

Should Christians Meditate? Is There Such A Thing As Christian Yoga?

by Rev. Sylvester Herbert



Even a cursory study of the Scriptures reveals numerous references of God's people meditating (Psa. 1:2; 19:14; 63:6; 77:12; 119:15, 23, 27; 145:5). Some references actually command us to meditate (Josh. 1:8; I Tim. 4:13-15). Christian meditation is a desirable activity. It is a conscious engagement of the mind with God as He has revealed Himself through the Scriptures.

Yoga is becoming an increasingly popular meditative practice. Can a Christian practise yoga in good conscience? Actress, singer, public speaker, personal trainer, and author Laurette Willis had been involved in yoga and the New Age for 22 years before coming to Christ. Her views on whether Christians should be involved in yoga are very instructive. According to Laurette, to use the term Christian yoga "is like saying someone is a Christian Buddhist or a Christian Hindu. What some people are doing is that they are trying to make yoga Christian. Even Hindus are saying that you cannot do that." She issued this cautionary note about the yogic experience of astral travel (people actually leaving their body): "I wonder with those experiences when I left my body what got in there when I was gone?"

Yoga is a method of spiritual training whose purpose is to integrate or unite the self. There are several practices within yoga, but central to all its forms is the practice of meditation. Yoga and other practices of Eastern mysticism have their roots in a worldview that is fundamentally opposed to a Christian understanding of God and the way He works in the world. Douglas R. Groothuis, a Professor of Philosophy at Denver Seminary, writes that:

"Yoga, deeply rooted in Hinduism, essentially means to be "yoked" with the divine. Yogic postures, breathing, and chanting were originally designed not to bring better physical health and well-being (Western marketing to the contrary), but a sense of oneness with Brahman—the Hindu word for the absolute being that pervades all things. This is pantheism (all is divine), not Christianity."

Here are some noteworthy differences in the two kinds of meditation:

Eastern Religion

1. *Emptying the mind*
2. *Mentally passive*
3. *Repeating a mantra*
4. *Mastering mental techniques*

Christianity

- Filling and renewing the mind*
- Mentally active*
- Using the Word*
- Relating to a personal God*

Do you need more stress busters in your life? Are you seeking for relaxation and spirituality? The Christian discipline of meditation promises to give you all these and more. Why not give it a try? And yes, it is O. K. to do some recreational stretching as long as you leave out the Eastern "meditation" techniques and other religious practices associated with yoga.

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In place of our exhaustion and spiritual fatigue, God will give us rest. All He asks is that we come to Him...that we spend a while thinking about Him, meditating on Him, talking to Him,



and thoroughly lost in the hiding place of His presence. -

Chuck Swindoll