

On Your Wiccan Way

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Learning To Build Your Wiccan Path

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Preface

I welcome you to my first book on Wicca. Wicca is a neo-pagan religion that began in the mid 1950's by Gerald Gardner in England. Originally the religion was closed - and if you're considering joining a coven, it still is very closed so you will have to work hard to even discover a local coven, let alone be admitted into it. Things have changed a lot since that time. These days you can be a solitary Wiccan and follow your own path, while still holding true to the central concepts of Wicca. Granted, you won't be exposed to details that coven members are privy to but you can form a wonderfully personal path for yourself promises a lifetime of enjoyment and promises a lifetime of enjoyment and also help you deal with life's changes.

I have been learning about Wicca, on and off since I was 24, when an ex-girlfriend introduced me to it and I have been studying and practicing it properly since my middle 30's for well over 15 years. Since that time, I have been learning - becoming fully devoted to Wicca. I fought long and hard about going down this path. It was a decision I didn't make lightly - especially with my prior religious background. My mother is Catholic and my father was Protestant but we were never what you would call devoted church goers. They believed in God but never shoved it down our throats. When I was 16, where we live, was flooded and we had to take refuge in a church and I tried getting into it. I even was baptized a second time (my first

time was of course as a baby) but I never felt really at home there. I always felt ostracized and in truth, saw far too many people saying one thing and doing another which has always rubbed me the wrong way. I'm the type of person that pretty much tells you as it is. The saying " what you see is what you get" - is a pretty accurate description of me. If you add to that the fact that I will tell you the truth, even if it may make you uncomfortable, you have a recipe for a more solitary life. That aspect is for another time and another book.

Within a few months I left that church, organized religion had no place in my world. I still believed in a version of God, however, not as God is portrayed in the Bible. In my mind, God could not be so disdainful to errors of his followers and yet claim love as well. When I was introduced to Wicca, I felt, for the first time, truly at "home" yet I still had trouble going down this road. I had not thought the bias I was taught and heard about growing up had any bearing on me as an adult. I was wrong. They had a much greater impact on me than I ever realized. I started on my path a handful of times, if not more and each time something bad would happen and I connected those things with my leaving the Christian path. This came as a surprise to me as I never thought I was on the Christian path - but I was indoctrinated in the Christian ways. Does this confuse you? It sure did me. Regardless of the repeated setbacks, I was drawn back to Wicca, It could be an article I read online or a book I happened to pick up - whatever it was, it kept drawing me back to Wicca.

Finally in 2014 I decided I could not continue to lie to myself and that this is what I was meant to do and this is who I am. Any God worth respecting and honoring would not want me to lie to myself or or continue to be someone I'm not. Since then, I have been learning on my own along with people who are supportive and have been walking the Wicca path longer. What I have learned, though, has not just come from those who are experienced, but also those new to it. They ask questions and inspire further study. It is a path that one can continually learn and grow in - constantly opening new ideas and new doors that we can all learn from. I have been an administrator in several groups since then and presently run my own group. I have had many people encouraging me to write a book. They have found a lot of help in the knowledge I have obtained over the years.

So, to those who have asked, pushed and supported me in this endeavor, I thank you. It is a pleasure and honor to put down my thoughts and blessings that this wonderful path has brought me. In all honesty, I have never in my life dreamed of writing a book of any kind. I have been very blessed to have a terrific group of people around me who kept egging me on to write a book on Wicca and I would like to take a moment to thank each of you, as well as my entire family who supported me in this project. I would also like to give a special thank you to Laurie Mueller, who helped to edit this book as well as Wendy Wilson for proofreading it for me. Without each of these special people, this book may very well not have seen the light of day.

I believe this book will help you on your road to learning about the wonderful religion of Wicca. My hope is that it shows, if nothing else, that anyone who wishes to learn, can break free from mainstream religions and forge their own path-- whether that is Wicca, Heathenism, neo-Druidism or what have you.

Introduction

In this book you will learn the basics of Wicca, some of the things that are used in Wicca, some of the beliefs that surround this wonderful spirituality. You will get to learn what the most common tools are that are used, ways to keep costs down so your wallet/purse aren't dented too heavily. I will get into the basics of essential oils, herbs, crystals to help you get started. You will learn about each of the Sabbats as well as some activity suggestions for you to use for each of the Sabbats. You shall learn about the moon phases, how to write your very own ritual. I will give you pointers on how to discover your Deity, how to tell your loved ones of your new path and a great deal more.

I try to give you a few of my own experiences so you can see how common a lot of emotions, ideas are that you might be having as you're starting your new journey. This book is not written to convince you to join Wicca; it is to help you learn about this nature-based religion and maybe spark some new ideas in yourself.

You've Discovered Wicca- Now What?

You have discovered Wicca and you want to jump in head first. You are excited- this is what you have always wanted to do This is wonderful and I am so glad you have found your path in life. That being said, when you are starting out, it can be very intimidating and overwhelming to begin in a new spiritual direction. Wicca and paganism in general, are not like realizing you are a devout Christian, Jew or Muslim. There is no "Bible", there is no "Church" for you to go and ask questions and read at your leisure. You have books available that can help a great deal but each author writes about Wicca the way they see the religion and how they practice. It can get confusing when one author tells you one thing and then you pick up the next book and another author gives you a different definition of something you thought you had finally grasped.

I went through the same thing when I began. I started out with several very well respected authors-- Scott Cunningham and Raymond Buckland. The funny thing is, I recommend their works so much, I should get a share of the sales. Lol! That is something I'll have to work out with their publishers!

What I recommend to new people is this: Do not get too overwhelmed with it all. This is meant to be a lifelong path.

You are simply not going to learn everything you wish to in a few weeks, months or even a few years. Take your time. Take one step at a time. Learn at a pace that is comfortable for you. Someone else may move faster on their path than you but guess what? There's a key phrase in the first part of that -- "**THEIR PATH**". The only path you need to concern yourself with is your own.

I am going to give you a short list of questions you can ask yourself when you begin on your new journey. These are designed to help you avoid a lot of pitfalls down the road and should provide you with some insights into what you wish to get out of Wicca, and which areas of Wicca may interest you most and so on. These are some questions I asked myself when I began - maybe they will help you as well.

"What do I want to get out of this?"

"What corresponds to my beliefs and that I'm comfortable doing?"

"Do I want to influence anyone without them being aware of it?" "What are my interests already that I can incorporate into my religion & witchcraft that I practice?"

"Do I want to help others and if so, how do I want to help them?"

"How much time am I able to commit to this regularly?"

"Who do I wish to let know what I'm doing?"

"How can I help others?"

"How much research am I willing to do to accomplish these things?".

Once you answer some of these questions, you will get a much better picture of what your goals are and then you start from there. Do not let it overwhelm you, just learn at a pace comfortable for you and your life. This path WILL take your entire life so no matter how much you learn you will never learn it all. If you push yourself too hard you will burn out and you may just quit. Not to mention as with anything you overdo, that it can affect your health if you burn yourself out. I would also recommend going over these questions occasionally, perhaps once a year. It is like giving yourself a spiritual evaluation. If you ask yourself these things every once in awhile, you'll get a better idea of how far you have come, as these things change over time. The beauty of Wicca is it is not stagnant. What interests you today may change a little bit or a lot in time. In fact, your path may change completely and that is perfectly okay and to be expected. When I started out, I was only into the healing aspects because in addition to being a professional artist, I am also a caregiver. Healing has always been in my blood, so to speak, so it was a natural place for me to start. I never worried about stones and crystals or using divination methods such as tarot or pendulums. Although I have always cooked and baked a lot, when I began with Wicca, I could not have cared less about kitchen magick.

Within a year, I began learning more about crystals and stones. When I read about how much they can help you- physically, mentally, and spiritually - I bought my first 3 crystals. I still remember them- howlite, clear quartz and amethyst. The howlite helps with creativity and with me

being an artist- well, that is pretty much my bread and butter. I purchased clear quartz because it's an all purpose crystal and can help amplify the energy of other crystals around it. Then I chose amethyst because I have post concussion syndrome and I suffer headaches and pain. This pain puts the worst migraine to shame and I had read that amethyst can help with severe headaches. From those first three crystals, grew such a large varied collection that it takes 3 nights of the full moon to be able to charge them all. I use them for helping to heal my mother's lung issues and colds. (She has COPD so she needs all the help she can get and the stones work wonders). I have a piece of chrysocolla I tape to her back when she gets a cough and within a day or so, the cough is gone as well as any chest congestion she may be having. I have used citrine on her stomach to help heal with bloating issues and I have used green aventurine to help heal her lower back and kidney pain. ***This is not to replace proper medical care but in conjunction with working with one's doctors.*** I have a piece of bloodstone I put under my dogs' bed when one of my dogs had a bad case of gastroenteritis and I have used a piece of black tourmaline when my other dog had a strained neck muscle. Each stone and crystal has powers that work in a specific manner.

On the kitchen front, when I'm cooking, I add positive energy into the cooking process to help keep my family happy, healthy and even provide them good fortune. I use teas to help with headaches, stomach issues, colds and so on. I add cinnamon to breads and cereals to fortify them

with good luck and good fortune and I will add different herbs to my cooking for whatever purpose I need.

I admit I am still not much into divination. Recently, though, I did do some research on using pendulums and that is something I may pursue in a few weeks and I am excited about that.

These are just a few examples of how your interests can change and even grow over time. Answering these questions every few months, or perhaps yearly, is a wonderful way to adjust your path. Think of it like reading a map. Even though you know where you are going, it doesn't hurt to check things every once in awhile to make sure you are still on the right road or to see what other roads you might be able to take to get to where want to be.

Types of Wicca

Wicca comes in several types. The religion was started in the 1950's in England by Gerald Gardner. There is a lot of debate about how he founded his form of Wicca but here's the story as I know it: He was initiated into a coven of witches in the New Forest region of England by a High Priestess named Dorothy Clutterbuck. He was under the impression that they had ties to true witchcraft from the middle ages, or so he claimed. Then in 1949 he wrote a book titled "High Magic's Aid" about medieval witchcraft. In 1951, England finally smartened up and got rid of the laws against witchcraft and so Gardner published "Witchcraft Today" -which included rituals and traditions that his coven used. Gardnerian Wiccan covens are run by a High Priestess and they follow the book that is handed down to them.(Although they are allowed to add and improvise). It has a three degree system.

Next is the Alexandrian Tradition which is quite similar to Gardnerian with a few minor changes. The most obvious change is that in Alexandrian, the athame is used as a symbol for fire and the wand as an air symbol. The rituals are quite formal and many within this Tradition are deeply involved with ceremonial magick. The ritual cycle deals primarily with the division of the year between the Holly King and the Oak King, several dramas are even acted out. The High Priestess is still seen as the highest authority. This tradition was created by Alex Sanders with his, then wife,

Maxine. As rigid as this system may appear to be it is a bit more eclectic and liberal than Gardnerian.

Then there is Dianic Wicca. This was founded by Morgan McFarland and Mark Roberts and gives supremacy to the Goddess aspect; however, the God is still included. Covens are mixed. There is a second branch of Dianic Wicca that some find more controversial called "Feminist Dianic Witchcraft". This version focuses exclusively on the Goddess and consists of women only covens and groups. They are loosely structured and are often times, politically feminist groups. Many of their members, not all, but many, have a resentment towards the male aspect.

These I have mentioned above are all coven and group based. You would have to find such a coven in your area and be able to observe them and then, if they find you are worthy, you may possibly join as a member. These forms of Wicca, especially Gardnerian and Alexandrian are very traditional and proper. Many of their members will not even consider a solitary Wiccan as a "True" Wiccan.

Do not give up though, if this is not your cup of tea. Whether you cannot find a coven in your area or you are not into the group dynamics, to learn on your own without answering to anyone- you can go the solitary Wiccan route. This does not mean that you have zero communication with others but that you learn on your own - without the aid and support of a coven setting and high priestess. Thankfully today there are many wonderful authors available (including such well

respected authors as Scott Cunningham, Raymond Buckland and Thea Sabin) that have been a great help to those of us who prefer to be solitary Wiccans. There are also a number of excellent online groups and forums you can join but be careful. As with everything else online and offline for that matter, go slowly. Be careful and remember that just because someone tells you something, that does not mean it is the only way or that the information is even accurate. Always do your own research even when someone is helping you out. There is a general anecdote that fits this perfectly. Ask 50 witches or Wiccans a question and you are likely to get at least 48 different answers- because everyone sees things differently. We do not have a special book like mainstream religions have where they can quote scriptures and pretend it's fact. Wicca is a very personal experience and even though we all follow a basic framework of the religion, we each have our own views and takes on that work for us.

You will often hear the term "eclectic Wiccan" when discussing Wicca. The term "eclectic" simply means that you're taking things from other paths- such as Heathenism, ancient Egypt and so on and blending it into your belief structure. This brings me to another point that I started on earlier about certain Traditions having members (and I do mean members because not everyone in the Traditional practices treat non-initiated Wiccans this way) that are not willing to recognize you if you are not initiated into their particular brand. This does NOT mean that if you learn on your own you are not Wiccan. Obviously, you truthfully

cannot claim to be Traditional Wiccan but you are still learning on your own so, you are in fact, Wiccan. There will, of course, be things you will not be able to know that are only shared in covens - but that is okay. It does not take anything away from all the hard work and learning and satisfaction you will get by being on your path. If anyone tells you that you're not a True Wiccan because you are not in a coven, smile and move on. You know in your heart that you ARE in fact Wiccan.

Now that you know a little bit about various types of Wicca I would like to give you a few more options that might help you determine what path you wish to embark on. These are different types of witches. A word of note: Just because you may connect with a few of these does NOT mean you have to limit yourself to those areas. This is a very fluid path as far as growing and expanding ourselves. If an interest you have now no longer interests you a few years from now, that's completely okay. If you are, say, a hedge witch now and 10 years from now you develop a love for water magick, it is perfectly fine to incorporate that into your practice. As long as you are learning and growing, you are never going to be stagnant, nor do you wish to be. Think how boring life would be if you only stayed with one interest or hobby? It would be like having the same thing for breakfast 7 days a week, 365 days a year for 80 years. You would get sick of it right? The same idea applies here: Just because you may fit certain categories does not mean you have to stay within those confines.

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