather

- give him some money to buy candy so he would go away, or
- teach him to play an exciting new game.



- If your parents asked you to promise something that you didn't want to promise, would you

- promise anyway and mean it, or
- promise anyway, but not keep your promise, or
- say you won't promise and make your parents angry.

- If you did something that could get you into trouble, would you rather have a friend

- who would lie to protect you no matter what, or
- who would help you figure out the good thing to do.

SHOW FILM.

2. Ask the group to help you fill out the choice list in no. 1, first as Sandy would choose, then as Pete would. Try to get some group consensus in the course of the discussion.

3. Discussion Questions

- How can you tell that Pete and Sandy are really kind of old for trick-or-treating? Why do you think they do it? Do they really find it fun? How do you know when something is fun? How does it make you feel? Free? Happy? Glad to be with people?

- What if Pete had decided he really didn't want to go trick-or-treating in the first place and decided to phone Sandy about it; can you pretend that you are Pete talking to Sandy?

- What kind of person do you think Pete is? What does his room tell you about him? How would you describe his feeling for other people? For the old lady with the jelly beans? For his dad? For little Ronnie? Are things or people more important to him?

- Why do little Ronnie and his friend follow Pete and Sandy? Could the older boys have acted differently toward the younger ones? What might they have done? Why do you think Pete and Sandy wanted Ronnie to tie the rope? Were they really keeping their word to Pete's dad that they would not do anything mean?

- Do you think that being embarrassed by the girls' remarks and trailed by the little boys had anything to do with the way Pete and Sandy reacted to the cranky man in the trailer? What other plan or trick might they have carried out that would have been kinder and yet fun?

- Would you like to have Sandy as a friend? Why? Why not? Do you agree with Sandy's argument that since Ronnie's father is rich, it's all right to let him pay for all the damages caused by the trick? How important is money?

- If Pete does make known his involvement in the trick, what do you think he should do about it? What do you think his mother will say? His father? (Role playing situation)

- How do you think Pete feels at the end of the film? What would you say to him if you had the chance?

- In the Gospel, Jesus described himself as the Truth, and asked us not to strike back in anger and even to carry our brother's burden. What do you think he might say to Pete if they could talk together as friends?



PROCEDURE TWO

(For Parents and Teachers)

1. Ask each person to take pencil and paper and to complete the following statements for their own insight. Statements need not be shared.

- The most frequent topic of conversation in my home/among my students is --
- The thing I fear most in regard to my children/students is --
- If I found one of my children/my students involved in an act of violence, I would --
- When they are upset or troubled, my children/students turn to --
- The last time I took time to have fun with my children/students was --

SHOW FILM

2. Ask the parents/teachers to complete the statements in no. 1 again; this time as they think Pete's father or mother would do it. Have them compare completed statements and their reasons.

3. Ask for volunteers to role play Pete and his mother, or father, as he tells her/him about all that has happened. Follow with discussion.

4. Discussion Questions:

- How would you help Pete to accept his responsibility and yet not be warped by extreme guilt?
- How would you help Pete to relate to Sandy, to reject his arguments but not Sandy himself?
- How would you help Pete to understand God's forgiveness and love even in the face of Pete's mistake?