

About Wicca

By Oak

The term Wicca means different things to different people, and I can only really tell you about how the members of my working group practice it. I am talking here of coven Wicca. Wicca, in this form, is certainly not for everyone. Coven Wicca is, in fact, about learning to be a priestess or priest, which is not necessarily the same as being a witch or a pagan. However, the usage of the word is changing, as it is also becoming interchangeable with witch as a solo practitioner, what some would call a hedge witch.

The purpose of Wicca is to:

Form a personal relationship with gods and goddesses.
Make yourself a better and happier person.
Increase your psychic abilities.
Help others.

To make that last point clear, although I am called a High Priest, what I really am is a servant to the group, the pagan community and the gods. I am not better or more important than anyone else. I do not order people about. I actually describe myself, if asked, as a pagan priest or a wiccan priest. I believe in humility in that no-one is better than anyone else, while recognising there may be some things I'm pretty good at.

How do you learn Wicca?

When anyone asks to learn I will ask why they want to take this path. If they reply 'to get power over people' I won't teach them. The best answer is 'I want to become a better person' or 'I want to serve the gods'. I will then spend some time trying to talk them out of it. If I succeed, we've both saved a lot of wasted time. A true witch has to learn, as it's what they are!

The person then spends around a year and a day as part of our study group, or outer coven, learning about the 4 elements and experiencing them. In effect, this is an intensive course of natural magic. The workings, 2 a month, are held in the time of the waxing moon.

They are invited to the 8 Sabbat celebrations. We have 2, an 'outer' one for those who are not initiated, and an 'inner' one for those who are. After a few months they are invited to a special ritual called a Dedication, held on a full moon. The coven will cast a circle and lead them into it. They are introduced to the Lords of the Quarters. We announce their new magical name and introduce them to each Quarter in turn, starting with Air. If we are psychically told they are accepted and may proceed past each quarter we go on to the next. If not, their training ends. It is also a good opportunity for the inner coven to meet them and assess how well their energy blends with that of the group.

All being well, they then start intensive training in the Major Arcana of the tarot. This is an initiatory process in itself and there is much ancient wisdom in the cards of the Major Arcana. Each is a gateway to part of ones psyche and invaluable in the real work of magic – that of transforming yourself.

When the initiate asks, and if they are ready, they can be initiated as a 1st degree Wiccan. When this happens, they are a witch, but with a lot to learn. They will then carry on their training, and join the coven workings on full moons, as they are now a member of the inner coven. They will learn spells, how a circle is cast, healing and many other things. They will be given a book of shadows, or possibly a CD of shadows! The study of the major Arcana continues.

At this point they will find what is in my opinion, the main difference between Wicca and Natural Magic. In the magic circle, the Wiccan high priestess and high priest, but not 1st degree witches, will invoke a specific god or goddess into themselves, acting as a channel for the gods to enter the circle, speak to the group, teach and work magic. The gods and goddesses seem to arrive in a way we can cope with, that is, we are not overwhelmed by their awesome power. It is a wonderful experience. We often invoke the goddess Aradia as the teacher of witches.

After at least another year and a day, if they are ready, they may be initiated as a 2nd degree witch, a high priestess or high priest. From this point they start to really put into practice what they have learned. They run rituals, take up positions that will help the community, get involved with ecological movements, whatever the gods wish and is suited to their own abilities. They will then invoke the gods into themselves during ritual.

A lot of time is spent on dealing with psychology, clearing unhelpful thoughts and patterns of behaviour during the 2nd degree. These workings take place during the period of the dark moon. I'll give you an example. Do you ever feel that you are the odd one out in your class at school? During the second degree you will realise that every other member of the class felt exactly the same, but hid it in different ways. You have to realise that you are wonderful, likeable and loveable just as you are. This is not easy, but it is very empowering and liberating! Take me, for example, I've realised that I have some bad points and lots of good points. All in all, I'm marvellous! And so are you.

When the time is right the witch may be initiated into the 3rd degree. From this point on they need no teacher, as they learn all they need to know from the gods. They may decide to work alone, with their partner, in their own coven or start a new coven. It's up to them. Probably they will do some of each. They become a true servant of the gods and their community.

So how do you join a coven? That's a tricky one. You can sometimes find out about covens that accept trainees from organisations like the Pagan Federation. Sometimes you'll just get to know someone is a Wiccan, perhaps at a green event or a healing centre. You could attend open rituals and discreetly ask advice about it.

You should be aware that, as in all walks of life, there are good and bad people in paganism. There are also people who pretend to be something they are not. You will need to be very careful in deciding if you want to be part of a group. Ask yourself, how do I feel about what they are saying and how they behave? Don't make any quick decisions. Get to know them a little better. Are they honest? Are they genuinely helping people, or are they just trying to make themselves feel important? Do you trust them? Wiccans meet in 'Perfect love and perfect trust'. Can you honestly say that about these people? If in doubt, take more time until you are sure these people

know what they are doing and are honest and trustworthy. Find out how they work. Are you comfortable with everything they do?

Skyclad.

Some covens work skyclad, i.e. without wearing any clothes. It's supposed to be a leveller, as without clothes everyone is equal. It can work very well if everyone is focussed on the task they are performing. In practice, for many people, it's a distraction. It's not helpful to be thinking, for example, 'I hope I don't look fat' when you're supposed to be doing a magical working. For most people, it's probably a bad idea.

Spells.

Wiccans are taught spells when they are 1st degree. Personally, I no longer use them as such very often. Instead, I talk to the goddess and god and say what I would like, for the highest good of all concerned. If they say yes, I leave it to them. No further magical work is needed. What is needed is for you to do your part. For example, if you wanted to be in a football team, you'll need to practice playing football. Do your part, believing in yourself, and use a spell to reinforce it and make you expect to succeed.

The Rule of 3 Fold Return.

Most wiccans believe that you get back what you put out with interest. It may not be exactly 3 times, sometimes it's a lot more! For example, if you are kind, thoughtful and make other people happy, you will find they are usually surprisingly nice too and you will live in a very happy world of your own making. If you cause trouble and are nasty to people, you will find your life is very unhappy. If you do your best to serve the gods and humanity, the gods will repay you many times.

Dark magic & curses.

Don't, for the reasons above. Dark magic is weak and makes you unhappy. There is only one true power in the universe. It is love. Love of yourself, everyone else, nature, the gods, all that is. That's power!

If you feel you have been cursed, you're almost certainly imagining it. The best way to break a curse, real or imagined, is to laugh at it. Curses only work if you believe they can harm you. Like I said, dark magic is weak. Tell the lady and lord you love them and bask in the glow of their love for you. And they do love you. No curse can break through that!

Are you ready for Wicca?

I would ask you: Are you ready to serve the gods, the Earth and humanity? If you can honestly answer yes to these, then Wicca might be your path.

For further information about Wicca or Natural Magic email Oak
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