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Truth about Wicca

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Truth about Wicca

Abstract

In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph.

"Wicca. A five letter word that is many of a time mistaken for another five letter word; witch. Yet in present definitions the two are far from interchangeable. Wicca is a religious practice that is slowly being recognized in the United States and other areas around the world. It's not a form of association with the devil, nor do Wiccans even believe in the devil. In truth Wicca is more about nature and the beauty of nature than anything else."



EMILY HEIDEN

Truth about Wicca

Wicca. A five letter word that is many of a time mistaken for another five letter word; witch. Yet in present definitions the two are far from interchangeable. Wicca is a religious practice that is slowly being recognized in the United States and other areas around the world. It's not a form of association with the devil, nor do Wiccans even believe in the devil. In truth Wicca is more about nature and the beauty of nature than anything else.

In fact they celebrate the five elements; earth, wind, fire, water and the always-present Spirit. These five elements control aspects of their lives, and in some respects, Wiccans can control the elements. Some may call this magic; the more scientific of us might just call it a transfer of energies. Either way, many Wiccans believe that there is an unseen force out there that they can affect and mold to their uses.

Wicca is ditheistic, having a God and a Goddess within most branches of belief. The focus tends to be on the Goddess, although males tend to lean towards the God for obvious reasons. There are two terms one must be familiar with when it comes to Wicca. They are Neo-Wicca and Traditional Wicca. Neo-Wicca is what is found in most areas now days, although there are some Traditional Wiccans. Neo-Wiccans used the deities of other polytheistic religions to represent their own depending on the need. So if for example you are trying to find a lost cat you might look to Bastet, the Egyptian Cat Goddess.

Traditional Wicca is stricter in its rules. It is more ditheistic than polytheistic, believing only in the God and the Goddess. To become Traditional Wiccan is very hard. You would have to find a coven that would accept you into their circle and teach you what they know (you would then be known as a Seeker). Also Traditional Wicca focuses on fertility, while Neo-Wiccans tend to focus on the natural aspect of things. The most forceful difference is that Traditional Wiccans have a very set way of doing things and only that way will be accepted.

Covens are not as portrayed in the media where they are casting spells on people and sacrificing animals. Most covens in present times are used as a time to get together

and honor the God and Goddess. At these meetings there are rituals, not all that different from the rituals that go on in Catholic and other Christian churches. Sure the names are different and the food may be different but it is just another way to honor the higher powers.

Wicca does not equal witch, at least not the way witches are presented in traditional media, like in Scooby Doo and the Witch's Ghost. Witches are not necessarily evil, or necessarily good. Witches are witches, and being labeled a witch does not mean you must act in a certain manner. The person matters, not the title. As for warlocks, the actual etymology of the word means "oathbreaker," so unless the person actually broke oaths it would be unwise to call him one. Preferably, any Wiccan should be called witch if you must title them with something other than Wiccan.

Like many other religious beliefs there are several different branches. Among Traditional Wicca there are the main branches of Gardnerian and Alexandrian Wicca. Most solitary Wiccans (those without a coven) are considered to be Neo-Wiccans. As with every label, there are people who take it and make it into something it's not. Frostian Wiccans and people that follow something called "Celtic Faery Egyptian Wicca," or something equally as unusual are two such groups. Frostian and Celtic Faery Egyptian Wiccans are two branches that, to most Wiccans (both Neo and Traditional), are not really considered Wicca but are more of...an embarrassment to the religion.

Many may believe that Wiccan Holidays and traditions are unlike those of Abrahamic faiths, but that is far from truth. Many of the Wiccan Sabbats (holidays) are on dates that we know well. Mabon, for instance, is the Fall Equinox, and Imbolc is the Spring Equinox. Yule is Winter Solstice, and Litha is Midsummer Day. Ostara is widely celebrated among non-wiccans as Easter, and Lammastide as the first of August, while Beltane (May Day) is the celebration of fertility and joy. The most common and popular Sabbat is Samhain, or All Hallows Eve, or most easily recognized as Halloween. This holiday marks the end of the Wiccan year.

Among Wiccans there is a guideline that is called the Wiccan Rede. Rede means to advise or counsel. The words of the Wiccan Rede are "An Ye Harm None, Do What Ye Will." The saying basically means that if it harms someone or yourself, you are not suppose to do it, but you won't be struck by lightning if you do it anyway. This has led to some Wiccans being called White Witches, as most Wiccans will think carefully about what it is they're about to do before doing it. The Wiccan Rede is part of a bigger poem called the Wiccan Credo.¹ This is just another group of basic guidelines that you should follow. Once again, you would not be struck by lightning if you do not obey them.

Among Traditional and some Neo Wiccans there is also the Ardanes, sometimes called the Old Laws, which is older than the Rede². It speaks of many things about the beliefs of the Traditional Wiccan and tells one to never break one's oaths. To break the oaths you gave when you became part of a coven is to disrespect your coven and the God and Goddess.

Wicca believes in reincarnation and also of a peaceful realm called Summerland. It is believed among many Neo-Wiccans that the spirit goes to Summerland between reincarnations. There, it waits for the proper time to return to earth. When you die it is believed that you have learned the lesson that was the purpose of your existence in that body or form. In this way death is looked upon as a good thing, not evil or necessarily bad. As for a Hell, well in the Ardanes it is said that if you break your oaths the Curse of

the Goddess falls upon you and you will never be reborn again, stuck forever in the Christian Hell.

There is also the concept of the Threefold Law, which helps keep Wiccans in the mindset of goodness. It's believed that when one does harm or good in the world it is sent back to you three times as much. This concept is very similar to karma in that good and bad is returned to the person. Wicca law differs in that it comes back three times as much.

Just like many other religions, Wicca has many sacred texts. Within what they call a Book of Shadows, they write down many rituals and spells that are either passed down through generation or shared among covens. Some also put their thoughts and beliefs down in a Book of Shadows, although many are starting to create another book called a Book of Mirrors just for thoughts and beliefs.

Another tradition among Wiccans and several other religions is the taking on of a new name. This does not mean that your original name is to be forgotten. That, in the eyes of most people, is considered a form of disrespect to your parents. To choose a Wiccan name is to find a name that just clicks with you and that you love very much. It's a name that is between you and the deities. Wiccans can tell other people what their Wiccan name is, but most just keep it within their coven or close friends (if they do not have a coven).

Neo-Wicca is a very free religion that allows you to conform the religion to your life, instead of conforming your life to the religion. While there are some things that are considered traditions and are important to celebrate and honor, not everything is a set path. It is generally viewed as disrespectful and wrong to force the Wiccan religion upon another person of a different faith. There's a difference between explaining what it is and telling someone to join Wicca.

Wicca is a unique religion that is just beginning to flourish again. As awareness of Wicca increases, so will the acceptance of the religion. It's important that all religions, Abrahamic and other are seen for what they really are and not as what media wants them to be.

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