

Pathwork on
Role of Ritual

This quote from Pathwork Lecture 70 *Questions and Answers*, speaks to the role of ritual in our spiritual development. The lecture notes that ritual can provide a framework for the inner meaning of a deep truth, and for this ritual can be useful. However if ritual is used by rote, superficially, hoping that by routinely performing a ritual one would experience safety, ritual is not useful, for ritual by rote cannot give an experience of safety. There are subtleties here – perhaps even a meditation practice could be considered a ritual if done by rote and not done with awareness and understanding.

36	As to your second question, regarding ritual, do you refer to a particular ritual or about ritual in general? [In general. What purpose does it serve on the path?]
37	Ritual does not serve any purpose. It is a symbol, a reminder, an invitation, so to speak, to think about the inner meaning. Try to look beyond the ritual for the deeper meaning. It is nothing but a signpost, a reminder. There are two categories of wrong human responses to ritual. There are those who keep following rituals in an imaginary sense of safety. They think that by following the ritual, they follow the sense behind it. This implies a laziness of thinking, and a wishful thinking that with minimum effort, maximum effect can be had. Many people belong to this category, and not only those who belong to a religious denomination. There are subtler ways in which this can be done.
38	People in the other category say that ritual means nothing, and to some extent they are right. But they have come to the wrong conclusion also, because it does not occur to them that something wise, true, flexible and alive may be behind the ritual. They would realize this if they were but willing to think of and consider such a possibility. However, they do not try, and so are incapable of thinking any more freely and independently than people of the other category. Ritual in itself has nothing to do with the path, with growth, with the freedom that you are all bound to achieve sooner or later, whether you now work on this path or not. But freedom is bound to come eventually, when you are ready to see that you need to work for it. Then you approach freedom, but not by ritual.