



Why a Christian ALTERNATIVE to Yoga?

by Laurette Willis, Director of PraiseMoves®

Yoga. It's everywhere. In ads for everything from I.T. to ice cream, meditative supermodels sit cross-legged in the Hindu Lotus position, contemplating "nirvana." There are yoga videos for pregnant mothers, senior citizens, toddlers and babies – even yoga for you and your dog! You can work out with yoga straps, blocks, bolsters and balls.

The well-dressed yoga practitioner can wear her loose-fitting yoga togs, carry her yoga mat in her matching yoga tote and dress her daughter in Sesame Street yoga pants (featuring Elmo!). Since yoga is everywhere, it must be okay. Or is it?

Those who think yoga is little more than a series of stress-relieving stretching exercises may be surprised to learn about true foundation of the multi-billion dollar yoga craze in North America.

There are an estimated 15-20 million people practicing yoga in the U.S., and estimates of 50,000 to 100,000 yoga instructors offering classes at 20,000+ locations.

According to Webster's New World Dictionary, yoga (coming from an east Indian Sanskrit word which means "union with god" or "to yoke") is "a mystic and ascetic Hindu discipline for achieving union with the supreme spirit through meditation, prescribed postures, controlled breathing, etc."

Over the last several decades yoga has been embraced by the mainstream of society – and even the church. We find yoga classes offered at YWCAs, church fellowship halls, and even elementary schools.

As a child growing up on Long Island, I became involved with yoga at the age of seven when my mother and I began watching a daily yoga exercise program on television. For the next 22 years I was heavily involved with yoga, metaphysics and the New Age movement until I came to the end of myself and surrendered my life to Jesus Christ in 1987.

I call yoga "the missionary arm of Hinduism and the New Age movement." We don't often think of other religions having missionaries, but the philosophy and practice of yoga have been primary tools of Hindu "missionaries" to America since "Indian priest and mystic" Swami Vivekananda introduced yoga to the West at the 1893 World's Fair in Chicago.^[1]

Interestingly, Swami Vivekananda is attributed with the idea of combining the theory of “evolution of the soul” with his teachings of Hinduism. Instead of working out one’s “karma” by becoming a grasshopper, ant or human in progressive lives, he taught an “evolution of the soul” whereby the individual continues in an evolutionary process to “manifest the god within.”



Apparently he understood that Americans wouldn’t buy into the traditional Hindu belief in reincarnation. Not many westerners could imagine they would ever come back as a *lower* form of life. A *higher* form of life perhaps, but certainly not a lower one. Have you noticed how many people – even *Christians* – believe in reincarnation? One can just keep coming back until they get it right. Sadly, this false teaching leads people away from the necessity for a Savior. And if we progressively get better with each life, why aren’t we all living in Blissville now?

Some consider this Hindu belief a **theory** to be embraced. Interestingly, definitions of “theory” in Webster’s include, “a speculative plan, conjecture or guess.” Do you remember when *evolution* used to be called the “theory of evolution?” It’s seldom called a “theory” any longer outside of Christian circles. Promote a theory long enough and it becomes the truth? “Not hardly,” as my country cousins would say. But I digress...

Another Hindu missionary welcomed into elite circles was Paramhansa Yogananda who started the Self-Realization Fellowship in Los Angeles. He cleverly chose to demonstrate that yoga was completely compatible with Christianity. Wearing a cross, he came to America in the 1920s with the Hindu religious text, the *Bhagavad Gita*, in one hand and the Bible in the other. He reasoned that yoga was the binding force that could connect all religions.

From experience I can say that yoga is a dangerous practice for the Christian and leads seekers *away* from God rather than to Him. You may say, “Well, I’m not doing any of the meditation stuff. I’m just following the exercises.” It is impossible, however, to separate the subtleties of yoga the technique from yoga the religion. I know because I taught and practiced *hatha* yoga for years. *Hatha* yoga is the most popular yoga style available on store-bought videos and in most gyms. For an eye-opening account of the background and meaning of “*hatha* yoga,” please see my notes at the bottom of this article.

Perhaps you have sensed uneasiness while doing yoga (what some call a “check in your spirit”), but you ignored that quiet nudge. I urge you to pay attention to it. Jesus Himself said, “...the sheep follow Him, for they know His voice” (John 10:4).

Your yoga teacher may bow to her class saying, “*Namaste*” (“I bow to the divine in you.”). Postures have names such as *Savasana* (the Corpse Pose) and *Bhujangasana* (the Cobra or Snake Pose). References are made to *chakras* or “power centers” in the body, such as the “third eye.” The relaxation and visualization session at the end of yoga classes is skillfully designed to “empty the mind” and can open one up to harmful spiritual influences.



As Christians, you are instructed to “be transformed by the **renewing** of your mind” (Romans 12:2), not the *emptying* of your mind. Many believe that transformation process occurs as we meditate and feed on the Word of God – renewing our minds by filling them with *God’s* thoughts, not emptying them or filling them with the prideful thoughts of man.

It seems the enemy has a counterfeit for almost everything the Lord offers. While mind-numbing tranquility may feel good for a time, it’s a poor substitute for the “peace which surpasses all understanding” (*Philippians 4:7*) and “the joy of the Lord (*which*) is your strength” (*Nehemiah 8:10*).

Yoga’s breathing techniques (*pranayama*) may seem stress-relieving, yet they can be an open door to the psychic realm – inhaling and exhaling certain “energies” for the purpose of relaxation and cleansing (Paul refers to satan as “the prince of the power of the air” in Ephesians 2:2, and I doubt the air to which he is referring is oxygen, but rather the psychic arena some call “the second heaven” which is certainly not a playground). Whenever you see the words *prana*, *ki* or *chi*, these refer to “life force” energies (see the notes on *hatha* yoga at the end of this article).

Both chanting and the customary relaxation period at the end of a yoga session also have an agenda that may surprise the weekend yogi. Before becoming a Christian, I remember numerous instances of “traveling outside my body” during yoga relaxation periods. I wonder who – or what – checked in when I checked out? Whether you believe such phenomena can happen or not, some medical professionals claim such experiences have led to psychosis. (Note: While Christians cannot be

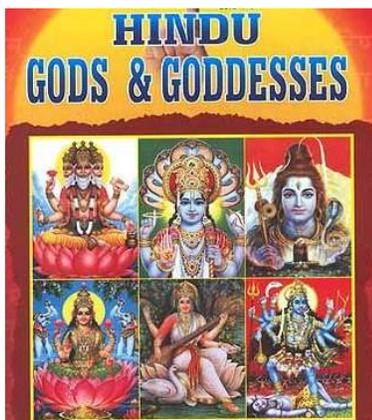
“possessed” since the Holy Spirit resides in your re-created human spirit, one may be “oppressed” by demonic influences.)

Nine out of Ten Hindus agree: “Yoga is Hinduism”

Again and again we hear or read, “Yoga is *science*. It is not religion.” But what do Hindus and true yogis say?

TIME magazine featured a quote from **Subhas Tiwari, a professor of yoga philosophy and meditation** at the Hindu University of America in Orlando, Fla.: **“Yoga is Hinduism.”** You may read the full article from the Sept. 5, 2005 issue at: <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1098937,00.html> which included a quote from yours truly that “Christian yoga” is an oxymoron (contradiction in terms – like a “Christian Buddhist” – no such thing!).

A staff member of an east coast Classical Yoga Academy wrote to me, **“Yes, all of yoga is Hinduism.** Everyone should be aware of this fact.” This staff member went on to say she didn’t appreciate my “running down of the great Hindu/Yogic religion.



Did you know that yoga postures are offerings to the 330 million Hindu gods?

Can you see a twisting of Romans 12:1 here (“*present your bodies a living sacrifice*”)?

One of our PraiseMoves Instructors spent three months on a missionary trip to India several years ago. She said her group often saw people performing yoga postures in front of statues of the gods in the streets! Some brought offerings of flowers, some fruit, some *themselves*...

Acts 15:29 tells us to “abstain from things offered to idols.”

In an article dated May 14, 2006, Darryl E. Owens of the *Orlando Sentinel* quoted **Sannyasin Arumugaswami, managing editor of *Hinduism Today***. Arumugaswami said **Hinduism is the soul of Yoga** “based as it is on Hindu Scripture and developed by Hindu sages. Yoga opens up new and more refined states of mind, and to understand them one needs to believe in and understand the Hindu

way of looking at God. ... **A Christian trying to adapt these practices will likely disrupt their own Christian beliefs."**

In an article entitled "An Open Letter to Evangelicals" from the January 1991 issue of *Hinduism Today*, Swami Sivasiva Palani writes, "**A small army of yoga missionaries** – *hatha*, *raja*, *siddha* and *kundalini* – beautifully trained in the last 10 years, is about to set upon the western world. They may not call themselves Hindu, but **Hindus know where yoga came from and where it goes.**"

Swami Palani goes on to write, "We hope this proves useful to you. I close with a quote from **Swami Vivekananda, Hinduism's greatest modern missionary**, spoken in January of 1895, 'What I now want is a band of fiery missionaries.' It's a hundred years late. But it appears he's going to get his wish."

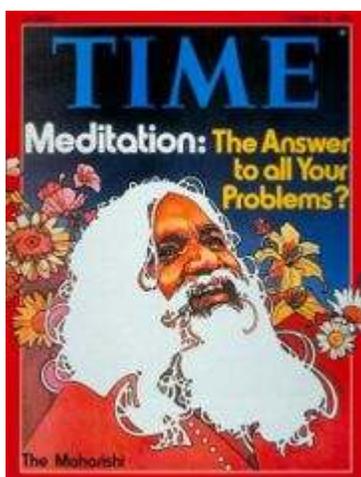
In the West, the term "yogi" is used to refer to anyone who practices yoga. However, in the Bhagavad-Gita, the god Krishna says that the true yogi is one who has surrendered himself "fully unto me."

Besides these historical evidences, I can clearly state from my own experiences and those of many I knew while in the New Age movement, yoga class was the door that led us into the New Age Movement.

According to Swami Vishnudevananda, one of yoga's most influential leaders, *hatha* yoga "prescribes physical methods to begin ... so that the student can manipulate the mind more easily as he advances, attaining communication with one's higher self."^[iii]

It seems the student is being manipulated as well. Yoga's "least religious" form, *hatha* yoga, influences one's spiritual life as unmistakably as any one of the dozens of other yoga techniques. *Hatha* yoga is actually seen as the stepping stone to *raja* yoga (the form said to involve "psycho-physical meditation techniques to attain an experience of the truth and ultimate liberation from the cycles of death and rebirth, or *moksha*"). Anyone want to join me in a collective, "Yikes!?"

Yoga claims physical and mental disciplines bring about union with God. According to Maharishi Mahesh Yogi (once



associated with the Beatles), meditation "brings us more ability for achieving something through right means, and very easily a sinner comes out of the field of sin and becomes a virtuous man."^[iii]

Oh, really? Sounds like salvation by *works* (instead of by grace) doesn't it?

The Bible tells us: "*For all have sinned; all fall short of God's glorious standard. Yet now God in His gracious kindness declares us not guilty. He has done this through Christ Jesus, who has freed us by taking away our sins... We are made right with God when we believe that Jesus shed His blood, sacrificing His life for us*" Romans 3:23-25 NLT.

"You make me SICK!"

While most of the emails I receive are positive, there are a few which disagree with my viewpoints about yoga - some strongly (I was even credited with the remarkable ability of making someone "sick" once or twice!).

You may study or teach yoga (or so-called "Christian yoga") and believe it is completely compatible with your Christian faith. Perhaps you feel your relationship with the Lord is unshakeable, but I ask you to consider for a moment the young Christians and non-believers in your life. We all have people we influence by how we live our lives.

In light of the facts - the religious philosophy and history of yoga - take a look at Paul's warning to believers in the Corinthian church about meat offered to idols, "All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify. Let no one seek his own, but each one the other's well-being... If anyone says to you, 'This was offered to idols,' **do not eat it for the sake of the one who told you**, and for conscience' sake...not your own, but that of the other... **not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved**" (1 Corinthians 10:23-24; 28-29, 33).

To strong Christians (strong in their relationship with the Lord as well as the strong-willed, strong-minded ones) I say - certainly, you may not be adversely affected by the subtle seeds of doubt and New Age thought planted in yoga classes. You may even be going to a yoga class that is devoid of much of the New Age lingo and Hindu phraseology. And if not, perhaps you are able to see there is nothing inherently right or wrong with the "meat" or postures offered to idols (1 Corinthians 8: 4-8). You are oblivious to the visualizations and suggestions during the "meditation and relaxation" at the end of yoga class, the talk of *chakras*, auras,

breathing in *prana* (the "life force" connecting us to the "Universal Life Force") and getting in touch with our higher self to unite with "Universal Mind" (remember, I was a student and teacher of this stuff for 22 years).

However, would you agree there are people in your life you influence? Do you think there may be some unbelievers and new believers watching you?

Might someone young in the faith be watching you and saying to herself, "You know, she's a strong Christian and loves Jesus. She does yoga and says there's nothing wrong with it. I think I'll take that yoga class being offered down the street." This young follower may not have your discernment. She may be like my mother and I were - weak and unskilled in the Word of God and open to the deceptions of the enemy. Do you think she could perhaps wind up in the New Age movement as I did?

Are we responsible for living our lives in such a way as to be a help or a hindrance to the cause of Christ? That's a pretty tall order, isn't it?

"They are teaching YOGA in my child's school."

I receive a lot of emails from concerned parents who tell me they just discovered their child is being taught yoga in school.

Should you be concerned? I would.

"But they're not teaching any of the religious aspects of yoga, just the exercises."

Okay. What are they calling it?

"Uh, yoga."

So, in future years when your child is visiting a bookstore and passes by the 'metaphysical/Hindu/Buddhist/occult/what-have-you' section and sees books on "yoga" (some of which are highly religious and occult in nature), he/she will equate it with the warm fuzzies received during those "harmless little yoga sessions" in Ms. Winkie's 3rd grade class, and immediately buy the book.

Or, they may later go to college and live down the street from an Ashram, see the word "yoga" and get those wonderful warm fuzzies, sign up for classes and be on a whole 'nother path quicker than you can sing, "Swami, how I love ya." (I was "blessed" by famed yogi Swami Satchidananda at the Ananda Ashram in upstate New York when I was ten years old--less than three years after we began doing yoga "just for exercise.").

Many parents have written to me with their concerns about the various yoga curricula being offered around the U.S. and Canada. I'm sure parents in Europe, Australia and elsewhere are encountering similar challenges. When something is so widely accepted in mainstream society, those of us who sound the clarion call are seen as "fearful" and "extremists."

If it were me, I would urge the principal to look into offering stretching exercises instead. That's one of the reasons why I developed **PowerMoves Kids**. I was concerned about the prevalence and growing acceptance of yoga in schools.

"PMK" is being used in a number of public schools (as well as private and home schools). It's completely non-religious -- plus it has the added benefit of Character Education (and all Character Education points back to Truth, doesn't it?).

"PMK" combines stretching with character-building quotes. It's the first classroom program to combine Fitness with Character Education - please see: www.PowerMovesKids.com .

From personal experience, I know where the study of yoga can lead for children as well as adults.

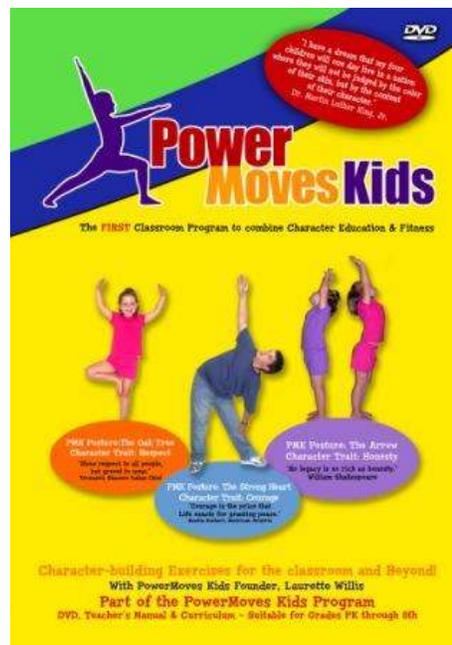
If your children are at a Christian school (yes, *believe-it-or-not, some Christian schools are teaching yoga*) or home school, know that **PraiseMoves for Children** is also available (DVD, not curriculum--yet).

But ANY good stretching program is a better choice than yoga. Look around, there are several good DVDs available on just good, healthy stretches for children, athletes and adults.

Concerning Things offered to Idols...

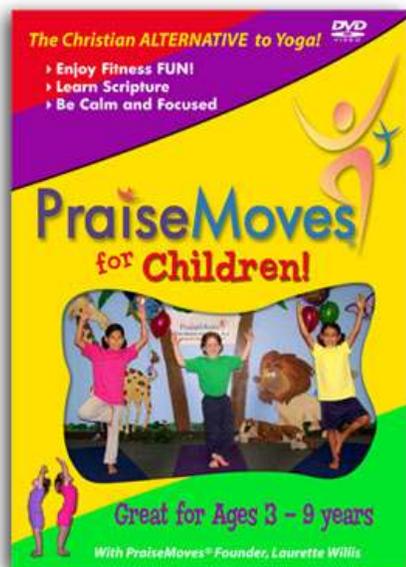
Quoting from 1 Corinthians 8:1, 9-13 - **be forewarned this is hard to read:**

"Now concerning things offered to idols: We know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up (makes arrogant), but love edifies (builds up). **But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak.** For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol's temple, will not the conscience of him who is weak be emboldened to eat those things offered to



idols? And because of your knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? But when you thus sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble."

So it is not out of a spirit of fear we avoid yoga, but could it be out of wisdom and love for others - perhaps those who are not as spiritually mature as we are? Can we do such things out of love for others? That's too hard, isn't it? What if I LIKE IT?!



Again, looking at the "ouch" from 1 Corinthians 10: 28-29 and 33 - "But if anyone says to you, 'This was offered to idols,' do not eat it for the sake of the one who told you, and for conscience' sake... 'Conscience,' I say, not your own, but that of the other... **not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.**"

So - it's not all about ME after all. I win when I make the decision to come in third place: **1st** - "Love the Lord your God with your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" **2nd** - "and love your neighbor" **3rd** - "as you love yourself" (Matthew 22: 37-39).

While practicing yoga may not seem to have an adverse effect on your Christian walk, it may be effecting your Christian witness. Of course not everyone who knows and trusts you will jump into yoga and find themselves engulfed in a New Age lifestyle for 22 years as I was, but some weak ones might - and be hopelessly lost as others have been. Would you agree that we are responsible for planting seeds of faith or doubt that can lead people to Christ or away from Him?

I remember planting *numerous* seeds of New Age philosophy when I taught yoga classes - enough to make anyone without a firm foundation of Biblical knowledge doubt the veracity of God's Word and fall prey to satan's question to Eve, **"Has God indeed said...?"** (Genesis 3:1).

For example, I was convinced that there was no such thing as "sin." All we had to do was "get in touch with god within and connect to Universal Mind." One of my favorite New Age parrot-isms was, "Nothing is either good nor bad, but thinking makes it so" (quoting Shakespeare like it was Bible!). Another favorite: "All is good. All is God." And the real kicker whenever something bad happened to someone,

“Well, they obviously *drew* this to themselves on some level to *learn* something.”
What insensitive nonsense!

“Sin” I reasoned “is an acronym for **self-inflicted nonsense.**” How clever. How humorous. How deadly – for if there is no such thing as sin, then there’s no need for a Savior. And if there’s no need for a Savior, then why did Jesus come? Oh, He was “just a good Teacher.” Then why didn’t I follow His teachings? In John 3:3 Jesus said, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again (from above), he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

But Yoga is NOT Meat!

For those who would argue with the scriptures in 1 Corinthians 8 and 10 and say, “But yoga postures aren’t MEAT!” Okay. Here’s a scripture that’s even clearer. I believe the Lord drew me to this scripture when I was praying to understand the differences among yoga, so-called “Christian yoga” and PraiseMoves – **Acts 15:29**. The apostles were gathered together considering what rules should be placed on the Gentiles who were coming to Christ. Should they be circumcised, follow the dietary laws, etc.?

Led by James, Jesus' half-brother, they wrote a letter that has since become known as the Jerusalem Decree. In it they wrote:

*“For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit,
and to us, to lay upon you
no greater burden than these necessary things:
That you **abstain from things offered to idols,**
from blood, From things strangled,
and from sexual immorality.
If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well.
Farewell (Shalom)”* – Acts 15: 28-29.

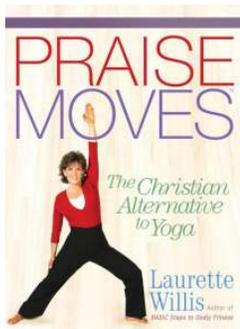
PraiseMoves certainly isn’t for everyone, **but stretching exercises are!** Find a good book on stretching and flexibility. Look for videos that are purely about stretching the *body* – not the mind and spirit.

The believer's walk is one of **renewing the mind** (*Romans 12:2*), **not emptying it** - a practice common in yogic meditation.

“But I have a lot invested in being a yoga instructor (or student)” you may say. Sometimes the measure of our growth in the Lord equals the size of the sacrifices we make to follow Him. If you’ve been feeling “stuck” spiritually, this may be the next step the Lord is asking you to take.

No, you don’t have to do PraiseMoves – but why not consider a stretching and flexibility class instead of yoga? If still unsure, please pray and ask the Lord about it.

“Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God” 1 John 3:21.



PraiseMoves is Born

In February 2001 I began praying about an idea I believe the Lord gave me for a Christian *alternative* to yoga, PraiseMoves. I’m careful to tell people **it’s not “Christian yoga,”** which I believe is an oxymoron (a contradiction of terms). What would you say about the woman who says she’s a “**Christian Buddhist?**” Wouldn’t you think she’s bit confused?

“Christian yoga” is an example of *syncretism* (an attempt to blend conflicting beliefs, religions or philosophies). Actually, **PraiseMoves is a Christ-centered alternative to the practice of yoga.**

When I told my husband Paul (also a former New Ager) about the idea, I asked him what he thought of the name PraiseMoves. His first words were, “Well, praise moves God.” *That’s it!* I thought. Here’s exercise we can do which is good for the “temple of the Holy Spirit” (our body), which also renews our mind on the Word of God, refreshes us spiritually, and *moves* us to praise and draw nearer to our precious Lord. Praise moves us closer to Him, too!

Over the next two years, I prayed, studied and developed the PraiseMoves® technique. Our foundation scripture is 1 Corinthians 6:20, “*For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.*” People who have been looking for a safe alternative to yoga have told me PraiseMoves is answered prayer. I also believe it can be a “witty invention” to win the lost.



PraiseMoves postures are integrated with corresponding Bible scriptures. For example, during a posture named **"The Altar"** (at left), we consider the scripture from Romans 12:1: *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service."*

Dr. Steven J. Scafidi, a chiropractor in New Jersey writes, "I have been experiencing terrific results using PraiseMoves and have been recommending it to my patients. I am thankful to Laurette for a program that combines Christ-centered worship with the physical benefits often attributed to yoga." (To read more Testimonies, please visit the PraiseMoves.com website.)

There are several PraiseMoves DVDs, and we are blessed to train people interested in becoming Certified PraiseMoves Instructors, starting their own Fitness Ministry to bring this Christian alternative to churches, gyms, health clubs and recreation centers across the U.S., Canada, in Europe and Australia.

More Information? Check out the links to articles from *Today's Christian Woman*, *Charisma* and CBN.com on our [home page](#).

Holly Robaina, in article entitled "Take a Pass on Yoga" on ChristianityToday.com does a marvelous job explaining the dangers of yoga, so-called "Christian yoga" and how PraiseMoves is definitely different. See: <http://www.praisemoves.com/ctarticle.mht>

Other links available with good info about yoga:

http://www.johnankerberg.org/Articles/article-index-y_1.html - has MANY fascinating articles

<http://www.watchman.org> A ministry of Christian discernment - powerful information

http://www.macgregorministries.org/cult_groups/yoga.html

"But wait a second, these postures sure *look a lot like yoga.*"

I've discovered there's not an *infinite* number of ways the human body can move. Some of the PraiseMoves postures resemble yoga postures while others do



not. For example, the 22 PraiseMoves Alphabetic postures are based on the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet (such as Lamed, at left).

If I may be so bold, I consider PraiseMoves to be a **redemptive work**. Realizing that “redeem” means to “buy back” or to “restore” something to the way it had once been, I like to think that moving our bodies to glorify God may not be such a new idea.

Two thousand years ago Paul wrote that “your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit” and that we are to “glorify God in our body and in our spirit, which are God’s” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). King David “danced before the Lord with all his might” (2 Samuel 6:14) around 2800 years ago. After the Exodus from Egypt and crossing the Red Sea on dry ground Moses’ sister



Miriam and the women danced and sang a song of victory to celebrate God’s triumph over their enemies about 3500 years ago (Exodus 15:20).

Critics tell me yoga is a “science” that goes back at least 5,000 years. If that is true, then I KNOW glorifying the God of the Bible in body, soul and spirit *must* go back further than that.

How can I possibly know that in light of the fact there doesn’t appear to be any references earlier than Exodus 15:20? Because I know that satan is not a creator. He is not capable of creating anything. God is the Creator (John 1:3 says of Jesus, “the Word made flesh” that “All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made” and “For by Him all things were created...visible and invisible... All things were created through Him and for Him” Colossians 1:16).

The enemy can only *twist* what God has already created to serve his own wicked purposes. In fact, the word *wicked* means “twisted,” like the wick on a candle or wicker furniture.

Destroy all music because of ungodly music?

Are we to throw all music out the window because of the ungodly music in the world? Or can we redeem the notes on the musical scale, the instruments, and the singers to offer worshipful praises to God? Of course we can!

Considering this, I like to think of PraiseMoves as a way to “untwist” these beneficial postures back to glorify God.

However, there are some among us who would question whether or not we can “redeem” rock music or country-western music. What do you think? Should we only sing hymns? I’m not being facetious either. Some believe we should.

What about Paul’s admonition to “*abstain from all appearance of evil*” (1 Thessalonians 5:22, KJV)? Is the appearance of evil to one the praise music of another?

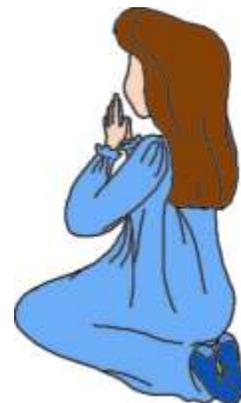
How about this interpretation from the Amplified Bible: “*Abstain from evil [shrink from it and keep aloof from it] in whatever form or whatever kind it may be*”?

Is this a fine distinction to be decided between each believer and the Lord (as opposed to certain topics over which most or all Christians agree)?

There are certain postures we will NOT do in PraiseMoves



I’ll admit there are certain postures and gestures we will NOT do in PraiseMoves because of their appearance. For example, did you know that the so-called “Praying Hands” gesture (putting one’s palms together with fingers pointing upward) is a *mudra* (Hindu prayer gesture) which pre-dates Christianity? Yes, even though we love the paintings of the little children with their hands in that position while kneeling beside their beds saying, “Now I lay me down to sleep...” It is still too



closely linked with the Hindu “*Namaste*” greeting (“I bow to the ‘divine’ within you”) and other Eastern religious practices, so we will not use it in PraiseMoves.



Besides, the Bible speaks of praising the Lord with **uplifted hands**, not palms pressed together: *"Thus will I bless Thee while I live; I will lift up my hands in Thy name"* (Ps. 63:4); *"Lift up our hands in the sanctuary, and bless the Lord"* (Ps. 134:2); and *"...and the lifting up of my hands as the evening offering"* (Ps. 141:2).

The PraiseMoves Posture "The Standing Cross" is at left with accompanying scripture: *"For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God"* 1 Corinthians 1:18.

Having spent 22 years in yoga, metaphysics and the "New Age" movement, I am like *Christianity Today* writer Holly Robaina in the "Take a Pass on Yoga" article (*mentioned above*). I have a "big nose" for anything even slightly metaphysical or leaning toward "mystical Christianity." Just like a recovered alcoholic or former smoker can smell alcohol on someone's breath or can tell if there's been smoking in the non-smoking hotel room, former New Agers like Holly and I are super-sensitive to anything even vaguely "New Age-y." As a recovered alcoholic and former smoker myself (by the *amazing* grace of God), I'm super-sensitive to those smells, too.

Radical Thought Alert!

The Postures are NOT the Foundation of PraiseMoves

What?! Isn't this all about the stretching postures? No. The foundation of PraiseMoves is neither exercise nor the stretching postures.

The FOUNDATION of PraiseMoves is the Word of God which we speak aloud or meditate upon.

The healthful stretching postures are merely a "witty invention" to get us more *into* the Word of God – and to get more of the Word of God into us!

If the truth be known, the stretching postures are not the foundation of yoga either (*as you see from its history detailed above*).

"My doctor told me to do yoga..."

"But yoga postures are beneficial!" I hear some say. "My doctor/chiropractor/physical therapist told me to start doing yoga and now my

shoulder/arthritis/fibromyalgia is better." Well, certainly. There is evidence that yoga postures are quite helpful for *physical* ailments. They can even be stress-relieving (although yoga cannot bring true **peace**—only God through a relationship with Jesus Christ can do that).

True, one could hardly imagine something entirely unfruitful to be much of a trap for anyone. Without physical benefits, I doubt people in the Western hemisphere would ever practice yoga. I don't argue with its *physical* benefits. If every time someone did yoga they said, "You know, I would rather have hit myself on the head with a brick," we wouldn't even be discussing yoga—few would do it!

May I throw a wild analogy at you? If one wanted to poison an animal, they wouldn't plop a glob of poison on a plate and yell, "Here, boy!" A more likely scenario would be to put the poison in the middle of a nice hunk of juicy meat or some other food they'd enjoy. "Hmmm. Looks good," thinks the animal. "Smells good. Sure gonna taste good." Yep, it sure tastes good. Ah, but at what price?

Did you know that 98% of rat poison is corn?

Only 2% is the arsenic that poisons the rat.

Hold on to your Helmet !!! (see Ephesians 6:10-17)

The true meaning of *hatha* yoga (the style available on most videos and at most gyms today - you know, the kind that's "only exercise"):

"The term Hatha Yoga has been commonly used to describe the practice of asana (postures). The syllable 'ha' denotes the pranic (vital) force governing the physical body and 'tha' denotes the chitta (mental) force thus making Hatha Yoga a catalyst to an awakening of the two energies that govern our lives. More correctly the techniques described in Hatha Yoga harmonize and purify the body systems and focus the mind in preparation for more advanced chakra and kundalini practices.

"Let us see the meaning of word Hatha, it is made up of Ha + Tha. "Ha" means Ida nadi, (moon principle) or left nostril and "tha" means Pingala Nadi (sun principle) or right nostril. Nadi means psychic passage of energy which can be compared with nerves in physical body. Hatha means balance of Ida and Pingala Nadis, or balancing of mental energy of Ida and Vital energy of Pingala Nadi. Ida Nadi can be compared with Parasympathetic Nervous system and Pingala nadi can be compared with Sympathetic Nervous System. So Hatha Yoga practices results in balancing the entire nervous system. The basic purpose of Hatha Yoga is to purify the Ida and Pingala Nadis and then uniting these 2 forces with the third Psychic Nadi Sushumna, which carries Kundalini at Ajna Chakra (eyebrow center)."

- Yogacharya Vishwas Mandlik, Vice Chancellor of Yoga at Vidya Gurukul (Yoga University).

"It's just exercise...right?" Or is it?

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