

Why Yoga and Christianity are Incompatible

Mention “yoga” and most people think of exercise and meditation.

Neither of these is incompatible with Christianity. By exercise we care for the bodies God gave us, and strengthen them to serve Him better. And Scripture speaks highly of meditation: he is blessed whose “delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night” (Psalm 1:2).

So why are yoga and Christianity incompatible? Why should no Christian practice yoga? Why should every Christian think it inconsistent when Christian schools, churches, and organizations (the YMCA, for example) promote or even teach yoga?

Here are three reasons.

Yoga is an inherently pagan worship practice.

Yoga is pagan in its origin. All reliable statements of the history of yoga mention that it developed in connection with Hinduism, Buddhism, and other eastern pagan religions.

Christians should not adopt any pagan practice without seriously evaluating it.

To clarify, I am talking about *practices*, not *products*. Christians may use *products* made by pagan unbelievers, so long as we use them in the service of Jehovah (I Timothy 4:4-5). But because pagan *practices* proceed from a wrong view of whom and what God is, they generally do not conform to Jehovah’s will regarding how we must serve Him.

Evaluating practices which are pagan in origin, Christians should be most concerned when a practice is one of *worship*, or union with the divine, as yoga is. On the website Answers.com we read: “The term *yoga* comes from a Sanskrit word which means yoke or union. Traditionally, yoga is a method joining the individual self with the Divine, Universal Spirit, or Cosmic Consciousness.”

Union with which God? Christians do claim to have union with Jehovah God, through the work of Christ and His Spirit. Our worship of Jehovah manifests and celebrates this union.

Is it permissible, then, to worship another God also? Absolutely not! Jehovah forbids all idolatry (Exodus 20:3).

Or is it possible to worship Jehovah by the same means which pagans use to approach their idol gods? No! Jehovah determines how He will be worshiped (John 4:24).

Can we have union with Jehovah God, and with the pagan gods? Impossible! We can serve one or the other; we must serve Jehovah (I Corinthians 10:20-21).

Yoga meditation is not consistent with the Bible’s requirements for meditation.

The Bible gives principles which must govern the Christian’s practice of meditation.

First, proper meditation does not require us to empty our mind, so that we think of nothing. We must think; our minds must have something in them. We must think on things that are true, honest, pure, lovely, and praiseworthy (Philippians 4:8-9).

Second, proper meditation is not introverted; it does not require us to focus on ourselves, our existence, or some personally sacred mantra. Rather, we must meditate on God, on His Word, and on His works! Proper meditation is extroverted - it thinks of Jehovah! Read Scripture passages such as Psalm 119:15, 23, 48, 78, and 148, and I Timothy 4:15.

God promises peace in the way of praying to Him through Jesus Christ.

Yes, our world is busy. Yes, our lives are hectic and filled with stress. Yes, we need time apart from it all. Yes, we need to find peace and renewal.

These come from God, in the way of prayer. They are gifts that Jesus has purchased for God's people!

God's people join themselves to the divine Jehovah in the way of prayer!

Needing rest, Jesus prayed (Mark 1:35). David found that to cast his burden on God was the way to find relief (Psalm 55:22). Through the apostle Paul, God directs us what to do when anxious: praise God, give thanks to God, and make requests to God (Philippians 4:6).

Proper prayer - prayed with a humble and sincere heart, in the name of Jesus - gives peace to God's people (Philippians 4:7). A wonderful and blessed peace - a peace that passes all understanding! Peace with God, and with God's way for us. Peace which only God gives, by declaring our sins forgiven on the basis of Christ's sacrificial death on the cross.

Rather than teaching yoga, why do not Christian organizations focus on teaching the real way to approach God and to find peace - the way of prayer? My experience is that all Christians continue to need solid instruction in the area of prayer.

The Christian who has a good prayer life might well spend time in meditation and exercise. But he should not spend time with yoga. He has a peace that yoga cannot give.

Pastor Douglas Kuiper

Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.

Philippians 4:6-9