



Pay attention and listen to the sayings of the wise; apply your heart to what I teach, Prov 22:17 (NIV)

Is it acceptable for a Christian to be superstitious?

Superstitions are folk beliefs and have been around for many years. “Superstition: an irrational belief or practice resulting from ignorance or fear of the unknown.” The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. Copyright 2006, Columbia University Press. There are many types of superstitions in the world, ranging from the benign—such as not walking under a ladder—to the occult practices of astrology, black magic, divination, voodoo and sorcery.

The Bible does not support idea of things occurring by chance, nothing is done outside of God’s sovereign control. Either He causes or allows everything in keeping with His divine plan. Acts 4:27-28 Ephesians 1:10

Leviticus 19:26 ‘You shall not eat anything with the blood, nor shall you practice divination or soothsaying.

King James Version: Ye shall not eat any thing with the blood: neither shall ye use enchantments, nor observe times.

Amplified version: You shall not eat anything with the blood; neither shall you use magic, omens, or witchcraft [or predict events by horoscope or signs and lucky days].

What is divination, soothsaying, enchantments and observe the times?

- Divination–

soothsaying -

KJ enchantment, nor observe times. – Enchantments –

Observe the times –

Leviticus 19:31 ‘Give no regard to mediums and familiar spirits; do not seek after them, to be defiled by them: I am the LORD your God.

- What are mediums? Those who enter a covenant with the devil to try to foretell things or to call back spirits of the dead. He wants His children to turn to Him only.
- What were familiar spirits - The Hebrew word, rendered "familiar spirit," signifies the belly, and sometimes a leathern bottle, from its similarity to the belly. It was applied in the sense of this passage to ventriloquists, who pretended to have communication with the invisible world. The Hebrews were strictly forbidden to consult them as the vain but high pretensions of those impostors were derogatory to the honor of God and subversive of their covenant relations with Him as His people
Neither seek after wizards--fortunetellers, who pretended, as the Hebrew word indicates, to prognosticate by palmistry (or an inspection of the lines of the hand) the future fate of those who applied to them.
- What was to happen to these?
Lev 20:6,27

Deut 18:10-12

- Instead Isaiah 8:19

“We are not to observe pagan practices - - they were forbidden especially as implying a want of faith in the being, or of reliance on the providence of God.” JFB The Lord wants us to rely on Him only.

- Pagan practices - round the corners of your heads... Herodotus tells of the use of this type of haircut, forming what is called a tonsure, as the practice of pagan religious cults of ancient times who did so honoring one of their gods. The cutting of one's flesh also characterized pagan worship as attested by the priests of Baal on Mount Carmel in the contest with Elijah. Tattooing was also a device of paganism. Certain gods had their logo inscribed upon their followers; and Paul made indirect mention of this in the Lord Jesus. At the time Paul wrote, the worshippers of pagan gods actually were literally branded with the symbol of their false deity. For example, the mark of the pagan god Dionysius was that of an ivy leaf burned into the flesh with a branding iron. However, as McGarvey put it, the marks of Paul that branded him as a slave of Jesus were the deep cuts of the lictor's rods of Philippi and the stones of Lystra. Christians generally disapprove of tattooing, despite the fact of the widespread use of it by many even today. In the light of what God says here, and in view of the history of it, it seems strange that anyone would pay someone else to tattoo him. Coffman
- “For Christians to have their nativities cast, fortunes told, or use charms for the cure of diseases, is an intolerable affront to the Lord, a support of idolatry, and a reproach both to themselves, and that worthy name by which they are called. Nor observe times - Superstitiously, esteeming some days lucky, others unlucky.” Wesley
- “All kinds of witchcraft, divinations, and necromancy are condemned, nor is there any relaxation of such prohibitions in the N.T. In times of religious decline, there happens the same thing prophesied in N.T. -- "men shall turn away their ears from truth and shall be turned unto fables." What happens when people consult such characters? They are "defiled." Even a king of Israel (Saul) consulted the witch of Endor (1 Samuel 28:3-7), and it may be supposed that there were wholesale violations of God's law throughout the nation. Even with the enlightenment of our own times superstition of people with reference to such things enables thousands to make their living catering to those who seek by sinful means to find access to the hidden things of God.” Coffman

While still in the wilderness, the Lord instructed Moses so he could prepare the Israelites to enter the Promised Land. What instruction did Moses have for the people in Deut 18:10-13?

What does Lev 20:27 tell us about how vile the Lord considered these practices?

Any belief or attitude that is inconsistent with the known laws of science or with what is generally considered in the particular society as true and rational; especially, such a belief in charms, omens, the supernatural, etc." It is also "any action or practice based on such a belief or attitude (Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language). Superstitions are based on a belief in magic or things that cannot be explained by reason and are based on the ignorant faith of some object having magical powers.

What does doing evil in the sight of the Lord cause? 2 Kings 17:17

Superstitions as folk beliefs have been around and passed down through many generations. These beliefs can be powerful in that they can influence the sanest person's behavior. Even when we practice it subconsciously, nevertheless it is practiced.

A look at some of the most common superstitions and where some of them came from:

- Crossing your fingers for luck. The reason behind this practice is that it was believed that when two lines crossed, the wish was held at the center until it came to be. By crossing your fingers, you supposedly had a better chance of seeing your wish come true.
- "Cross my heart and hope to die?" The reason behind this saying is that the ancients believed that the heart was the seat of wisdom. When you crossed your heart you were giving testimony to the validity of what you were saying. It showed you weren't lying.
- What about opening an umbrella indoors? I have never specifically not opened an umbrella indoors because of that superstition, but many times I have opened one and thought about the superstition that it would bring me bad luck. The interesting thing is when umbrellas were first invented; opening one indoors might just bring you bad luck. Back then umbrellas were huge, because they were made to cover entire families. Opening an umbrella of this size indoors would frequently hurt somebody or break something; brought bad luck, thus the tradition today.
- Walking under a ladder is not good either. Why? Most of us don't ask that question, we simply don't walk under ladders. It's good common sense because the ladder might fall, but the reason behind the superstition goes back farther than that. In the ancient world, a ladder leaning against a wall formed a triangle with the ground. This was considered a sacred triangle, as it was a symbol of life. Anybody who walked through this sacred triangle would be punished. Another reason for not walking under ladders were the methods of execution of long ago. Years ago men who were facing execution would be hung from the seventh rung of a ladder leaning against a tree. Back then, death was considered contagious, and walking under a ladder provided the risk that the dead man's shadow would fall on you and you might die.
- If you spill salt, pour some in your hand, throw it over your shoulder for good luck. Speaking of salt, if you borrow salt, it is bad luck to return it. That is superstition that came from long ago. When the ancients found out that salt preserved food, they rationalized that it must protect people as well. So spilling salt was a sign from the friendly spirits that there was evil around. Back then; it was thought that good resided on a person's right side, and evil on a person's left. Throwing salt over your left shoulder would therefore win the favor of the evil spirits.
- What would you do if a black cat cross your path? Would you try to reverse the problem by making him cross in front of you again? This is a pretty simple one, and most people know the meaning. Black cats were known to be common companions of witches. When a person saw a black cat coming towards them, they didn't know if it was just a cat, a witch or the devil.
- Other superstitions (origins unknown) - find a snake in your house, it means you have an enemy. A picture falling off the wall is a sign of death. Some believe an empty frame should be turned face down to keep spirits from being stuck in the frame. It is bad luck to rock an empty rocking chair, to sing at the table, kill a granddaddy long leg spider, have scissors in your hand on Sunday, walk with one shoe on and one shoe off, hit a bird with your vehicle, give a knife as a gift or schedule appointments on the 13th. We say it is bad luck for the groom to see the bride before the wedding, even say the bride must have something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue and a sixpence for her shoe to bring her good luck. You should exit a building through the same door you entered or you will have bad luck. You must get out of bed on the same side that you get in or you will have bad luck. It's bad luck to pick up a coin if it's tails side up. Good luck comes if it's heads up.

Many superstitions are harmless, but if we dig deep into their meaning, we will find some of them come from beliefs that are not consistent with what the Bible teaches. Superstition has no power outside what our thinking gives it. The question becomes do we continue to practice them if we knew how they came about.

- Most superstitions have come down through many generations and were repeated so much, the original version became somewhat altered. We knock on wood for good luck but this particular superstition came about as an effort to appease the tree spirits. It is a common practice to knock on wood whenever something good is said. But have we ever thought about why we do that. The reason for this practice goes back many years, is the case with most of these practices.

Ancient belief was that the gods lived in the trees. When a person needed a favor or something good, they would touch the bark, speak it and then knock on the bark as a note of thanks. It was also believed that there were jealous spirits that roamed around. If they heard your good fortune, they might try to ruin it, so knocking on wood would keep them from hearing it.

- Break a mirror and you will have 7 years bad luck. Most of us don't know what it means or how it came about. This statement came to be before mirrors were ever invented. In those days, if a man wanted to see his reflection, he had to go to a pool. The belief was that your reflection was another "self", and if the water were disturbed (thus disturbing your reflection) it would disturb your other self. The idea of seven years bad luck originated from the Romans. They believed that a cycle of life was seven years long, and that it would take a person seven years to recover from such a harsh blow.
- Why do buildings not have a thirteenth floor? We usually don't think about "why" the number thirteen is so unlucky. Most of us associate it with evil, but that's about all that got passed down with the tradition that the number thirteen represented bad luck. The tradition first started back when man was first learning to count. By using his ten fingers and two feet, man came up with the number twelve. Anything beyond that (thirteen) was considered unknown and mysterious. Later on, tradition says that a goddess got kicked out of her realm and became a witch. After that, every Friday, twelve witches would get together for a meeting with the devil. That equaled thirteen evil spirits that were up to no good. By associating traditions, the evil of Fridays, and the mystery surrounding the number thirteen, arose the tradition that Friday the thirteenth was bad.
- Some people believe you should hold your hand over your mouth when you yawn to keep the devil from entering in. As Christians, we do believe there is a devil roaming the world but placing our trust in Christ is what gives us strength to overcome his advances.
- Another harmless belief with evil connotations is saying, "God bless you", after a person sneezes. "A common superstition in middle ages was the devil could enter a person during that unguarded moment when that person was sneezing; this could be avoided if anyone present immediately appealed to the name of God. Tradition of saying "God bless you" when someone sneezes still remains today." (The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition. Copyright 2006 Columbia University Press.) The ancient belief was that a person's spirit or soul was found in the breath or in the air in his head. When someone sneezed, there was the danger that the spirit would be expelled unless God's blessing was called. In some Asian cultures, if a person sneezes, somebody will blow back at them; so that the person's spirit might go back into his head.
- Putting candles on a birthday cake, lighting them, and then blowing them out? What superstition is behind this practice? This superstition began with a Greek tradition in honor of Artemis, goddess of the moon, marriage, and childbirth. The towns people would bake special cakes in the shape of the moon. Candles were then placed on the cakes, lit, and set on altars in the temple. During the celebration the candles were to be blown out with one breath, in this, the goddess Artemis would gaze favorably upon her worshippers. This is the superstition behind celebrating one's birthday with a birthday cake and lit candles.
- Whenever we have an entire chicken for dinner many look for the wishbone, to make a wish. But why is the collarbone of a chicken so important? The ancients believed that because a hen cackled when laying an egg, and a rooster crowed at dawn, they were divine. They were worshipped, and so when a hen was killed, the collarbone was hung out to dry. When it was dry, they would make a wish a break the bone much like we do today. He who got the larger part would get his wish. That is how the name "wish" bone came about.

How can killing a spider or opening an umbrella in the house bring us anything good or bad? Don't you think most of these appear to be silly and irrational? How can a person really believe a picture falling off the wall can bring bad luck?

Even famous people gave in to superstitious beliefs. President Harry S Truman displayed a horseshoe over the door of his office in the White House. Winston Churchill petted black cats to obtain good luck. Al Jolson always wore old clothes to open a new show. Cornelius Vanderbilt had the legs of his bed placed in dishes of salt--to ward off attacks from evil spirits.

There are many other countless superstitions all around us, many of which we don't even notice or recognize as superstitious. Superstition is attached to countless things in our everyday life, and most of it is simply tradition passed on from ancient beliefs. They started because of ignorance or fear of a certain fact, and not that we know better, we still are superstitious. They may have started as a folk religious belief, and we practice it out of ignorance. The reason is, for the most part, tradition. Most people who practice tradition have no clue why they're doing what they're doing. They do it because their parents and grandparents did it. And that is how it works most of the time with superstition.

Superstitions can be traced back in time to when ancient people had no understanding of the natural world, as we know it. Not knowing the laws of nature, superstition naturally arose from ignorance and fear. And most superstitions that began thousands of years ago still persist in our society today. Some people still believe in little people such as elves or leprechauns. Belief in these imaginary people gives them someone to blame when evil happens. They assume it's the leprechauns playing pranks.

Superstitious practices as we know them today, especially those practiced in the western world are considerably different from those practiced originally. It is important to realize that most, if not all, superstitious practices can be traced back several thousand years. In ancient times, superstition was a lot more widespread than it is today. The reason for this was mainly the ingenuity regarding scientific explanations for many of the simple things of life. The fact that a flower could grow from a little seed was considered to have something supernatural about it, because they didn't understand how the seed worked. With the advancement of technology and subsequent scientific progress, superstitious beliefs sharply declined. Though all sciences were originally born out of theories, some even strange, superstitions never had any reasonable beliefs. In the ancient world, superstition was common even among the Greeks, who were known for their intellect. With time, skepticism took its toll, but in the end it paved the way for more superstition with its exaggerated idea of the impossibility of any kind of certainty. In the medieval times, the "Churches" rooted out the most conspicuous superstitious beliefs. In fact, it is a fact most of the heresies that the Church had to deal with were riddled with superstition. But even though the major superstitions had been rooted out for the most part, the more innocent ones persisted. These would include things such as the belief in fairies, knocking on wood, etc. During the Renaissance and Reformation period, the influence of superstition suffered a severe blow, and was almost wiped out completely. However, superstition persisted stubbornly in men's hearts. When man has not intelligible reasoning for something, he always wants to know more about the supernatural and spiritual world, and will very readily and willingly submit to any authority that has a traditional and even maybe a divine sanction. In the past century, superstitious beliefs have suffered another large decline due primarily to the rise of education that is more intertwined with science. Our educational system deals more with the scientific, and though it makes a good case for the spiritual significance of life, it is by no means compatible with superstition. The reason is that by definition, superstition is unreasonable. <http://www.christianliteratureandliving.com/jan2002/ryanhaase1.html>

Superstitions found among some believers. Bible speaks of Peter's shadow falling on people and they would get healed (Acts 5:15). Healing was a genuine miraculous power given to Peter, but today we have those with Christian beliefs practicing apostles' power in an attempt to reproduce the miracle in a miraculous way. When the Bible speaks of Paul's handkerchief healing people (Acts 19:11-12), we are talking of a unique miraculous power, which died with Paul. Today in America we have the anointed cloth ministry, where a minister prays over the cloth and for a donation sends it to the sick person so they might be healed

Ok we are Christians and we do not practice those things mentioned in Deut 18:10-13, yet sometimes we might tend to observe superstitions and days without thinking about them and even sometimes read horoscopes. Notice how many people claim to be Christian yet are happy to tell you what birth sign they were born under, and regularly read their daily horoscope for 'amusement'. To venture into this is to flirt with demons.

Does God mock those who trust in astrology? Isaiah 47:13-14

Habits are another area where superstition abounds. 'Essential' traditional routines inspired by old wives tales: 'Say white rabbit on the first of every month for good luck.' 'Don't walk under ladders or it will bring bad luck'. 'The first person to cross the threshold of your home on New Year's Day must be a tall dark man'. To trust in luck, fate, or fortune is to trust in demons. You are responsible for your own life and actions. Trust in God, in His Word, and His Spirit.

“Part of what raises a flag here is the self-centeredness which superstition betrays. All the superstitions which I've encountered have to do with me, my loved ones, and the good or bad fortunes which may befall us. Superstition is supremely selfish. While our faith in Jesus saves us, it doesn't stop there. It starts there. We are saved to something and that something is relationship - other-centeredness. We are saved to have an intimate relationship with God who made us for Himself. We are saved to engage in a positive way with our Christian brothers and sisters. We are to love them, serve them, care for them, build them up, admonish them, encourage them and so on. We are also saved to engage the world which needs to hear the same good news we heard. If our “faith” centers too much on ourselves, we can be sure that something is way out of balance.

What was Paul's statement about faith in Ephesians 2: 8-10

There are many types of superstitions in the world, ranging from the benign—such as not walking under a ladder—to the occult practices of astrology, black magic, divination, voodoo and sorcery. Scripture condemns those who practice astrology (Deuteronomy 4:19), magic, divination and sorcery (2 Kings 21:6, Isaiah 2:6). Idolatry is also forbidden, and no one who practices it will enter the Kingdom of God (Revelation 21:27). These types of practices are extremely dangerous because they open the minds of the practitioners to the influence of the devil. I Peter 5:8 warns us to “be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.” We should get our faith not from objects or rituals of man-made origin, but from the one true God who gives eternal life. “See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ. For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority” (Colossians 2:8-10).

Religious people, even those who have a genuine faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and who claim to have no use for superstition as such, can unconsciously pick up beliefs that are nothing more or less than exactly that. In his column called "Magic in Jesus' Name?" in "Faith Today," (November/December 2002 Issue) John Stackhouse Jr. referred to the plethora of religious e-mails which bear a promised blessing or a threat. He notes that, though the Bible condemns such superstition, at least some Christians don't seem to have a big problem with this kind of thing. They happily pass along e-mail messages that suggest that if you forward them to ten friends, you will get a "very pleasant surprise... Very good things will happen to everyone that touches this story."

Stackhouse notes that superstition is "more widespread and more important than many of us realize." He cites studies that show that about 15% of regular churchgoers believe in things like astrology and good luck charms. Superstition and authentic Christian faith stand in opposition to each other. Superstition attempts to control the universe in a mechanical way. The thought is if I do this, then that will happen. If I avoid that, then this will happen. True faith is rooted in our relationship with God as our

Father, not as an impersonal force which can be manipulated. <http://www.familybiblehour.com/christian-superstitions>

On Christian Cross Idols: Christians often wear or carry a cross of some description; plain or with a dead Jesus on it. They naively claim that it is not a charm, talisman, or an idol but 'The Cross in My Pocket is merely a reminder of Christ's death for us'. Christians do not worship the Cross, or revere the Cross. Christians worship The Living Christ who died on a cross, and they follow Him. It is His Sacrifice that is the heart of the Gospel, not the lump of wood we nailed Him to. Satan will use that instrument of torture and death, and images of it, to lure suckers into idolatry and sin. Here's a vivid example. Trusting in fate, or luck is to depend on evil spirits. <http://www.born-again-christian.info/superstitions.htm>

How do you feel about wearing a cross?

Because we are Christians we have a hope in Christ Jesus, which replaces all fear, all foolish beliefs and superstitions passed down to us through the years. Christians try to hold on to superstitious beliefs, but we are encouraged to let go of the things of the world and place our trust in Him. Our fears and anxieties disappear when we focus on Christ and surrender them to Him. Only then will we find the peace and joy that overflows just enough to wash away our foolish beliefs

Superstitions take seemingly innocent forms and are often performed subconsciously but remember, superstition have no power outside what our thinking gives it. Check the way you behave and think about them and think, would you continue to practice them if we knew how they came about. Is there some area of superstition you just seem to hold on to, whether consciously or subconsciously? Do you carry a lucky charm or avoid stepping on cracks? Somewhere along the way have you gotten off track, or just blindly followed along without thinking. Superstitions are known as foolish beliefs and the bible has much to say about believing in foolish beliefs.

We engage in superstition whether we try to or not. It is embedded in our culture, and is part of our tradition. We don't think about why we do a lot of the things that we do. Not all of it is bad in itself either. But superstition can make way for fear and uncertainty in any person's life, because that is essentially what it preaches. That is why it is important for the Christian to not lay too much at stake when it comes to superstition, because it breeds fear and uncertainty. We need to plant our feet on the solid rock of Jesus Christ. He is our rock and our fortress, and we need not fear.

Proverbs 18:10

Prov 29:25

Col 2:8-10