

## Introduction to Yoga by Amy Day

Is it vanity to care for my body? To really live inside of it?

At times I feel so preoccupied with my body: how is it feeling, what is it needing... Aren't I supposed to master it and be done with it? What about my debilitating back pain?

Being filled with the Spirit means that God's Spirit infuses us. By "us", I mean each individual's spirit, soul, (soul is mind, will and emotions) and body. This is the trinity of our whole being. Being filled with the Spirit does not fill a portion of our existence. It fills all of us, and that includes our body. Our triune existence is impossible to separate, just like our Triune God.

When our spirits are surrendered to His Spirit and His Spirit is lord over our souls and bodies, our whole person is conformed to God's truth and His intention for us. 1 Thessalonians 5:23,24 "may God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it."

How do we posture our whole beings in order to bring them into submission so that as we surrender, His reign is made manifest? Matthew 26:41 says "our spirits are willing, but our flesh (bodies) are weak."

The word Yoga means "Yoke" or "Union". The word "Yoke" is used 44 times in Scripture. Matthew 11:28–30 "come to me all you who are weary and heavy-burdened and I will give you rest. Take my Yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my Yoke is easy and my burden is light."

My personal experience is that the practice of yoga, "Yokes" my whole being to Christ. Yoga brings the body, soul and spirit together into one harmonious experience.

Yoga is not a series of artfully displayed bodily poses, just as Jesus was not merely a teacher and moral individual. The whole system of yoga is built on three main structures: movement, breathing, and meditation. Each of these moves inward and allows us to be effected from the inside out. The movements of yoga are designed to put pressure on the glandular systems of the body, which shuts down our fight-or-flight mode, and also shuts down stress, fear and worry in our bodies and souls. When our survival mode is shut down, we increase our body's efficiency and total health, and open our brain's pathways to the increased ability to receive love, compassion, and peace.

Breathing techniques are based on the concept that breath is the source of life in the body. Pneumos in Greek, tells us that "breath" is synonymous with life. God breathed us into being in Genesis 1:26, Jesus breathed on the disciples and said "receive the Holy Spirit" in John 20:22, and in Job 32:8 scriptures say it is "the spirit in a man, the breath of the almighty, that gives him understanding". By taking in more breath, and quality instead of quantity, we are taking in more of God's Spirit. By engaging the lower lobes of our lungs, we move from anxious shallow breathing to slow, deep breathing which deliberately creates more room in our bodies for God's Spirit to reside in us, effect us, and transform us. Maintaining fullness of breath and lung capacity is far more important than the intensity of the movement or depth of the pose. These two systems, movement and breathing, prepare and quiet the body and mind for meditation on Jesus Christ.

Meditation aligns our spirits with His Biblical truth in order to experience the indwelling Spirit of God.

- "I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways. I delight in your decrees and I will not neglect your word," Psalm 119:15.
- "Oh how I love your law, I meditate on it all day long", Psalm 119:97.
- "Be still and know that I am God. I will be exalted in the earth." Psalm 46:10
- "This is what the sovereign Lord, The Holy One of Israel says, 'in repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength'". Isaiah 30:15

No one knows when yoga began but it certainly predates written history. Stone-carvings depicting figures in yoga positions have been found in archeological sites in the Indus Valley dating back 5000 years or more. There is a common misconception that yoga is rooted in Hinduism. On the contrary, Hindu religious structures evolved much later and incorporated some of the practices of yoga.

The Holy Spirit compelled me to become an instructor with an organization called Holy Yoga in March 2011 after 8 years of practicing in order simply to alleviate back pain. Jesus my Healer has come through my yoga practice and miraculously I haven't needed any of the predicted treatments for my diagnosis in 2000. "Holy" Yoga essentially means "a union set apart from others". The mission statement of Holy Yoga is "to facilitate an experience that offers an opportunity to believers and non-believers alike to authentically connect to God through his word, worship and wellness."

Thank you for joining me on my journey. Father, Come! Jesus, Come! Spirit, Come!

## **Benefits of Yoga**

The benefits of yoga are physical, psychological, and spiritual in nature:

**PHYSICAL** - Yoga helps with flexibility, strength, balance, coordination, energy levels, circulation, cardiovascular endurance, and can combat common diseases like heart disease, diabetes, osteoporosis, asthma, chronic back pain, arthritis and high blood pressure.

**PSYCHOLOGICAL** - Yoga is neither competitive nor goal-oriented. It teaches you to honor your body where it is at that moment and push to your "edge", and turn your practice "inward". It helps with stress reduction, combats depression and other psychological conditions, improves mood, lowers anxiety and anger, improves self esteem and self awareness, and brings about a sense of psychological well-being and inner-peace.

**SPIRITUAL** - Yoga fosters a true connection with our creator and in Holy Yoga that connection is in our relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Yoga is not a religion, but can be used in a powerful, spiritual way, regardless of your religious beliefs, due to the body-mind-spirit connection of yoga.