

# Yoga Defined & Personal Experiences

## Why a Christian ALTERNATIVE to Yoga?

<http://praisemoves.com/about-us/why-a-christian-alternative-to-yoga/#Yoga>

by Laurette Willis, Founder of PraiseMoves Fitness Ministry

Yoga—and now there’s even so-called “Christian yoga.” It’s everywhere. In ads for everything from IT 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.

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.*”

Merriam-Webster’s online dictionary defines yoga this way: “Hindu theistic philosophy teaching: the suppression of all activity of body, mind, and will in order that the *self may realize its distinction from them and attain liberation.*”

## Yoga in the Mainstream

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.

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.

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.

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...

<http://praisemoves.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/11/new-age-syncretism.jpg>

<http://praisemoves.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/11/new-age-syncretism.jpg> Another Hindu missionary welcomed into elite circles was Paramhansa Yogananda who started the Self-Realization Fellowship in Los Angeles.

Yogananda 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.

## **Personal Experience**

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 page.

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.”). Poses 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.

For an enlightening article and brief video on what the Bible says meditation REALLY is — and the dangers inherent within “creative visualization,” “contemplative prayer” and even what some are calling “Christian meditation” — please see: <http://praisemoves.com/2010/10/christian-meditation-what-is-it/>

## The Dangers of Yoga

(and what about Tai Chi?)

It seems the enemy has a counterfeit for almost everything the Lord offers. (NOTE: *When I use the phrase “the enemy” I am not referring to a person or group of people. Rather, “the enemy” refers to satan, the devil, the enemy of your soul. We love people. We hate sin and the author of it; the one Jesus calls “the thief” in John 10:10 and “a murderer” and “the father of lies” in John 8:44.*)

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.

### What is *Pranayama*?

According to one yoga website: “*Pranayama* forms a vital step in the path to ascendancy. (*i.e. liberation, freedom or salvation*) through Yoga. *Pranayama* is derived from 2 Sanskrit words – *Prana* (life force) and *Ayama* (control). Therefore, in its broadest description, *Pranayama* would mean the control of the flow of life force.”

In other words, *pranayama* involves manipulation of so-called life-force energy, and is part of the twisted “plan of salvation” through yoga.

In Paul’s letter to the church at Ephesus, he refers to the enemy of our soul as “*the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience*” (Eph. 2:2). “Air” in this

The yoga mudra (hand gesture or “gateway”) for Namaste (“I bow to the divine in you”), is a Hindu gesture that pre-dates Christianity. The Bible speaks of praying with uplifted hands or “hands spread up toward heaven” (1 Kings 8: 22 and 54; 1 Chronicles 6:13)

*“Let my prayer be set before You as incense, The lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice” Psalm 145:1*

instance does not mean the oxygen we breathe. Rather, Paul is referring to what some call the “second heaven” or “psychic arena.”

The first heaven is the atmosphere we can see (planets, sun, moon and stars). The third heaven is where God dwells (2 Cor. 12:2). Hence, the “second heaven” is that realm in-between, an atmosphere wherein angelic and demonic forces dwell (Daniel 10:10-13). Dabbling in this arena as if it were a playground is certainly not what we as believers are called to do.

It can be quite dangerous manipulating “life force energy.” Those who do so are moving into the realm of psychism, magic, and witchcraft—where the “*god of this world*” as Paul called him has “*blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them*” (2 Cor. 4:4).

[Be sure to read "**The True Meaning of Yoga**" at the end of this article by Yogacharya Vishwas Mandlik, Vice Chancellor of Yoga at Vidya Gurukul (Yoga University). He outlines the true meaning and purpose of Hatha Yoga, the form of yoga taught in most gyms, fitness centers and even churches.]

### **What About Tai Chi?**

Whenever you see the words *prana* (Hinduism), *chi* (Chinese, Tai Chi), *ki* (Japanese, martial arts), or *mana* (Hawaiian Huna religion), they are all referring to the same thing. Like yoga, Tai Chi and traditional martial arts involve similar manipulation of life force energy, thus opening the door to deceptive spiritual influences.

**PraiseMoves Scripture Sequences**, where we flow from one PraiseMoves posture to another as we recite verses of Scripture, may be considered “The Christian Alternative to Tai Chi!”

<http://praisemoves.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/11/yoga-relaxation.jpg>

### **Chanting and Out-of-Body Travel**

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 just exercise,” or “Yoga is a science. It is not religion.” But what do Hindus and true yogis say?

<http://praisemoves.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/11/time-magazine1.jpg>

**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*,” said Professor Tiwari of the Hindu University of America. You may read the full article from the Sept. 5, 2005 issue at: [“Stretching for Jesus” – TIME Magazine](#).

**From the article in TIME:**

*“‘Christian yoga is an oxymoron,’ agrees Laurette Willis of Tahlequah, Okla. She says yoga led her to dabble in a rootless New Age lifestyle until she became a Christian in 1987. Willis now speaks to Christian groups against yoga, offering instead a series of poses called PraiseMoves.”*

The same TIME magazine article describes the viewpoint of Pope Benedict XVI when he was Cardinal Ratzinger:

*“Catholics face a more formidable skeptic. In 1989 the Vatican issued a document saying the practice of Eastern traditions like yoga ‘can degenerate into a cult of the body,’ warning Catholics against mistaking yoga’s ‘pleasing sensations’ for ‘spiritual well-being.’ It was signed by then Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger—now Pope Benedict XVI. In a 2003 document the Vatican further distances itself from New Age practices, including yoga.”*

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.”

## **“Christian yoga” is an Oxymoron (no such thing)**

**People ask me, “Christian Yoga is okay, right?” Well, you tell me.**

Listen to the description of this book about “Christian Yoga Metaphysics” and tell me if you can spot anything Christian about it:

<http://praisemoves.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/11/christian-yoga-metaphysics.jpg>

***The Life and the Way: The Christian Yoga Metaphysics – by A.K. Mozumdar***

*“A. K. Mozumdar was the founder of the **Christian Yoga Society** and this book outlines much of its spiritual philosophy. East and West are brought together to allow those from both spiritual backgrounds to **enhance their growth and to possibly experience an all-pervading Oneness in the universe.** This is an important spiritual work that is capable of transforming an individual. From reading it, one may discover a unique path to follow and achieve spiritual peace of mind.”*

Uh-huh.

[http://praisemoves.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/11/christian\\_yoga\\_mag.jpg](http://praisemoves.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/11/christian_yoga_mag.jpg)

This “Father of Christian Yoga” lived from 1864-1953. Here’s an interesting quote from Mozumdar who obviously denies that Jesus came to earth in the flesh, as a man (a basic tenet of Christianity):

<http://praisemoves.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/11/A.Z.-Mozumdar.jpg>

*“If man thinks and acts, is not the thinker and actor God? If God is all life, then all lives are God. The creative power is the very nature of the being of the Creator; hence the creative power is God. Life is the Creator, and will never be reduced to the level of its own creation. This knowledge sets a man free.”*

No, A.K., knowledge of the truth that Jesus is the only Way, the Truth and the Life sets one free. I for one am SO grateful that Jesus, the King of Glory, lowered Himself and came to earth as a man, His own creation, that He could be the perfect sacrifice for mankind.

**So much for so-called “Christian Yoga”**

What did the apostle John under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit say about testing the spirits, whether they are of God or not?

*“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world”* (1 John 4:1-3).

<http://praisemoves.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/11/chrislam.bmp>

### **Have you heard of “Chrislam”?**

It’s supposedly Christianity mixed with the Moslem faith. Most Christians would agree that Christianity and Islam cannot be mixed. So, why are some so ready to believe one can mix Christianity with Hinduism?

**ChrIslam = Islam**, just as “Christian yoga” = yoga.

Christianity is a relationship, not a religion (although many have made a religion out of it). Relationship is God-made. Religion is man-made.

Note: I’ve been told the church sign photo at right is a fabrication. However, you can Google “Chrislam” and see where it is an emerging trend among those who seek to discredit the truth of God’s Word.

## **Yoga postures are offerings to Hindu gods?**

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

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

<http://praisemoves.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/11/dr.-george-alexander.jpg>

**George P. Alexander, Ph.D.**, who taught World Religions at Biola University, is a friend of our family. Born in Sri Lanka, George grew up in India, the birthplace of Hinduism and yoga. He told us that yoga poses are actually offerings to the 330 million Hindu gods.

*“Many Westerners who practice yoga today are unaware that the physical positions assumed in yoga symbolize a spiritual act: worshiping one of the many Hindu gods,”* Dr. Alexander said. *“To a Hindu, yoga is the outward physical expression of a deep spiritual belief. You cannot separate one from the other.”*

Since yoga is tied so strongly to Hinduism, can there be such a thing as “Christian yoga,” or would that be an oxymoron (a contradiction in terms)? Many practicing Hindus as well as Christians agree that since yoga IS Hinduism, the two cannot be combined.

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 poses 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.”*

## Where Yoga Leads (according to Hinduism)

<http://praisemoves.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/11/HinduismTodaymag.jpg>

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.

**New Age** is a combination of a number of religions and has as its foundation pantheism (the doctrine that all forces, manifestations, etc. of the universe are God; also, the worship of all gods) and astrology (the belief that the positions of the sun, moon, stars and planets guide or affect human affairs, and can foretell the future).

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.”

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."

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.

Maharishi Mahesh Yogi taught that through meditation, not salvation through Jesus Christ, "a sinner comes out of the field of sin and becomes a virtuous man." This is an example of the erroneous philosophy of "salvation by works."

## Consider the Example You Set

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 poses 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).

<http://praisemoves.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/11/ymca-yoga.jpg>

**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 at the YMCA (what does that 'C' stand for? Oh, yeah 'Christian'). Seems there's nothing wrong with it. But the Y is six miles from my house. I think I'll take that yoga class being offered down the street at the Ramalama-Ding-Dong Ashram" (**NOTE: Not its real name, but those who have been there know the place of which I speak.**)

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?

**What's wrong with this picture?** A young lady, perhaps in her 30s exclaimed to me recently, "The 'C' in YMCA stands for 'Christian'? I didn't know that!!!" That should be a clarion call to the YMCA/YWCA. Perhaps the wrong message is being broadcast.

## **Concerning Things offered to Idols...ouch.**

Keep in mind that yoga postures are "offerings to the 330 million Hindu gods," and Acts 15:29 admonishes us to "abstain from *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).

*"What am I saying then? That an idol is anything, or what is offered to idols is anything? Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice **they sacrifice to demons and not to God**, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; **you cannot partake of the Lord's Table and of the table of demons**. Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than He?" (1 Corinthians 10:19-23).*

### **Your Walk versus Your Witness**

While practicing yoga may not seem to have an adverse effect on your Christian walk, it may be affecting 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?

## “Yoga is Like Meth”???

Some may remember the great controversy stirred up by Rev. Albert Mohler of the Southern Baptist Seminary when he wrote in October 2010 that Christians who practice yoga “must either deny the reality of what yoga represents or **fail to see the contradictions between their Christian commitments and their embrace of yoga.**”

I stood up for Rev. Mohler and shared in an interview my take on his comments.

“I agree,” says Laurette Willis, Director of PraiseMoves Fitness Ministry. “I admire Rev. Mohler for taking a stand, and we can see from comments he has received that many have been angered by someone standing up for the Truth. “Yoga is like a drug to some,” she says. “I noticed that Mohler said he was ‘really surprised by the depth of the commitment to yoga found on the part of many who identify as Christians.’

“Something amazing happened to a Fitness Center owner in Texas a few years ago,” Laurette continues. “She and her husband wanted to get rid of the yoga classes in their 4 facilities in order to have their instructors teach PraiseMoves instead. She told me that some of her members were so incensed that their yoga ‘drug’ was being taken away that **it reminded her of people coming off Meth** when she worked as a drug rehab counsellor!

“The Fitness Center owner told me, ‘We felt convicted by the Lord to get rid of the yoga classes since we’re followers of Jesus Christ. We decided to replace the yoga with stretching/toning classes until our trainers were certified in PraiseMoves. But a number of the members went ballistic! I asked them what they liked so much about the yoga – and they told me the stretching and toning! I told them we had that, but no! They said they HAD to have their yoga. It was like a DRUG!’

“Amazing,” says Laurette. “That’s why we call PraiseMoves ‘The Christian ALTERNATIVE to yoga.’ The foundation is the Word of God we meditate upon when doing these stretching and strengthening postures. Bible-Jesus-the Word is ALL THE DRUG WE NEED!!!”

[http://praisemoves.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/11/PraiseMoves\\_LOGO-small.jpg](http://praisemoves.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/11/PraiseMoves_LOGO-small.jpg)

## The True Meaning of Hatha Yoga - it’s NOT what you think

<http://praisemoves.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/11/Vice-Chancellor.jpg>

*(Note: Hatha yoga is the style available on most DVDs and presented at most fitness centers, health clubs and sadly, even churches – you know, the kind that’s “only exercise”)*

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

“The term Hatha Yoga has been commonly used to describe the practice of asana (poses). 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).”

**“It’s just exercise...right?” Or is it?**