



The Moonlight Post

Merry Meet,

There are two schools of thought in the Wiccan community.

One is that “only a witch can make a witch” meaning and you must be initiated and become part of a coven before you become a full-fledged Wiccan.

Another is that "anyone can be a witch or a Wiccan, as long as their heart and soul desires it."

There comes a point in your journey where you'll have to make a very important and often very hard decision.

Should you go solitary or should you join a coven?

In this issue, we explore the differences, the similarities and give you good advice on both.

But remember...

...in the end, the way you study and practice is 100% up to you. The decision is yours alone to make, but it doesn't hurt to be well-informed :)

Thanks and Blessed Be!

James Raven

The Solitary Witch and the Coven Practitioner

In making the decision on how to practice your beliefs, it all depends on you and your nature. But you can weigh the pros and cons to help you come to a more informed decision.

You would be better off being a solitary practitioner if:

1. You have a knack for researching and amassing knowledge on your own:

You don't need anyone's help in learning about something and in adapting what you learned to suit the framework of your belief.

2. You don't like to be bound by place and time to practice:

Being a solitary practitioner, you own your time and you will do with it as you please, and you have full control of the different aspects of your ceremonies.

Here are the cons of being a solitary practitioner:

For every positive, there is a negative.

1. There will be a lot of trial, error and confusion:

There is a chance that you will get overwhelmed by everything you come across. You really are on your own.

2. You will have no one to share information and experiences with:

Sharing learning experiences and interacting with people who know more than you do is a chance to expand your horizon and broaden your understanding of anything.

Joining a coven is perfect for you if:

1. You like to be instructed or mentored

The High Priests and High Priestesses will be your mentors, where the priest are in charge of the learning of the females and the priestesses are in charge of the learning of the males.

2. You like to learn from those more experienced:

As an initiate, you will be the least experienced member of a coven. This means you can learn from other members who are sure to have more experience than you.

Here are some of the cons of joining a coven:

1. The beliefs of the coven may not coincide with yours:

This is why it is very important that you review or research about the coven that you are considering to join. Being in a coven means the structured beliefs of the group as a whole are not centered on a single personal belief.

2. People working together often leads to disagreements or discord:

It is inevitable for issues to arise when many people work together, even though they share the same beliefs and have one true purpose. This is human nature and is a risk you take if you join a coven.

So there you have it.

The good news is that most often a Coven gives you one year to decide if you want to be a part of the group.

This is good because this will allow you to assimilate with the group, learn their practices and dynamics, and see for yourself if you would like to be a permanent member.

In this article, we looked at some of the major points to consider in deciding what kind of practitioner you are going to be. It is ultimately up to you and you should not be beholden to anyone in making this decision.

The best decision comes from a place that is at peace with yourself and in line with your beliefs.

Tips For The Solitary Wiccan

Being a solitary practitioner poses challenges other than just not having guidance in your journey. If you prefer this path, here are some tips for a smoother experience:

Have clear intentions

You should be able to answer clearly and assuredly why you choose this path. Just as joining a coven, choosing to be a solitary Wiccan takes commitment and lots of hard work. It is not a hobby nor a pastime. Can you explain in 30 seconds why you choose to practice solitarily?

Don't limit your learning

Never limit your learning of Wicca. Don't read books from just one author. Cast a wider net and dig deeper. Being alone on this path means you rely solely on yourself for your choice in reading materials, so be careful not to limit yourself.

Create your own rituals

In your learning and practicing, you will reach a point where you can splinter off from what's "by the book." This is a normal course in being a solitary practitioner.

Use a degree system

Just as in being a part of a coven, it is possible to set standards for yourself and allow yourself to move forward in experience-based degrees. You yourself can evaluate if you think you've advanced and are on a higher level of learning.

Socialize

Being a solitary practitioner does not mean becoming a hermit and not socializing with other people. Your solitary practice is your foundation for your every day activities. It is how you de-stress and recharge.

Welcome transformation

You will reach a point where your rituals and your learning balance each other out. Your practice becomes holistic and you will find yourself on the path to healing. Embrace it.

Your progress will be challenged

You will find your progress challenged, not by you, but by everything around you. This is how you will gauge your advancement. Life is in motion. So remain strong and firm in your beliefs.

You are not alone

There will be some moments where you crave connecting with other like-minded people. Know that you are not alone, there are Wiccan communities online and all you have to do is search for them.

The fruits of your labor as a solitary practitioner will give you fulfillment like no other.

Know that you treaded this path alone and you are able to carve out a space that's just yours.

Remember: There is invaluable wisdom to be gained as a solitary practitioner.

Should you join a coven?

If you are just starting out on your Wicca journey, I am sure you have encountered an offer or two to be part of a coven.

There comes a point in your journey, where you have to make a decision.

Here are some things you should consider in deciding what kind of practitioner you'll be.



The Solitary Witch

Solitary witches are often those who have just developed an interest in Wicca, but many "old-timers" are also solitary practitioners.

Advantages of going solitary:

- You can make your own rules
- You worship according to your own schedule
- You are not obligated to anyone or to a group
- You can work with anyone you like, even those following a different tradition

Disadvantages of going solitary:

- There is a tendency to become limited in your learning
- You might need to seek out a mentor at some point to facilitate your growth and learning
- You may find it difficult to work with other Wiccans
- You will miss out on the opportunity to hang with like-minded Wiccans as yourself



Coven Practice

Coven witches revel in the sense of community and the energy that comes from engaging with other witches.

Advantages of working with a coven:

- You learn a lot from people who know more than you
- You will learn from a structured lesson plan, you will have a sense of direction
- You benefit from a more structured practice, with rituals and schedules
- You have the opportunity to network and meet with other Wiccans

Disadvantages of working with a coven:

- Coven work is pre-scheduled to accommodate everyone
- More experienced Wiccans can sometimes make the experience terrible for the new Wiccans
- Working with other people can cause friction
- Issues are inevitable in covens
- Joining a coven means you have to adjust to their ways



So there you have it...

There might be more advantages and disadvantages under each, but remember, **How you practice is a personal decision.**

Belonging In a Coven!

If you get an invitation to a coven that you want to be a part of, it can be exciting. But don't let the giddy feeling cloud your thoughts.

Joining a coven is a big step forward. You should be clear on the following questions:

Will my loved ones support me?

If you have a family, whatever decision you make is always a subject for discussion. Make sure that this is something your loved ones are ok with.

The path to Wicca is one of peace and harmony, and should not be the cause of discord at home.

Can I fulfill my obligations?

Every member of a coven has his or her responsibility. Can you devote the time to studying? Can you show up on time to meetings? Do you have other priorities that are much more important than your priorities in the coven?

Can I follow the rules?

You are often oath bound to keep the practices of the group a secret, and oftentimes, the real names of the members are not shared. Can you keep yourself from sharing such information and can you follow the rules in general?

Can I get along with everyone?

Group dynamics is something that you have to adjust to. If someone in the group gets on your nerves, can you stick it out or will you let resentment build up inside you? When humans work together, it is inevitable for issues to arise.

Will the coven allow me to grow?

Is this the type of coven that will let you grow, or is the type that just wants to gain a following? Learn about the type of coven you are about to become a member of before making a decision.

What if I want to leave?

There are covens that accept your decision to leave and wish you well. Then there are those that make it hard for a member to leave. Be very clear on this before you join.

Final Thoughts!

Remember, that when you join a coven, your journey goes from being just about you, to being about the group's journey as well.

Which coven you decide to join (if any) is ultimately up to you. Just be sure you know what you are getting into.

Do You Need Both a God and a Goddess?

Wicca is a polytheistic religion.

Wiccans are united by practice and not by belief.

Wiccan views on divinity revolve around the duality of both the Goddess and the Horned God, where both are polar opposites and equal. There are some Wiccans who exclusively worship the Goddess, and then there are some who exclusively worship the Horned God.

In Wicca, there are no Gods and Goddesses that are higher than the rest. The Gods seek to guide us, not control our actions. And they do this as equals, like friends.

Gods and Goddesses belong to pantheons. The popular ones are the Greek pantheon, Celtic pantheon and Roman pantheon. You can make room for as many Gods and Goddesses in your life as you want.

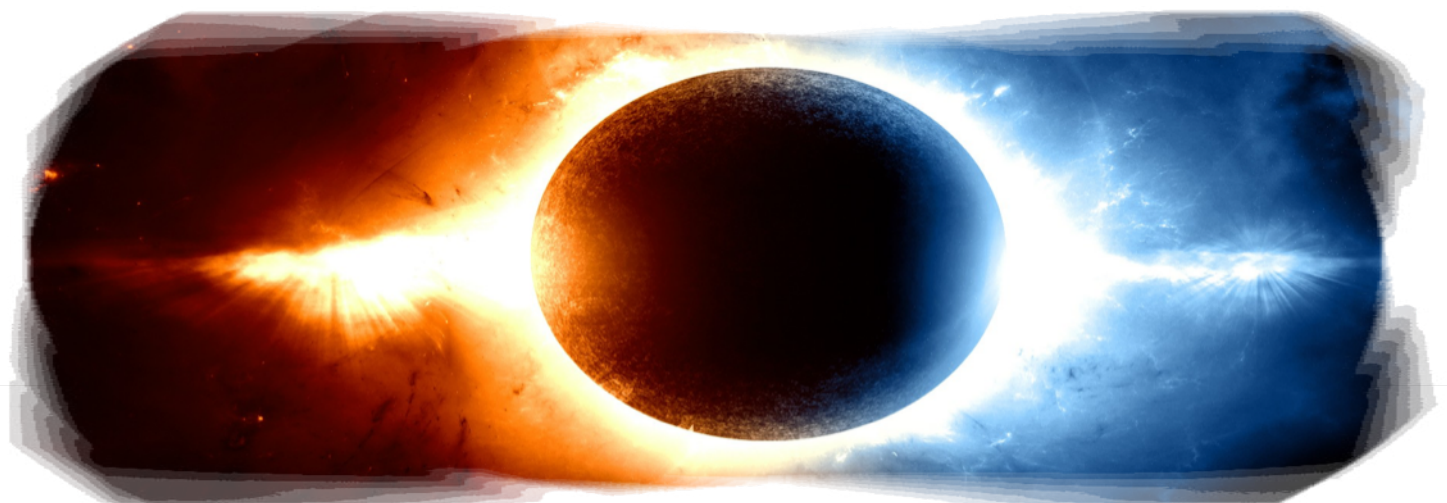
If you are new to Wicca, it is ultimately up to you who you worship. The thing is that it's decentralised, so there is no hard rule dictating whom to worship.

If you belong to a coven, you will most likely worship the deities the coven worships.

But if you're an eclectic practitioner, you can draw from as many pantheons as you want. Read up on mythologies and find one that speaks to you or responds to your nature. It is also advisable that whichever pair you choose belongs to the same pantheon.

Some start off with the Earth Mother, Sky Father and Moon Goddess. You can introduce yourself to the Gods and Goddesses that you've been studying by casting a circle and meditating at the center.

Close your eyes and communicate with them just as you would with a close friend.



A new coven or study circle?

If you are thinking of forming a coven or a study group, there are a couple of things that you should consider and some questions that you should ask yourself in the beginning stages of your planning.

A coven is a much formal set up and has a level of exclusivity that is different than a study group. A study group is often so informal that it can be open to the public.

Questions to ask

To help you make a decision, here are some questions you should ask yourself to determine what type of group is better suited for you to form:

1. **How much time** do you have for it?
2. **How many people** do you anticipate joining your group?
3. **Who will lead** your group? Will members be given the chance to lead?
4. **Who will establish** the rules?
5. **Where** will the meeting place be?
6. **What's the frequency** of your meetings?
7. **What's the age** requirement?

Degrees

For covens, it is the norm to have a number of degrees, with two being the minimum, and the maximum going as far up as fifteen.

Seeker:

Someone who has just been accepted to the coven

Dedicant:

Someone who has a year of study under his or her belt

Neophyte:

Someone who is ready to go through initiation and become a High Priest or High Priestess

There are also levels to being a neophyte:

First Degree Neophyte:

The student is now a full-fledged member of the coven

Second Degree Neophyte:

Simply an acknowledgment of accomplishments

Third Degree Neophyte:

The student is now capable of starting a coven

Much research has to be done before you can start your own study group or coven.

Getting people together is one thing, but reaching a much higher sense of purpose and advancement in knowledge as a group requires a lot of preparation and discipline.

So think it through, ask for help and take your time.

Writing Your Own Coven Bylaws

When you are gathering people for a common purpose, you should have a set of guidelines that you as a group will follow in order to have a sense of continuity.

Having Coven Bylaws helps you keep organized. Every coven should have them.

Here are some of the important things that your bylaws should include:



Mission Statement

This is the purpose behind your group's formation. It can also tell which gods you are honoring or which tradition you are following.

This is probably THE most important part of your coven bylaws, as this section will set a precedent for the rest of your laws.

Membership and Structure

Here you state what requirements one should meet, to be a part of your group, is the method a vetting or a selection process? Also detail the initiation rites/process. The last thing you want is ambiguity on what makes one eligible, which can rouse intrigue.

Meeting Schedule

Here you will state the frequency of your meetings and on the special occasions which you should meet for a ritual or celebrate. You clarify any attendance requirements here, if there is any.

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Principles

The principles of the coven should reflect what the group upholds as very important. One example is the principle of not letting any member pay to be a part of the coven.

Another example is the principle of not letting anyone who is not a part of

the coven know the business and practices of the group as a whole.

Rules on Leaving

Every coven should have a written procedure for how to deal with a member who wants to leave.

This is good for the coven and will help ease the new member's mind.

Remember to include if members are allowed to share any "secrets" after they leave.

Degree Levels

For the covens who mark educational levels by varying degrees, they should write down how each member can move from one level to the next in terms of Wicca knowledge and experience.

Member's Signature

Every member accepted to the coven must have read and understood the coven's bylaws. Have the member affix their signature at the end of the document, stating that he or she has read and understood everything written down as bylaws.

Having coven bylaws is for the betterment of each member. Each and every member should be furnished a copy of the bylaws they can keep, review and check their actions against.

Wiccan Meditation 101

Meditation is one of the most useful tenets of Wicca. Wiccan rituals and practices require you to be in a very relaxed and peaceful state of mind. Because how can you connect with the natural forces around you, if your mind is cluttered?



The ability to calm your thoughts and control your mind is a sign of discipline. And mental discipline is very important in your spiritual growth.

Now, reaching a meditative state is not as easy as one two three. Beginners will find it very difficult and will find the quiet very uncomfortable. This is where various aids come in. For example, incense oils and sticks, candles, chanting and drumming. All these can help you reach a meditative state of mind.

How Long?

How long and how often you should meditate really depends on you and your own goals. Are you meditation to get rid of stress or is it a matter of getting closer to your gods?

No matter what, a little meditation is better than no meditation. So, simply start with a couple of minutes and slowly work your way up to 15 minutes a day (or more if you need to).

Where?

You should carve out a space where you can meditate daily. Your place of meditation should have peace and quiet. One example is a natural place, somewhere in nature, like in a park. Imagine the sound of the tinkling of the water in a stream or birds chirping about. How relaxing, right?

Positions?

Any relaxing position is a good meditative position. The most popular positions are: lotus, lying back, and cross-legged. Plus if you do yoga, there are more positions at your disposal.

The key here is that you should be able to sit (or lie) in this position for a while, without getting tired in the back or legs. Be careful not to choose a position too comfortable though. You don't want to fall asleep.

Clearing Your Mind?

There are steps you can break away from the chaos, clear your mind, and prepare you for meditation: Go for a 5-minute walk- the release of endorphins will put you in a good mood.

Do deep breathing exercises- even just a minute or two of this will do.

Get Rid Of Negative Thoughts - Practice Gratitude by thinking of all the positive things in your life that you should be thankful for.

How?

Imagine your mind is a pond; peaceful, tranquil, and still. A clear and still pond reflects the beauty that is around: the flowers, the trees, and the blue sky.

1. Close your eyes and become aware of your breathing. Be aware of all the workings of your body, starting with your feet, and working all the way up to your head.

2. Imagine yourself scanning every part of your body for any tension and pain present. Then, let every tension in your body melt away.

3. Be conscious of any negative thoughts that come to you, and release them. Let them go.

4. Breathe deeply for a few minutes. At this point you should be aware of

all the tension, pain and worry that you feel.

5. You are now ready to make a connection. Chant. Call out to your deities. Talk to them. Think of symbols and what they mean.

Wiccan Meditation Subjects

There are many meditation subjects for Wiccans. If you don't know where to start, you can start by meditating about the following:

- I am one with the Gods and Goddesses
- Change is Growth
- The Pentagram
- Magick
- Trees

Whenever you meditate, it is also helpful to have a notebook and pen with you, so you can write down your realizations and what you have learned from your meditation session.

Meditation is a practice that can have holistic results. It may be a discipline of the mind, but you will also reap the good benefits in your mental, physical





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Coming up in future issues...

- How to make the perfect altar.
- Why you don't have to pay \$50-\$100 for a BOS.
- Where does the Wand come from?

...and much, much more!

Until next issue, take care, take it easy and keep practicing!

Blessed Be!