

## Witchcraft and Wicca FAQ

Q. Are Wicca and Witchcraft the same thing?

A. Some say yes, and some say no. I suppose the only way to navigate this question safely is to point out what some may consider the main differences. In general Wiccans feel free to review different belief systems such as Celtic, Norse, Essene, Gnosis, or Shamanism and then blend together any points that "feel" right into their own personal path. Pure Witchcraft on the other hand, may focus a little more tightly on using Magick and ritual to work with the elemental and spiritual forces in nature. Regardless, I feel the differences are slight in that Wicca and Witchcraft both work to achieve balance and harmony within nature and self.

Personally, I follow a predominately Celtic Wiccan path. As time passes however, I find myself increasingly drawing upon the wisdom and beliefs of other spiritual beliefs as my knowledge and understanding of them increases. So; while I consider myself a Celtic Wiccan, I also consider myself a Witch and perhaps part Shaman too because I utilize and blend aspects of all three.

On the other hand, my wife shares many of the same beliefs regarding the Creative Force of the universe and living in harmony with nature but she does not consider herself Wiccan, Witch or Shaman. Instead she prefers to not use the name of any particular belief system.

Q. Who do Witches Worship?

A. There is a single power defined as the One or All, which is composed of everything it ever created. This supreme energy force does not rule over the Universe, it IS the Universe. Since most find it difficult to talk to or call upon a faceless mass of Divine energy, this supreme power is personified into male and female aspects as the Goddess and God. This simply makes the concept easier for the human mind to relate to. Some take this concept a step further and use actual names like, Astarte, Isis, Odin, Pan, Dianna, Cernunnos, etc., when invoking the Goddess and God. In the end, it is a personal preference and what Witches use depends on what "feels" right for them individually.

Q. How do Witches view Christianity. Are Witches Anti-Christian?

A. Not necessarily. Witchcraft overall is very tolerant of other religious views and does not engage itself in criticizing the beliefs of other people providing their beliefs do not violate the basic tenant of "Harm None." Witches do object to religions that attempt to suppress religious beliefs of others.

We also have a strong disdain for those who use religion as an excuse to commit mass genocide. The "Burning Times" are a clear historical example of one religious group attempting to exert its philosophies and beliefs upon others using extreme measures.

Perhaps an over simplified way of describing our view is this: Imagine a beautiful meadow in the forest, and there are many paths leading to this meadow. It really does not matter which path you take to get there, the important thing is that you get there without harming anyone or anything along the way.

Q. Can I follow the path of Wicca or Witchcraft and be a Christian too?

A. Again, some say yes and others maintain that they are completely separate religions. I believe that if one looks closely at the true teachings of Jesus with an open heart, you will find some stark commonalities. It is only when one takes literally the sometimes frail misinterpretations of those who misunderstood the intent or used the teachings to suit their own political agendas that one sees wide differences.

As a solitary you are free to choose any path you desire, or any blend that "feels" right to you. The important thing is to not allow a name or word to become a stumbling block. It is the intent of your actions and spirituality that matters in the end. I realize it is a poor comparison; but Peanut Butter and Chocolate are two completely separate things, the fact remains however that they work pretty well when mixed together. Ultimately you must do what "feels" right to you...

Q. The Wiccan Rede says "An it harm none, do as ye will." Does that mean a Witch can do anything they want and its OK if they justify the action to themselves?

A. An excellent question indeed! and the answer is no... The whole premise of our belief system is based on living in harmony with all things that exist. This includes but is not limited to the earth, trees, rivers, lakes, oceans, air, all of earth's creatures as well as other people without regard to race, color, religion or personal orientation.

My interpretation of the Rede tells me that the creative force of the universe has given me an inner voice or "conscience" which tells me what is right or wrong. It is also this consciousness that connects me to the creator. By listening to this inner voice, (Perhaps I should clarify here. No I do not hear voices, \*smile\* it is more like something I feel) I try to analyze my impulses and feelings to

ensure they are not driven by greed, lust, envy, prejudice or anger. If they are, I try to put them in perspective or discard them all together. I then use common sense and judgement in my actions and accept full responsibility for them. This is not always easy to do, but I try. By keeping these ideals of right and wrong foremost in my mind, as well as seeking to obtain harmony and balance with nature and all living things, I am able to do my best at following the Rede as I go through my day.

This is not to say that Witches are perfect, never do anything wrong or make mistakes, we are still human. We are aware of, or try to be aware of the karmic return of our actions, and are very careful not to send out negative energy in thought or deed.

Yes, sometimes a Witch will focus an energy form toward someone who needs a psychic zap. This is only done however when a person is consistently doing something very wrong within society and causing a lot of harm to others. If and when a Witch does zap someone, they do so with the full knowledge that it will eventually return to them and there will be a price to pay according to the Law of Three. There are times when we simply must make a personal sacrifice for the good of the whole and shoulder this weight.

Q. If Wicca and Witchcraft are not evil, why do you wear black robes?

A. This is another baseless superstition and Witches wear clothing and robes of every color. Black is the combination of all colors and all vibrational rates of light on the material plane. It is known that black is a very good conductor of energy, therefore wearing black simply helps Witches absorb natural energy to increase the power of their thought forms.

Q. OK, so if Wicca and Witchcraft are not evil, why do you hold rituals and ceremonies at night hidden in the woods?

A. This practice has its history in a couple of different things, none of which have anything to do with evil... In the old world; especially within the Celtic tribes, the day followed an entirely different schedule than it does in modern times. The new day for them actually began at sunset, this is also why most observances of holidays were celebrated on the evening before the actual calendar day. The second reason is that survival had an entirely different meaning during those times. Almost without exception, everyone spent their daylight hours tending the crops, their herds, or engaged in their trade. All daylight hours were vitally important simply for survival reasons. I also believe

there

was a third reason that I will not go into great detail on here. If you have an interest, you should look at my section on The Burning Times.

OK, so that takes care of why we observed our rights at night during ancient times, and many of the

reasons are the same in today's times. For one, most of us are busy working all day earning a living,

so the evening is the only time we have to seek spiritual communion. Secondly; Wicca and Witchcraft are still largely misunderstood religions and we are still persecuted for our beliefs.

Another reason which is important for me, and possibly for others as well is that I feel a special closeness to the Goddess and God at night. Yes I can and do enjoy the mountains, meadows or a sunrise and sunset during the daylight, but I am truly more aware of the heavens and the great expanse of the Universe at night, so it just makes sense for me.

Q. What form does the practice of Witchcraft take?

A. The form and context vary from group to group and between each ritual, and may run the gamut

from elaborate ceremony to spontaneous ritual to simple meditation.

Q. How do you see the Goddess and God?

A. Wiccans believe that there are female/male aspects to the One or All and without the union and

balance of these two aspects, nothing can exist. See Before Time Was or read the answer to question number two above again for more insight.

Q. Do all Witches practice their religion the same way?

A. Yes and no. Wicca is a highly individualistic religion. Moreover, the number of different sects within the Craft may give the impression that no two groups practice the same way. Though practices may vary, most traditions have many similarities, such as the working of magic and a respect for nature. Most Witches find enough common ground for mutual support and productive networking throughout the Craft community.

Q. Is Witchcraft a cult?

A. No. Cults are groups that trade salvation and a sense of belonging for the ability to think for oneself. They indulge in extravagant homage or adoration (Webster's Dictionary) usually of an earthly leader of some sort. Most Witches come to the Craft through reading and communing with

nature and later finding like minded people. Witches are extremely individualistic.

Q. Do Witches have a bible?

A. No. A bible is supposedly the word of a deity revealed through a prophet. Witchcraft is a Pagan folk-religion of personal experience. Witchcraft in the old times was much the same as the beliefs of the Essenes, Gnosis, Druids, and many other religions. The teachings were passed along by spoken word through long periods of one on one instruction with a master of the Craft. This approach was taken because the power and knowledge could be misused in the wrong hands. Therefore by using only the spoken word, the old masters could ensure those who wished to follow the path had a true understanding and their hearts were in the right place as their knowledge of the mysteries grew. Unfortunately, when the medieval church began its attempts to convert and eliminate rival belief systems, the teaches were either killed outright or went underground resulting in much of the ancient knowledge being lost.

Q. If Witches don't have a bible, what do you use?

A. Most modern Witches keep a Book of Shadows, (BOS) or Grimorie which is more like an individuals workbook, journal or diary meaningful to the person who keeps it. This book containing rituals, discoveries, spells, poetry, herb lore, etc. Covens almost always keep a similar group book.

I am not exactly sure how the name "Book of Shadows" came to be, but I would assume that this also ties into the Burning Times when the church set out to eliminate all texts along with the followers of the old ways. The writings that existed were more than likely were taken into the shadows and hiding with the survivors.

Q. The word Tradition is used quite often, what is the exact meaning of this?

A. Here the word Tradition relates to the beliefs of a specific geographical region such as Celtic, Germanic, Norse, ect., and is sometimes broken down into further subsets. Essentially it is much the same as the variety of denominations seen within Christianity such as Methodist, LDS, Mormon or Catholic.

Q. Do Witches cast spells?

A. Some do and some don't. A spell is a ritual formula, or series of steps, to direct psychic energy to accomplish a desired end. This energy is drawn from the Earth with the aid of elementals, concentrated and sent out into the world to achieve a positive goal. Since Witchcraft teaches that whatever one sends out is returned threefold, Witches are very careful to never send out harmful

energy carelessly. The Christian word for this is "Prayer", the only real difference is that Witches also invoke the aid of spirit guides, familiars or other elemental energies to add strength to the process as well as using ritual tools.

Q. Do Witches worship the devil?

A. No. Satan or the Devil has absolutely no place in Wicca or Witchcraft. The worship of Satan is the practice of profaning Christian symbolism, and is thus a Christian heresy rather than a Pagan religion. The goddess and God of the Witches are in no way connected to Satanic practices. Satan or the Devil is a Christian creation and they are more than welcome to keep him.

Q. Are Witches only women?

A. No, although women do seem to predominate in the Craft overall. In fact, some traditions have only women practitioners, just as others have only men. A male Witch is simply called a Witch, never a warlock and it is considered an insult to call a male Witch Warlock. The word Warlock actually means "oath breaker". Some traditions of Wicca separate between female/male. The word "Wicce" pronounced (Wik-kay) designates a female Witch and "Wicca" pronounced (Wik-kah) designates a male Witch.

Q. How do Witches view Sex?

A. Sex is part of nature and sacred to the Deities and Witches. The Great Rite at Beltane is a symbolic representation of the union between the Goddess and God resulting in the creation of all that exists. Very few if any traditions engage in sex as a part of group rites and there are no orgies during ritual. Many couples who have chosen each other, and jointly follow the path do use sex in their private rites and rituals however. It is a deeply intimate sharing of body, spirit and soul which bonds them together closer than anything else can.

Q. What is the purpose of performing ceremonies Skyclad?

A. The term skyclad means "Clad only by the sky". Not all Witches perform rituals skyclad, but those who do believe that the absence of clothing allows energy to transfer to and from them more freely. Many simply feel closer to the Goddess and God while in their natural form without the bindings of human technology, insecurities or socially retarded inhibitions regarding the human form. Many wear a robe or some other clothing made of natural materials while participating in group activities and go skyclad only when observing rites alone or with their mate. Regardless, going

skyclad during ritual is in no way a sexual act, it is a deeply spiritual one for those who "choose" to do so.

Q. Is Witchcraft a religion?

A. Yes, Witchcraft is a nature based religion and it has been recognized as such in the United States and Canada. In the US, Wicca is has full recognition as a religion and is granted all rights as such under the Constitution. The American Heritage Dictionary defines religion as; a belief in and reverence for a supernatural power recognized as the creator and governor of the universe. So yes it does qualify as such. Our definition differs slightly in that to us, the creator of the universe IS the universe. Witchcraft or Wicca is not something that can be followed once in a while or when it is convenient or we need or want something. It is a dedication made to nature, the deities and yourself. It is a way of life, and as such we are mindful of the balance between ourselves and all things within the universe at all times.

Q. How do Witches view death?

A. Many Witches believe in reincarnation and the Summerland. After passing over, Summerland is where the spirit awaits to be returned into a new physical form. We do not believe in an absolute Heaven or Hell where the spirit spends eternity as reward or punishment for ones earthly actions.

Q. How can someone find out more about Witchcraft?

A. Ours is not a missionary religion, and we never try to make converts. We feel that if this path is right for you, you will find your way to it. We are however becoming more visual and vocal in an attempt to educate and dispel myths and superstitions about the Craft. You need not worry about a Witch knocking on your door and wanting to come in and share passages from their BOS though. For those who are interested there are many excellent books in our suggested reading list. Some Witches also teach classes or facilitate discussion groups. In this way, people may make contact with a like minded Coven, form their own groups or share thoughts and beliefs with others. There is also a growing number of superb craft sites on the internet, periodicals, and national and regional festivals through which a seeker can make contact with the larger Craft community.

Gentle Breezes!  
Herne

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