

## Should a Christian avoid practicing yoga exercises?

Question 182838: Answered by: Shane

Answer from Gotquestions.org: For many Christians in the West who don't understand the history behind it, yoga is simply a means of physical exercise and strengthening and improving flexibility of the muscles. However, the philosophy behind yoga is much more than physically improving oneself. It is an ancient practice derived from India, believed to be the path to spiritual growth and enlightenment.

The word "yoga" means "union," and the goal is to unite one's transitory (temporary) self with the infinite Brahman, the Hindu concept of "God." This god is not a literal being, but is an impersonal spiritual substance that is one with nature and the cosmos. This view is called "pantheism," the belief that everything is God and that reality consists only of the universe and nature. Because everything is God, the yoga philosophy makes no distinction between man and God.

Hatha yoga is the aspect of yoga which focuses on the physical body through special postures, breathing exercises, and concentration or meditation. It is a means to prepare the body for the spiritual exercises, with fewer obstacles, in order to achieve enlightenment. The practice of yoga is based on the belief that man and God are one. It is little more than self-worship disguised as a high level of spirituality.

The question becomes, is it possible for a Christian to isolate the physical aspects of yoga as simply a method of exercise, without incorporating the spirituality or philosophy behind it? Yoga originated with a blatantly anti-Christian philosophy, and that philosophy has not changed. It teaches one to focus on oneself instead of on the one true God. It encourages its participants to seek the answers to life's difficult questions within their own conscience instead of in the Word of God. It also leaves one open to deception from God's enemy, who searches for victims that he can turn away from God (1 Peter 5:8).

Whatever we do should be done for God's glory (1 Corinthians 10:31), and we would be wise to heed the words of the apostle Paul: "Fix your thoughts on what is true and honorable and right. Think about things that are pure and lovely and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise" (Philippians 4:8, NLT).