

The Truth About Witchcraft

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- According to the dictionary “Witchcraft” is defined as the following:

Witch-craft (-kraf) n. [wicchecrafte<OE wiccecraft] 1a) the power or practice of witches; black magic; sorcery b) an instance of this 2. bewitching, attraction or charm - SYN. Magic

This definition was found in both the 1996 edition of the Webster’s New World College Dictionary and the 1970 edition of the Webster’s New World Dictionary of the American Language, showing that not a lot has changed in regards to the perception of the religion known as “Witchcraft” in today’s society.

While this definition may be found in dictionaries and encyclopedias, this is not the factual or truthful definition of Witchcraft, but one that the church and the power of the church has bestowed upon our society.

In the third (3rd) century A.D., Constantine is the first known individual that began revising the biblical text to make the practice of Witchcraft by it’s practitioners illegal with this one line verse from the bible:

Exodus 22:18 Thou shall not suffer a witch to live.

The original word was poisoner and was changed by Constantine to witch to begin the reign of terror and murder against the practitioners of Witchcraft that even today to some degree still exist within our society.

Originally the practice of witchcraft, sorcery, wizardry, diviners, observer’s of the times, enchanter, charmer, consulter with familiar spirits or necromancer were all classified as a violation or curse from the Christian god.

By the fourth (4th) century A.D., the art of all the above mentioned was a civil offense punishable by fines, imprisonment and banishment. Once the church, both the Catholic and Protestant began to control much of the lands, money, and power, they began to build strong alliances with kingdoms and nations that entitled them to govern the once civil laws, which turned them into laws against not only the church but the state. Soon after this happened the art of practicing Witchcraft became a crime of heresy punishable by death with strong fines attached to every detail of torture to get confessions until the last detail of death. It may have cost someone a fortune they did not have or own to be accused, tried, tortured and murdered for practicing their religion of their ancestors.

While church records on a historical level has recorded the practice of Witchcraft in a very negative and untruthful manner; times are beginning to change with the science of anthropology and archeology. Both of these sciences studies ancient cultures and are beginning to paint a more realistic view point of the ancient peoples from which all of us originate from. Witchcraft can be traced back to the ancient Indo-European tribes of Europe, Asia and Africa. Depending on the cultural background of a person will portray the type of shamanic practices they use within their art of Witchcraft.

The word “witch” or “witchcraft” originates from the word wicche or wicce a feminine aspect of wicca; sorcerer akin to MDUwicken to use magic. When you look up the origins of this word it will tell you evil, but is it really?

The church chose this word at a time when women were being removed from positions of status and power. The church through out its history has attempted to make woman a lesser individual than man. It is no wonder that the church would use a feminine form of the word evil, while allowing the masculine version to portray the concept of a wise man. Many believe that the witch hunts were nothing more than a form of genocide to murder strong, independent women while at the same time performing forced conversions to the new founded Christian faith. The majority of the people murdered during the time now

known as the **“Burning Times”** were women and the men who loved, supported and eventually died for them. Also, if you look at the church records from that time period, you will be able to see that with each murder the church gained new land and other offerings from the individuals that they murdered and if you look even closer, you will see that when the church wanted a certain area or province they sometimes murdered whole villages and tribes to acquire the lands they desired.

A fine example of how the science of archeology and anthropology has begun to change the meanings of ancient cultures and their forms of worship and practices can be seen within this one word, witch doctor. I will provide you with the meaning obtained from both the 1970 and 1996 Webster’s Dictionary.

1970 Edition: witchdoctor- among certain tribes, especially in Africa, a person practiced a primitive medicine involving the use of magic, witchcraft, etc.

1996 Edition: witchdoctor-in certain primitive societies, a person supposed to have the power of curing disease, warding off evil, etc. through the use of sorcery, incantations and etc.

As you can see from this example, anthropology and archeology has made a distinct difference in the definition, meaning and perception of this word that once had a negative connotation to all that heard it.

While we must admit to ourselves and others that we cannot change the views of the church, we have managed to receive a public apology that has never been done by any other Pope within history, the church has finally admitted that they were wrong for murdering and forcing the Pagans to convert through the use of force. While we acknowledge the above we can still hope that we as practicing Witches can provide you with a truthful perspective to the art and practice of Witchcraft.

Introduction to Witchcraft

Witchcraft will be referred to by many by the names of Wicca, Paganism, Old Religion and The Craft. Some will even argue that none of those terms are the same as Witchcraft. But the key to this aspect of understanding the terminology is the individual and their form of worship, so when in doubt, ask. To me, they are all the same religion and nothing more than a preference in terminology, but I am just a single individual and cannot nor will I even attempt to speak for every practicing Pagan, Wiccan or Witch in our society.

Witchcraft is an earth-based religion, life affirming, and vital and spiritual religion reviving the ancestral roots of the indigenous people of each individual’s heritage. Today Witchcraft is a wonderful blend of ancient concepts with modern knowledge and information.

Witchcraft is a religion that can be shaped to fit the needs of the individual and has no strict dogmatic structure. There are universal concepts that practitioners share, but only a few of the codes, ethics or principles are mandates as a per-say requirement to follow the path of Witchcraft. Witchcraft is a religion designed to fit the needs of the individual and is a path that only the individual can walk to find their form of spirituality.

There is no one name for the concept of divinity or deity. It is believed that the divine is both male and female and the way of creation, so therefore there is a God and Goddess. Both are equal and important within Witchcraft. What an individual decides to call divine will have a lot to do with their cultural background and heritage.

There is no Satan or Devil within the deity structure of Witchcraft and never has been. Satan was created within the third (3rd) century A.D. by Zorastor and for some reason the Christian faith incorporated this deity. Witches are not Satanist. Satanist are reversed and perverted Christians. To believe in Satan

you must believe in the Christian concepts, which Witches do not.

Within Witchcraft evil is the intent of the individual and not a deity that has control over us or our actions. We do not believe that anyone or any deity has the ability to make us do something against our will. The concept of evil is the individual intent and not a supreme being. Within Witchcraft only the conscious decision to harm another can be classified as negativity or better known as evil, but the individual will be held accountable to and for their actions. To harm another is against the belief system of a Witch.

Witchcraft has no one book that detail our one and only belief system, such as the Christian faith's Bible. We record our journey in what is known as the **Book of Shadows**. The Book of Shadow may be from an ancestor with each ancestor's journey recorded within it or a new one created for each individuals journey. At one time, before the Burning Times, our belief system was an oral tradition passed down from mother to daughter and father to son, but once the genocidal acts of the church began, it became necessary to record our families traditions and to protect them for our children's future leaning process of our faith system. This is the only way we have survived into today's society.

Beliefs of a Witch

This is a common list of basic beliefs held by most Witches. This list is not a complete list and nor is it a statement that all Witches share this belief, but a generalized concept of the people I know and surround myself with and what I do teach and believe in.

1. All life is sacred.
2. All life must be respected
3. The Earth is not just for this time, but for all times and should be treated as such.
4. Respect the Earth and help maintain our environment
5. Respect for human, animal and plant life
6. Changing of the seasons mark the Sabbats
7. There are eight (8) Sabbats
8. The moon marks the Esbats
9. The phases of the moon correlates with certain rituals and spells
10. Full moons are usually used for healing
11. Witchcraft is a legally recognized religion
12. Witches do not attempt to convert anyone
13. Witchcraft is a personal journey and only the individual can decide to follow the path
14. It is the personal decision of the individual to be in or out of the "broom closet"
15. Witches respect all forms of diversity within all people, whether it is racial, religious, cultural, teaching, traditional or sexual
16. Spells are similar to the power of prayer and do not involve conjuring up evil spirits or the devil to assist us in our needs
17. The circle is a sacred space and similar to that of a church, synagogue or sacred lodge
18. The divine concept is both masculine and feminine
19. There is no one name to call the divine in either gender
20. There is no one and only path in life that is for all people
21. Witches value religious freedom and desire to stop the persecution of our children and us
22. Witches strive for knowledge through out all of their lives
23. Witches attempt to be law-abiding citizens and live in harmony
24. Witches believe in some form of reincarnation
25. The male and female are equal in all aspects of life, including divinity
26. Witches use tools such as herbs, tarot, astrology, etc. to better their lives and to attain and honor that which is divine.
27. Witches do not believe in a deity known as Satan or Devil
28. Witches do not do any form of human or animal sacrifice
29. Witches do not kill children for their fat to make a flying potion

30. Witches do not use their rituals for sexual depravity, but for religious worship, but do accept our sexuality and express it in a positive manner
31. Witches do not use drugs or alcohol to attain or honor the divine
32. Witches do not commit acts of violence in the name of religion
33. Witches are not against any religion, specifically Christian
34. Witches are not at war for the souls of Christians or their children
35. Witches do not participate in ritual abuse of any kind
36. Witches do not practice black magic of any kind
37. Halloween is not a satanic holiday
38. Witches do not make pacts with the devil
39. Witches do not have sex with the devil
40. Witches do not break any laws to practice their religion
41. Witches do not force their children to follow their path of religion

Ethics of a Witch

Many non-Witches have agreed that people who practice Witchcraft have no morals or values. This is not a true statement. The religion itself has a very strict moralistic code that is unwritten with the concept of reverence for all life, including plant and animals. Being a Witch is more than going to church on Sunday and asking for a divine being to forgive you week after week and never changing your habits. A Witch lives a certain moralistic life and has a code of ethics that encompasses all aspects of our divine and mundane life.

“An it harm none, do as you will.” This statement is classified as the Wiccan Rede pronounced reed. This means exactly what it states. Do no harm to none. Considering the fact that we are human, we will make mistakes and unfortunately, sometimes people will get hurt. The difference from being human and the Rede is the intent of the individual. To intentionally harm another is against all that we believe in.

The Threefold Law is the belief that all that an individual does comes back to them three (3) times over, whether it be good or bad. If you send out negative energy you will receive negative energy back three times over, if you send out positive energy you will also receive it three times over. Not everything you experience in this life is due to the Threefold Law. Some experiences are life’s lessons, things you must learn to move forward in not only this life, but also your next life and to also resolve past lives issues

Love spells are not acceptable due to the manipulation of one’s will and true desires. To attempt to control another’s will, mind or emotions is harming that individual and making them do something that they would not normally do. To create a love spell for all human kind to be loving, kind, caring and understanding to all individuals is not classified as a love spell but one of healing and one that needs to be done to heal our world and the anger and hatred within it.

Witches do not use their natural or abilities that they have developed to further their existence with greed. A Witch must learn to use their abilities to aid their community, its people and themselves in a positive manner and not to be greedy or selfish. Greed and selfishness promotes harm in the long run.

As Witches we must learn to work within and abide by the laws of the land, if the laws of the land are just and fair to all, which includes the practice of Witchcraft and our practices. While we strive to be the best that we can within our community, our community must be willing to accept us and abide by the same laws as us. We will and do use the laws of the land to protect us and feel strongly we have the right to self-defense. No matter what the reason for breaking the laws of the land, we feel strongly that the individual will take responsibility for their decision in violating the law.

“Perfect Love and Perfect Trust” is the concept of unconditional love and trust to each individual we meet. This concept is becoming harder with each passing day due to the violence of our world, but yet

we still attempt to practice this concept in its original concept by listening to our inner self for guidance. We always enter into Circle with perfect love and trust of our coven brother and sisters.

More than anything else, the basis of Witchcraft is that we must accept personal responsibility for our actions and decisions. We cannot do something and then shift the blame with a simple, "My Priestess, Priest, the devil or she or he made me do it or society wouldn't let me." We are the only ones who have made the decisions to base our action and must accept that responsibility.

Goals of the Witch

The goals of the Witch may vary from individual to individual, but here are a few concepts that most Witches share. All Witches have a common thread that bonds and bounds us to our chosen path.

1. To know one self
2. Know your chosen path
3. Never stop learning
4. Celebrate life
5. Honor the divine in both aspects of the God and Goddess
6. Attune to the Earth cycles
7. Exercise the mind
8. Exercise the body
9. Maintain personal balance from within
10. Keep our words in a positive order
11. Keep our thoughts in a positive order
12. Learn to listen to all things
13. Let there be knowledge with wisdom
14. Meditate
15. Live life according to the Wiccan Rede
16. Maintain optimum health in all realms
17. Breathe correctly
18. Eat correctly
19. Acceptance of all things we encounter
20. Turn all experiences into positive learning tools
21. Love thyself
22. Heal our world and environment
23. To create a tolerant society for all living beings

Practices of the Witch

Training: Witches are not bound by a strict dogmatic structure. There is no book that we classify as the book of knowledge. Witches may search out individuals to learn from, join covens to undergo initiated changes of growth on a personal and spiritual level. With the constant change of communications, we are experiencing a growth on resources that we may enter into training of all different aspects of our religion. The Internet has opened the doors of communication and sharing of one's ideas and ideology. There are approximately 5,000 or more sites on the Internet that deal with the Old Religion and every day new ones are opening up. Training is no longer a limited concept to a specific teacher, book or solitary concept. Even the solitary Witch has ways of learning from others without ever having to come into contact with people and maintaining their solitary status.

Book of Shadows: Witches call their personal journey diary the Book of Shadows. This is the most sacred and special tool of the Witch because it records their journey, which includes lessons they have learned from others, dreams, meditations, rituals, spells, poetry and when and how they made their tools or did their initiations and so on. In addition, this item can be passed down from generation to generation to keep the flow of information alive and well within a family or coven and becomes somewhat of a family heirloom.

Dance: Dance is an important aspect of the Old Religion because it allows one to express their sexuality in a positive manner and to raise the natural electrical currents within our bodies into the concept of raising the “Cone of Power.” Dance is also used to celebrate life and the changes of the season.

Bardic Aspect: In the days of our ancestors all of the stories that were important were told by word of mouth. Until the Priest of the Christian religions began to record the stories, it was the Bard’s job to tell all that he met the stories that he knew so the information would continue to thrive and live on to be what we know today as legends. Today the bardic aspect is still alive and strong, but also recorded. The stories of today has the concepts of the modern world and people that will one day be viewed as legends, such as Robin Hood and so on.

Being Creative: Using our creative energies to make our tools, whether they are for the altar, dress, and poetry or art work is a very important practice of Witches. Witches have a need to express themselves in any manner they can and they usually do it in a ritualistic manner that makes everything they do more personal.

Priest and Priestess: In the days of old a Priest or Priestess was someone who trained all of their life to fit into their role into society, a form of hereditary practice. As time progressed and people quit living in close knit tribes and communities, it became a way only through initiation. Today many people are becoming Priest and Priestess through self-initiation and from solitary training.

Spells: Spells are a form of prayer, but is used by Witches to direct their personal energy for a specific purpose. Spells are not of the supernatural, but of the natural energies from within nature, divine and one’s self.

Rites of Passage for the Witch

In all cultures around the world, there is some form of rites of passage that one must go through to grow within their society in some manner. When a child receives their driver’s license for the first time, that in itself is a form of a rite of passage which leads them into our society with the acknowledgement that they are becoming an adult. There are several different periods of these rites of passage into the different aspects of our lives, which usually begin at our birth, which is considered to be the first rite of passage. You have grown from a seed and lived within the safety and protection of the womb and then one must travel the birthing canal to be born and taken away from the safe and protected womb of the mother. Being born thrusts you out of the uncertainties of life.

Wiccaning: This act is very similar to the baptismal rite of the Christian religion and can be performed at the time of birth or at a time when the parents designate. The ritual is usually performed by someone close to the family to insure that the child is blessed and protected and all is asked to willingly aid the goddess in the protection of the child. The child becomes the responsibility for the whole of the community and the God and Goddess.

Coming of Age-Female: This is represented by the young girl’s first menstrual cycle. She is no longer the innocent child, but a child that has passed into womanhood and capable of giving life. Depending on the tradition there may be the art of Dragon Time, which is what the menstrual cycle is called by some or the bleeding onto the Earth.

Coming of Age-Male: Young boys have a hard time on this concept because it is not defined by age or any physical aspect, but by maturity and the ability to handle more responsibility. If the child is living in a hunting society it may be based on his first kill to feed the family or his first need to shave or to have an orgasm. Both genders of the coming of age passage truly about the sexual maturity of that gender.

Initiation: This rite can be done any time in life that a person desires to follow the path of Witchcraft. The

initiation into the Old Religion has several steps with the first being dedication of one's self to their path. Afterwards there are three levels of initiation into the Old Religion that eventually leads to the accomplishment of third degree, which entitles the person to the title of High Priest or Priestess, which shows they have studied all that they can within that path and now have earned the right to begin their own circle and to lead it with honor, wisdom and respect.

Handfasting: This is a celebration of two (2) people's commitment to each other. There are no guidelines that state the couple must be male and female. Witches and Wiccan ceremonies of Handfasting are for any two (2) people who chose to dedicate their love and life to another being, whether they are of the same sex or the opposite sex. This ceremony is similar to a wedding is legally recognized as a marriage ceremony.

Unbinding: This is similar to a divorce, but breaks the cord that binds the two (2) together so that they may search and find happiness. This can usually be done in a positive manner where there is a celebration from what each learned from the other and many even consider this as resolution of a past life issue. Therefore, this is a ceremony that makes way for new and positive change into both people's lives.

Passing Over: This is similar to a funeral or basically the death and dying process and how we honor this process. Death is an accepted part of the cycle of life. Death is not seen as the final step in life, but one that will lead to a continuance of life, through the belief of reincarnation. When someone dies, we believe the Hounds of Annwn will carry into the underworld and others call this place the Summerland. Going into the Otherworld to be reborn into their next cycle of life.

The Witches Wheel of the Year

Witches live, worship and celebrate according to the changes of the seasons and lunar cycles. The year is cyclical and that is how it was coined the Wheel of the Year. There are eight (8) Sabbats and 12-13 lunar Esbats, which represent the full and new moons of each month.

Samhain October 31st. (Pronounced sow-win): This is more commonly known as Halloween, All Hallow's Eve, Day of the Dead, the Celtic New Year. To Witches this is the actual Celtic New Year and the first day of the year and our most holly days. We celebrate it as though it was New Year's Eve. A new beginning. It is also the day when the veil between the worlds are the closest. Our loved ones who have passed on to the other life are honored and greeted with open and loving arms. A time when the masculine energy of the divine (the representation of the Sun) has been lost to the other world and the Goddess is in her Crone aspect.

Winter Solstice December 21st.: This is a time of family, telling stories, sharing the final feast from the last harvest. Tonight you will burn the Yule log all night until nothing is left but ashes to cleanse the old. Tonight is the longest night of the year and the time when the God of darkness and light battle for the return of the Sun. Decorating the Yule trees in memory and honor of the fertile time that will soon be here again.

Imbolc, Imbolc, Candlemas, Brigid's Day February 2nd.: This is the celebration of the sun and winter is fading quickly. Soon all things will grow and be bountiful again. A time when ritual blessings are done for cleansing, growth and preparation for the planting season. The Goddess is in her Maiden aspect.

Eostara, Ostara, Spring Equinox, March 21st.: This is the first day of Spring. All of the Earth is beginning to come alive with life again. A fertility rite usually involving the symbolism of the egg, for rebirth, life and new beginnings. The Goddess is in her Mother aspect.

Beltane, Beltaine, May Day, May 1st.: This is the second most important Sabbat. It is a great fertility rite and an ancient time for handfastings. In retrospect today is the day when the God and Goddess make love and plant the seeds of our harvest.

Summer Solstice, Litha, Midsummer, June 21st.: Today is the longest day of the year. The Sun is at its

strongest and today signifies the sun beginning to lose its energy. The Goddess is in the Mother aspect about to give birth to our harvest.

Lughnasadh, Lammas, August 1st.: The Goddess has given birth to our harvest and we celebrate all that she has provided to us. We feast on all that has grown. We share with our families, friends and family. The Old Harvest King is fed the finest foods, made love to and willingly sacrificed so that there may be growth in the community. A new Harvest King is appointed by games of skill and challenge. We honor self-sacrifice through the harvest we experience life.

Autumn Equinox, Mabon, September 21st.: This is the last harvest of the year and mainly grains, grapes and other such items. We make bread and wines in celebration of his harvest and prepare for the winter to take hold. We prepare for the Wheel to turn its final turn.

The Witches Altar

The Witches altar is very important and sacred to the Witch. The altar is an expression of the self and how the individual worships and honors the divine. The altar expresses how the individual sees the divine and themselves within the cosmic role of our Universe. Many of the items laid upon a Witches altar are items that have been used through out the history of the Old Religion and some may even be of the present times, but none the less sacred to the individual. There are certain tools that are laid upon the altar that are universal in concept, but none of them mandatory, but does allow the individual to freely express their form of worship in a positive manner.

1. **Altar Table** Is any flat surface within the sacred space. Used to hold altar items.
2. **Altar Cloth** Is laid over the table acting as a veil to protect the altar items.
3. **Altar Tile** Often a pentagram representing earth, air, fire, water and the spirit.
4. **Athame** A knife used to bless the juice and represents the union of the God/dess
5. **Book of Shadows** The diary of the learning of the individual or group
6. **Cakes** An offering to the God/dess
7. **Chalice** Represents water and the feminine aspect
8. **Cauldron** Used to burn incense and a symbol of rebirth
9. **Crystal** Used to represent the Goddess and is used to for healing
10. **Salt** Represents the Earth and is used to purify and cleanse
11. **Candles** They represent the elements
12. **Red/Gold Candle** UIs seen as a representation of the God and used to honor him
13. **Wand** Phallic symbol and is elemental and often used to cast circle
14. **Goddess Statue** Represents the Goddess in her many different forms
15. **God Statue** Represents the God aspect in his many different forms
16. **Altar Plate** Holds the cakes that are for honoring and offering to the God/dess
17. **Altar Bell** Summons the God/dess, elements, keeps negativity, defines the starting point
18. **Altar Flowers** To honor the God/dess and to attune with nature

This is just some of the items a person will and may have on their altar or what they feel is important for them to have upon it to properly worship. For each Sabbat and Esbat there will be different items brought to adorn the altar that will represent the season and ritual purpose. Below is an example of some of the items that may be on an altar during the Sabbats:

1. **Samhain** Pumpkins, squash, apples, purple flowers and black candles\
2. **Yule** Mistletoe, holly, green sprigs, white, red and green candles
3. **Imbolc** Lilies, pastel colors, reds, seeds
4. **Ostara** Eggs, seeds, rabbit symbolism
5. **Beltane** Phallic symbols, ribbons, roses, rose quartz
6. **Summer Solstice** Sunflowers, gold sand, garters
7. **Lammas** Fruits of the harvest, colors that represent the seasons, seeds

8. Mabon

Corn dolls, corn, apples, wine, dried flowers

For the Esbats, depending on whether it is Full Moon or New Moon there will be crystals and other healing tools during these rituals.