

FAQ's:

What is Wicca?

Wicca, sometimes called "The Craft" or "The Craft of the Wise" is one of many earth-based religions. The religion which is closest to Wicca in America is probably Native American spirituality. Traditional Wicca was founded by Gerald Gardner, a British civil servant, who wrote a series of books on the religion in the 1940's. It contains references to Celtic deities, symbols, seasonal days of celebration, etc. Added to this were components of ceremonial magic and practices of the Masonic Order. A more recent form is eclectic Wicca which involves a combination of Wiccan beliefs and practices, combined with other Pagan and non-Pagan elements. The various traditions of Wicca are part of the Pagan or Neopagan group of earth-based religions.

Who are the Goddess and God in Wicca?

According to David Barrett et al, editors of the "World Christian Encyclopedia: A comparative survey of churches and religions - AD 30 to 2200," there are 19 major world religions which are subdivided into a total of 270 large religious groups, and many tens of thousands of smaller ones. Each of the 19 world religions has a different concept of deity or deities. Even among the Abrahamic religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, there are very different views of deity. Conservative Protestant, Roman Catholic, liberal Protestant, Islam, Reform Judaism, Orthodox Judaism, and Conservative Judaism all call their deity God, but conceive of their male God in different terms. They teach that he requires different behaviors and beliefs from his followers.

Many Wiccans believe in a deity that is largely unknowable -- sometimes called "The All" or "The One." However, they believe that they can comprehend the male and female aspects of the deity, whom they call the God and the Goddess. Sometimes, they commune with "The Goddess" or "The God." Other times, they link with specific Pagan deities from the past. Instead of "the Goddess," they might relate to Athena, Brigit, Ceridwen, Diana, Hecate, Ishtar, Isis, Venus, etc. In place of "The God" they may link to Adonis, Apollo, Dionysus, Odin, Osiris, Pan, Thor, Zeus, etc.

How do Wiccans worship the God and Goddess?

Some Wiccans pray to their God or Goddess. More Wiccans probably feel that they have more of a partnership with the God and Goddess than the God/worshiper relationship found in Christianity and other world religions. They need the Goddess and God; the God and Goddess need them. They welcome communion with the God and Goddess; they don't really worship them in the same way as followers of other religions do.

Is Wicca a form of Satanism?

The short answer is "No." The long answer is "It depends."

To some conservative Christians, all religions other than their own are forms of Satanism in which followers worship Satan or one of his demons. So, they view Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Wicca, and dozens of other religions as varieties of Satanism.

However, most people recognize that there are over many dozens of religions in the world, with different beliefs about deity, humanity and the rest of the universe. One of these is Wicca. Another is Satanism. These two religions have entirely different beliefs about deity, different rules for ethical behavior, different expectations from their membership, different views of the universe, different seasonal days of celebration, etc. Wiccans do not recognize an all-evil deity like Satan; he belongs to Christianity and Islam.

Wicca and Satanism are not at all similar religions. However, the Christian church linked them in the past -- particularly during the Witch burning times of the late Middle Ages and Renaissance. They regarded Witches as Satan worshipers. Some Christian denominations have not been particularly thorough in correcting mistakes of the past. So, Wicca and Satanism continue to be linked in many people's minds.

Is Wicca a form of Paganism?

"Pagan" is one of those religious terms which has so many conflicting definitions that the word is meaningless. "Neopaganism" is a better term. It refers to a group of many religious belief systems that are reconstructions of (or patterned after) ancient Pagan religions. Wicca is one Neopagan religion, as are Asatru (Norse Neopaganism), Druidism, Shamanism, and ancient Egyptian, Roman, Greek and other religions.

Do Wiccans have rituals like communion, baptism, etc?

Yes. However, it generally involves a direct encounter with the God and Goddess, rather than an indirect experience routed through a priest, minister or other clergy person.

Many Wiccans observe a Wiccaning service for infants which is vaguely like a Christian baptism. It welcomes the newborn into the community. However, it does not obligate the infant in any way. Wiccans feel that a person must mature before they can make their own decision about religion; an infant cannot make such a choice.

There are initiation rituals where a person becomes a Wiccan. Some are self-initiation rituals where a person declares themselves to be a Wiccan. There are other initiation rituals performed in a Wiccan group, often called a Coven.

Many Wiccans write rituals for themselves or their coven to recognize life passages, like the onset of puberty, graduation, marriage, purchase of a house, divorce, healing, death, menopause, etc.

Many Wiccans observe Esbat rituals at the thirteen or so full moons each year, and occasionally on the new moons as well. There are eight Sabbats: four minor Sabbats at the solstices and equinoxes, and four major Sabbats each year.

What do Wiccan rituals involve?

Wiccan rituals take many forms. But they all generally include:

- The casting of a circle -- the consecration of a sacred space.

- The invocation of a deity/deities.

- The body of the ritual, which may involve magick, spell casting, a community meal, dance, readings, singing, etc.

- Closing or banishing of the circle -- restoration of the space to ordinary usage.

What does being a Wiccan involve?

Common to almost all Wiccans is the recognition of the existence of the Goddess, and her consort the horned God. These may be viewed as real living personal entities, or as symbols.

Wiccans follow the Wiccan Rede "A'in it harm none, do what thou wilt." This means that as long as it harms no one, including yourself, one is free to do what they wish. A Wiccan carefully reviews the implications of each action or non-action in her/his life. Domination, manipulation and control are particularly prohibited by the Rede.

Wiccans typically go through a dedication ritual at the start of their training, where they declare their intent to study Wicca. If they choose, they experience an initiation ritual when they complete their initial study of the religion -- often a period of a year and a day.

Wiccans engage in rituals, either alone or within a coven of other Wiccans. They are committed to personal spiritual growth.

How can I do a spell to make someone love me?

There are many "Witchcraft" web sites and booklets that list spells of all types. However, many of these are forbidden to Wiccans because they involve an attempt to control, dominate or manipulate another

person. Using such a spell would conflict with the Wiccan Rede (see above). However, a Wiccan could cast a spell to help make themselves more open to love. They could cast a spell to help make another person more open to love, if that person specifically asked for it. More information.

How does Wicca differ from Christianity?

In many ways, the two are similar. For example, they have similar ethics of reciprocity. The Wiccan Rede and Christianity's Golden Rule both emphasize kindness to and consideration of others. But there are many differences:

- On sexual and gender matters: Wicca has generally accepted the equality of men and women. Christianity has historically reserved positions of power in the church, the rest of society and the family for males.
- Wicca regards responsible sexual behavior as a gift of the Goddess. Some committed Wiccan couples engage in private sexual rituals. Christianity has tended to have a negative and restrictive view of sexual behavior.
- Wicca generally accepts all sexual orientations as normal and natural: heterosexual, homosexual and bisexual.
- Wicca is largely an oral tradition, and has no holy text that corresponds to the Christian Bible.
- Wiccans stress the cycles of life and look upon time largely as cyclical. Christianity largely views time as linear.
- Most Wiccans reject the concept of Heaven and Hell, and embrace reincarnation. The concept that a person must believe certain things or behave in a certain way to achieve salvation and avoid being tortured in Hell for all eternity is foreign to Wicca.
- Wiccans feel close to nature and are highly concerned about its preservation.
- Wiccans do not proselytize. In particular, they do not usually dedicate, teach, or initiate potential converts unless they are 18 years or older.
- Where possible, and where safe, Wiccans prefer to perform their rituals out-of-doors.

Should I become a Wiccan?

This is an intensely personal decision. We cannot recommend whether a person should or should not adopt a specific religion. Such a decision has to come from the heart. If you are searching for a faith group that matches your beliefs, you might find the Religion Selector by SelectSmart.com and SpeakOut.com to be helpful.

If you find the following portion of the Charge of the Goddess to be particularly moving and meaningful, then you might have the makings of a Wiccan. If it simply sounds like gibberish, then Wicca may not be for you:

Hear ye the words of the Star Goddess; she in the dust of whose feet are the hosts of heaven, and whose body encircles the universe:

"I who am the beauty of the green earth, and the white moon among the stars, and the mystery of the waters, call unto thy soul: Arise, and come unto me. For I am the soul of nature, who gives life to the universe. From Me all things proceed, and unto Me all things must return; and before My face, beloved of gods and of men, let thine innermost divine self be enfolded in the rapture of the infinite. Let My worship be within the heart that rejoices; for behold, all acts of love and pleasure are My rituals. And therefore let there be beauty and strength, power and compassion, honor and humility, mirth and reverence within you. And thou who thinkest to seek Me, know that thy seeking and yearning shall avail thee not unless thou knowest the Mystery: that if that which thou seekest thou findest not within thee, thou wilt never find it without. For behold, I have been with thee from the beginning; and I am that which is attained at the end of desire."

Becoming a Wiccan is not a simple path. Parents and friends might be very distressed when they learn that you are not accepting their religion. If you live in some areas of the world, you have to be quite secretive about being a Wiccan because of the danger of physical assault. People's reaction depends a

lot on how tolerant they feel towards other religions, and on what they believe about Wicca. As you may know, there is a lot of misinformation being circulated about Wicca and other Neopagan religions. Fortunately, an increasing number of Neopagans are coming out of the closet and openly discussing their religions. Increasing numbers of non-Pagan web sites which accurately discuss Neopagan religions are becoming available. Over time, the hatred and misinformation should largely disappear.

How do I make contact with other Wiccans?

There are generally no Wiccan listings in the religion page of your local newspaper. Individual Wiccans and covens tend to be in the (broom) closet for reason of security. It is safer that way. Many Wiccans start by attending a local Neopagan gathering or festival. The Witches' Voice maintains an index of Wiccans and covens worldwide. We urge caution when contacting an unknown Wiccan individual or group for the first time. There are a lot of nut-cases in North America and Wicca has its share. We recommend arranging the first meeting in a public place.