

Genesis 3, Astrology, Zodiac, Occultic Practices, Gaming, Movies, Eastern Religions, Yoga & Reiki: How does God want us to respond to Satan's influences in our daily world?

There is a habit common among humans that many of us practice from time to time. This practice is called “ignoring things we don’t like and hoping they will go away”.

With minor aches and pains—that method often works. With leaks, debt, and mechanical problems it almost never works.

When we ignore problems with our health, with our homes, and with our cars—those problems usually worsen. People that bother us that we ignore and hope they go away works sometimes, and sometimes it doesn’t.

DON’T IGNORE THE DEVIL!

But when we enter into the realm of our spiritual life, spiritual health, and spiritual safety—**ignoring the Devil is the worst choice we can make!**

Paul warns Christ's church, more than any other New Testament writer, of the dangers of the Devil. Paul goes on to command every believer in the name and the authority of the Lord—to be aware of, ready for, and armed against the Devil.

If I could summarize all of Paul’s extensive teachings on Satan it would come down to one phrase: “***Don’t Ignore the Devil***”. Please turn with me to II Corinthians 2:11.

We all should regularly examine what we are doing each day in life and why.

Hold up all of your habits, desires, hobbies, spare time, recreation, sports, pursuits, collections, appetites, and all else to the scrutiny of God's Word. Listen to what John Piper says in his book “Finally Alive”:

O how jealous I am that the followers of Jesus be a Christ- exalting, Bible-saturated, discerning people. For example, I pray that you don’t just sign up for your local yoga class and not know what you are doing. Yoga is to the body what mantra is to the mouth. The two are rooted in the same worldview.

Take my own town as an example. When I go to the Minneapolis YWCA website and click on “fitness classes,” I find 22 references to yoga, including Beginning Yoga, MS Yoga, Youngster Yoga, Youth Dance and Yoga, and Yoga for Everybody.

One explanation says that in “mantra yoga” one “has to chant a word or a phrase until he/she transcends mind and emotions. In the process the super conscious is discovered and achieved¹.”

Then yoga itself is described like this:

Yoga focuses on harmony between mind and body. Yoga derives its philosophy from Indian metaphysical beliefs. The word yoga comes from the Sanskrit language and means union or merger. The ultimate aim of this philosophy is to strike a balance between mind and body and attain self-enlightenment. To achieve this, yoga uses movement, breath, posture, relaxation, and meditation in order to establish a healthy, lively, and balanced approach to life².

You were born again through the living and abiding word of God. This word is the gospel of Jesus Christ crucified and risen. Don't fall prey to another gospel. There is no other gospel, and there is no other path to God—or to ultimate well-being—than hearing, understanding, and believing the scandalous news of Jesus Christ in the gospel.

THERE IS A WAR SWIRLING WITHIN US

Today I remind you that we live on an active battlefield every minute of our earthly lives. Not only is there a cosmic war swirling around us:

Satan and his army of demons are the ultimate terrorist insurgency. They are able to always creep around us unnoticed because they are absolutely silent and completely invisible.

Yet they are more deadly to our spiritual lives than any truck bomber or suicide vest. Yet their invisibility and silence make them often ignored. That is why Paul tells us “Don't Ignore the Devil”!

Don't yield any ground in your life to the Devil by ignoring him.

Nothing in life is neutral, nothing in life is harmless. Everything in life is either for God or against Him. Everything is either promoting God's Glory or opposing it. Nothing is neutral when it comes to God; never forget that as you assess the daily patterns and habits of your life.

2 Corinthians 2:11 Lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices. (NKJV)

¹ <http://yoga.iloveindia.com/yoga-types/mantra-yoga.html>

² <http://yoga.iloveindia.com/what-yoga.html>

DON'T IGNORE THE DEVIL!

Why is this topic so important? Because of what God's Word has already told us. Here are a few anchors in the Word to orient our understanding.

What does Genesis 3 say is Satan's strategy?

Satan has a four-part attack plan on humans. We need to know, understand, and beware of that plan.

When we get saved whose family do we leave in order to become part of God's family?

John 8:44 (NKJV) You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.

What were we saved away from and unto?

Ephesians 2:1-10 (NKJV) And you He made alive, **who were dead** in trespasses and sins, 2 in which **you once walked** according to the course of **this world**, according to the **prince of the power of the air**, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, 3 **among whom also we all once conducted ourselves** in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. 4 But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast. 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

What does 1 John 5:19 say is Satan's present role?

1 John 5:19 (NKJV) We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one.

God has always been opposed to all things occultic:

Deuteronomy 17:2-3 "If there is found among you, within any of your gates which the Lord your God gives you, a man or a woman who has been wicked in the sight of the Lord your God, in transgressing His covenant, 3 who has **gone and served other gods and worshiped them, either the sun or moon or any of the host of heaven**, which I have not commanded,

Deuteronomy 18:9-14 "When you come into the land which the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the **abominations of those nations**. 10 There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire,

or one who practices **witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, 11 or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead.** 12 For all who do these things are an abomination to the Lord, and because of these abominations the Lord your God drives them out from before you. 13 You shall be blameless before the Lord your God. 14 For these nations which you will dispossess listened to soothsayers and diviners; but as for you, the Lord your God has not appointed such for you.

1 Chronicles 10:13 So Saul died for his unfaithfulness which he had committed against the Lord, because he did not keep the word of the Lord, and **also because he consulted a medium for guidance.**

Isaiah 8:19 And when they say to you, “Seek those who are **mediums and wizards, who whisper and mutter,**” should not a people seek their God? Should they seek the **dead on behalf of the living?**

Acts 13:8-10 But **Elymas the sorcerer** (for so his name is translated) withstood them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. 9 Then Saul, who also is called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him 10 and said, “**O full of all deceit and all fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord?**”

Acts 19:18-19 And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds. 19 Also, many of those who had **practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all.** And they counted up the value of them, and it totaled fifty thousand pieces of silver.

SATAN’S FOUR LIES - GENESIS 3

Genesis 3:1-5 Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, “Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’” 2 And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; 3 “but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.’ ” 4 Then the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. 5 “For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”
NKJV

ATTACK ONE: DOUBT GOD’S WORD (3:1A)

Doubting God is the goal of the devil. If he can get his foot in the door by making us doubt, the rest of his plan quickly can follow. Without the foundation of God's Word believers are adrift and fall prey to every wind of doctrine and get tossed to and fro.

When young people are first exposed to secular scientific theories (with the God of Scripture left out), Satan always plants this seed of doubt in their minds: *"Has God indeed said ...?"* (3:1a). Since listening to the voice of Jesus always involves the Bible, Satan tries to persuade us that God's Word is just like any other book. "Oh," he says, "the Bible is nice, perhaps helpful, but it is not absolute."

Satan's ultimate plan is to keep us from regular contact with the Lord by any one of a variety of tools he employs: questioning the authority of God's Word, avoiding the teaching of God's Word, or neglecting the reading of God's Word.

The Lesson: **You doubt God when you doubt His Word.**

Let me ask you personally, is Satan's flaw showing up in your life this week?

Have you neglect God's Word to some degree this week?

What was it Jesus said back to Satan when faced with this very flaw in Matthew 4:4?

Matthew 4:4 But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'"

Jeremiah said in 15:16 Thy words were found and I ate them, And Thy words became for me a joy and the delight of my heart; For I have been called by Thy name, O LORD God of hosts.

Jesus' words at His temptation speak to all of us right now.

If it is a choice between breakfast or Bible reading—God's Word should win.

If it is the choice between TV or your worship and Scripture time—God's Word should win.

If you are having to choose between God's Word and sports, amusements, games, hobbies, web browsing, email writing, Facebook postings, or whatever—God's Word should win!

Are you doubting, by neglect, that God's Word is more important than even eating?

ATTACK TWO: DOUBT GOD'S GOODNESS (3:1B)

Satan planted seeds of doubt in Eve when he said, "Did God really say, *You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?*" (3:1b). He wanted her to doubt God and His goodness. He likewise bombards each of us by whispering lies such as:

God is trying to hold out on you ... He is robbing you of some good times ... He is out of touch with your needs ... He missed that disaster you just went through ... He messed up on how He made you ... God means well, but since He doesn't quite have everything under control, that makes Him not good.

Satan's fiery darts of lies are reserved for our most vulnerable moments. For instance, when a baby is born who is not fully functioning, or a young person's life is cut off in what seems to be a tragic and untimely death, a normal reaction is to cry out, "Why, Lord?" Things like this simply make no sense to our finite minds, so we may be tempted to doubt God's goodness.

The Lesson: **You doubt God when you doubt God's goodness.**

Another example is we idolize those who grace magazine covers or are otherwise in the social spotlight. At some point, however, they have to come to grips with the fact that we will never look like those people. That realization can lead a person to despise their own features and question God's goodness by thinking:

Why did God make me this way?

When the storms of life are at their fiercest, don't give in to thoughts like this that challenge your faith:

Is God really in control? Why is He letting this happen to me? Where is He? Is He really good?

At such times, watch out because Satan acts like a prowling lion (1 Peter 5:8), and you must not give the devil a place to land in your life (Ephesians 4:27).

As we turn to Ephesians 4:25-31, look at all the sins Paul lists that can open up a 'landing spot' for the Devil, which opens our minds and lives to Satan's influence. These areas will always hinder our walk in Christ. Satan lurks at the door of your mind, so do not let him in!

ATTACK THREE: DOUBT GOD'S AUTHORITY (3:4)

In Satan's next all-out attack to deceive Eve, he says point blank: "*You will not surely die*" (3:4). Satan loves it when we doubt God! He wants us to believe that God is not in charge, that God is not interested in our choices, and that God will not hold us accountable for our deeds. When that happens, every man or woman does whatever seems right in his or her own eyes. That is the hallmark of our world, the attitude that says—take charge of your own life, and be all you can or want to be!

The Lesson: **You doubt God when you doubt God's authority.**

Never forget that Satan's masterful scheme is to make you doubt, reject, and become deafened to the voice of Jesus. Because you are not listening to the voice of Jesus when you think wrongly about God, daily ask yourself: *Whose voice am I listening to?*

ALL RELIGIONS OF THE WORLD APPEAL TO SELF-EFFORT

If one carefully studies the various religions and cults of the world, he will soon discover that, without exception, they are founded on some form of human effort and works righteousness. And without exception, all religions and cults that deal with the supernatural trace their origins to angels, extraterrestrial creatures, or other spirit beings. For example, the angel Moroni is said to have presented the Book of Mormon on golden plates to Joseph Smith; the angel Gabriel supposedly dictated the Koran to Muhammad; and it was on supposed angelic revelations to Mrs. Herbert Armstrong that Armstrongism (the Worldwide Church of God) was founded. In addition to that, every human religion and cult denies the Trinity, denies the sole divinity of Jesus among men, and denies His unique and complete sacrificial atonement for man's sin³.

Listen to Al Mohler of Southern Seminary⁴:

There is nothing wrong with stretching exercises, and Christians are called to meditate upon the Word of God, but the practices of Yoga, both historic and current, are not about mere stretching.

The Subtle Body – Should Christians Practice Yoga?

When Christians practice yoga, they must either deny the reality of what yoga represents or fail to see the contradictions between their Christian commitments and...

Some questions we ask today would simply baffle our ancestors. When Christians ask whether believers should practice yoga, they are asking a question that betrays the strangeness of our current cultural moment — a time in which yoga seems almost mainstream in America.

It was not always so. No one tells the story of yoga in America better than Stefanie Syman, whose recent book, *The Subtle Body: The Story of Yoga in America*, is a masterpiece of cultural

³ MacArthur, John F., *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary*, (Chicago: Moody Press) 1983.

⁴ Al Mohler blog: <http://www.albertmohler.com/2010/09/20/the-subtle-body-should-christians-practice-yoga/>

history. Syman, an engaging author who is also a fifteen-year devotee of yoga, tells this story well.

Her book actually opens with a scene from this year's annual White House Easter Egg Roll. President Barack Obama made a few comments and then introduced First Lady Michelle Obama, who said: "Our goal today is just to have fun. We want to focus on activity, healthy eating. We've got yoga, we've got dancing, we've got storytelling, we've got Easter-egg decorating."

Syman describes the yoga on the White House lawn as "sanitized, sanctioned, and family-friendly," and she noted the rather amazing fact that a practice once seen as so exotic and even dangerous was now included as an activity sufficiently safe and mainstream for children.

In her words:

There certainly was no better proof that Americans had assimilated this spiritual discipline. We had turned a technique for God realization that had, at various points in time, enjoined its adherents to reduce their diet to rice, milk, and a few vegetables, fix their minds on a set of, to us, incomprehensible syllables, and self-administer daily enemas (without the benefit of equipment), to name just a few of its prerequisites, into an activity suitable for children. Though yoga has no coherent tradition in India, being preserved instead by thousands of gurus and hundreds of lineages, each of which makes a unique claim to authenticity, we had managed to turn it into a singular thing: a way to stay healthy and relaxed.

In her book, Syman tells the fascinating story of how yoga was transformed in the American mind from a foreign and "even heathen" practice into a cultural reality that is widely admired and practiced.

In telling this story, Syman documents the ties between yoga and groups or movements such as the Transcendentalists and New Thought — movements that sought to provide a spirituality that would be a clear alternative to biblical Christianity. She traces the influence of leading figures such as Swami Vivekananda and Swami Prabhavananda, along with Pierre Bernard and the now lesser-known Margaret Woodrow Wilson. Each of these figures played a role in the growing acceptance of yoga in America, but most were controversial at the time — some extremely so.

Syman describes yoga as a varied practice, but she makes clear that yoga cannot be fully extricated from its spiritual roots in Hinduism and Buddhism. She is also straightforward in explaining the role of sexual energy in virtually all forms of yoga and of ritualized sex in some yoga traditions. She also explains that yoga "is one of the first and most successful products of globalization, and it has augured a truly post-Christian, spiritually polyglot country."

Reading *The Subtle Body* is an eye-opening and truly interesting experience. To a remarkable degree, the growing acceptance of yoga points to the retreat of biblical Christianity in the culture. Yoga begins and ends with an understanding of the body that is, to say the very least, at odds with the Christian understanding. Christians are not called to empty the mind or to see the human body as a means of connecting to and coming to know the divine. Believers are called to

meditate upon the Word of God — an external Word that comes to us by divine revelation — not to meditate by means of incomprehensible syllables.

Nevertheless, a significant number of American Christians either experiment with yoga or become adherents of some yoga discipline. Most seem unaware that yoga cannot be neatly separated into physical and spiritual dimensions. The physical *is* the spiritual in yoga, and the exercises and disciplines of yoga are meant to connect with the divine.

Douglas R. Groothuis, Professor of Philosophy at Denver Seminary and a respected specialist on the New Age Movement, warns Christians that yoga is not merely about physical exercise or health. “All forms of yoga involve occult assumptions,” he warns, “even *hatha* yoga, which is often presented as a merely physical discipline.” While most adherents of yoga avoid the more exotic forms of ritualized sex that are associated with tantric yoga, virtually all forms of yoga involve an emphasis on channeling sexual energy throughout the body as a means of spiritual enlightenment.

Stefanie Syman documents how yoga was transformed in American culture from an exotic and heathen practice into a central component of our national cult of health. Of course, her story would end differently if Americans still had cultural access to the notion of “heathen.”

The nation of India is almost manically syncretistic, blending worldviews over and over again. But, in more recent times, America has developed its own obsession with syncretism, mixing elements of worldviews with little or no attention to what each mix means. Americans have turned yoga into an exercise ritual, a means of focusing attention, and an avenue to longer life and greater health. Many Americans attempt to deny or minimize the spiritual aspects of yoga — to the great consternation of many in India.

When Christians practice yoga, they must either deny the reality of what yoga represents or fail to see the contradictions between their Christian commitments and their embrace of yoga. The contradictions are not few, nor are they peripheral. The bare fact is that yoga is a spiritual discipline by which the adherent is trained to use the body as a vehicle for achieving consciousness of the divine. Christians are called to look to Christ for all that we need and to obey Christ through obeying his Word. We are not called to escape the consciousness of this world by achieving an elevated state of consciousness, but to follow Christ in the way of faithfulness.

There is nothing wrong with physical exercise, and yoga positions in themselves are not the main issue. But these positions are teaching postures with a spiritual purpose. Consider this — if you have to meditate intensely in order to achieve or to maintain a physical posture, it is no longer merely a physical posture.

The embrace of yoga is a symptom of our postmodern spiritual confusion, and, to our shame, this confusion reaches into the church. Stefanie Syman is telling us something important when she writes that yoga “has augured a truly post-Christian, spiritually polyglot country.” Christians who practice yoga are embracing, or at minimum flirting with, a spiritual practice

that threatens to transform their own spiritual lives into a “post-Christian, spiritually polyglot” reality. Should any Christian willingly risk that?

ATTACK FOUR: DOUBT GOD'S PLAN (3:5)

In Genesis 3:5 Satan blocked the Creator's voice when he said "... *Your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.*" From the very beginning, Satan has sought to convince mankind that his way is better than God's. Thus he tries to entice us with his own plan for how we can achieve immortality, glory, and happiness. How does Satan do that? He tries to solidly plant this thought in our minds:

Abandon all those restraints—just let go and work out your own plan for pleasure! The

Lesson: **You doubt God when you doubt His plan for you.**

Satan loves it when he gets us to doubt God and His plan! The devil's scheme is to plant thoughts that God's way is too restrictive, but his way allows freedom to pursue whatever lusts will bring the greatest pleasure. In fact, if Satan were to summarize his plan for us as a billboard ad, it would probably read:

Go for the gusto!

You only go around once!

Get your gratification now.

Satan delights in whispering to us: *Lust won't wait, so lust for what you want—and take it every chance you get!* That is exactly what Adam and Eve did when they gave in to their desire for pleasure (Genesis 3:6). Thus the horrible precipitous slide down into sin began, as these verses reveal:

*Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked And **they heard the sound of the Lord God** walking in the garden ..., and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God ...* (Genesis 3:7-8, emphasis added).

Before this awful day, Adam and Eve had been drawn to the voice of the Lord, and responded to Him. They both had longed to talk with their Creator and tell Him of their discoveries. They loved to ask Him questions about His universe and the garden they lived in. But now they discovered that His voice repelled them, so they hid among the trees of the garden. Then God—this Jesus who came "*to seek and to save that which was lost*"—had to become the seeking One (Luke 19:10).

The solution is that we need to understand:

GOD'S FOUR SPIRITUAL LAWS:

For every one of Satan's spiritual flaws, God counters with a positive and powerful law. Therefore, He has *four spiritual laws* that destroy Satan's *four spiritual flaws*.

You CAN Trust God's Word: *Forever, O Lord, Your word is settled in heaven* (Psalm 119:89). God's Word has never been proven to be in error scientifically, morally, or historically. God's Word is the only thing that you can stake your life on! Say it with me, "I WILL trust God's Word!"

You CAN Rest in God's goodness: *Truly God is good ... to such as are pure in heart* (Psalm 73:1). God is indeed good, and He has revealed himself to be so. He always makes good decisions! He made you well; you are a beautiful work of art, created in Christ Jesus for good works (Ephesians 2:10). He made you for His glory, so never wonder why He has allowed something to happen in your life; trust His goodness and rest in that truth. Say it with me, "I WILL Rest in God's Goodness!"

You CAN Submit to God's authority: *... Submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you* (James 4:7). Resist Satan's lies; resist his desire to make you rebel, and he will flee from you. Say it with me, "I WILL Submit to God's Authority!"

You CAN Follow God's plan: *Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths* (Proverbs 3:5-6). As soon as we head *away* from the Lord to follow after our own understanding, we are heading *toward* Satan's path. Satan always moves us away from God's Word, so we need to listen to the voice of Jesus in His Word! Say it with me, "I WILL FOLLOW God's Plan!"

To help all of us not ignore the Devil, think through how God has revealed Satan and what that implies as to his attacks upon us. We studied in-depth the top dozen or so ways that Satan is at work against us as believers this morning. Do you remember them?

DON'T IGNORE THE FATHER OF LIES WHO WANTS TO SNATCH THE WORD OF GOD FROM YOUR MIND.

He is revealed in John 8:44 "You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.)

DON'T IGNORE THE EVIL ONE WHO WANTS YOU TO THINK LITTLE-BY-LITTLE THAT SIN IS NOT SO BAD.

He is revealed in Matthew 6:13 NASB 'And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

DON'T IGNORE THE UNHOLY ONE WHO WANTS YOU TO SLOWLY LEARN TO LAUGH AT SIN ON TELEVISION AND IN THE MOVIES.

He is revealed in I John 2:13 'wicked one' I write to you, fathers, Because you have known Him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, Because you have overcome the wicked one. I write to you, little children, Because you have known the Father.)

DON'T IGNORE THE DECEIVER WHO WANTS TO DESTROY YOUR CONSCIENCE BIT-BY-BIT SO IT WILL NO LONGER WARN YOU.

He is revealed in II Corinthians 11:3 But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

Don't ignore *the tempter* (as he is revealed in I Thessalonians 3:5 For this reason, when I could no longer endure it, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter had tempted you, and our labor might be in vain.) *wants to entertain you so often with sin so that you won't think sin is as evil as sin really is.*

DON'T IGNORE *THE ADVERSARY OF GOD* WHO WANTS TO *DROWN* YOU IN A SEA OF SIN SO THAT YOU BECOME VERY TOLERANT OF IT.

He is revealed in Revelation 12:9 so the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

Don't ignore *the one who shoots flaming darts* (as he is revealed in Ephesians 6:16 above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.) *wants to fill your mind with doubts, lies, immorality, and false doctrine.*

1. Don't ignore *the murderer from the beginning* (as he is revealed in John 8:44 "You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.) *wants to addict you to violence, condition you to enjoying killing and bloodshed through games and movies.*
2. Don't ignore *the devouring lion* (as he is revealed in I Peter 5:8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.) *wants to debilitate your will and get you to do things you shouldn't do.*
3. Don't ignore *the fallen, warped, and twisted one* (as he is revealed in Isaiah 14:12 "How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, You who weakened the nations!) *wants to twist your thinking by putting sinful ideas to appealing music.*
4. Don't ignore *the counterfeiter of truth* (as he is revealed in II Corinthians 11:14 And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.) *wants to confuse your emotions by corrupting your desires and drawing your affections to the wrong things.*
5. Don't ignore *the original idolater and covetous one* (as he is revealed in Isaiah 14:13-14 For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north; 14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.' [He coveted what wasn't his but God's.]) *wants to get you drooling over stuff, to the neglect of your family life, church life, and spiritual life—in order to get it; and then he wants darken you with discouragement once you get it because you will only want more.*

So those are the elements of the war swirling within us we must not ignore.

Satan never sleeps, never stops stalking each of God's children.

But, as we turn onward to II Corinthians 10:4, Paul uses a Greek word that defines Satan's strategy we must not ignore.

*2 Corinthians 10:4 for the weapons of our **warfare** are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.*

The word *warfare* in 2 Corinthians 10:4 means "campaign." Paul explains that he was not simply involved in some little skirmish while ministering in

Corinth; he defines Satan's attack on him as just one little piece of a highly organized and relentless campaign.

Satan and his demons are alive, awake, and at work relentlessly, tirelessly, and devastatingly 24/7 as the ultimate spiritual terrorists. When you think about the safety of your life, home, and loved ones never ignore the reality of the powers of hell always trying to destroy the work of God (Matt. 16:18). Don't ignore the devil, and don't yield any ground to the enemy, not even one inch!

There are seven targets that God's Word describes as Satan's prime focus. These are the places in our lives where he is most at work. As we look at these seven areas, we will find that they parallel the seven pieces of armor that Paul commanded all of us to wear as believers.

So first, let's walk through the target list of Satan, laid down in the New Testament; and then we can match up and see how to wear and use our armor designed by God, and issued for constant use to every believer.

Guard the Targets of Satan's Attack

1. We don't ignore the Devil when we remember that ***Satan uses his mind to overpower our minds and has a great advantage if our minds are not protected by captivity to Christ. Satan can trick believers who listen to his lies into losing their focus upon Christ.*** [That is why Paul says, "I command you to wear your helmet]

*2 Corinthians 2:11 "Lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his **devices** [noema `devices, schemes, mind' 3540) ."*

"Devices", along with the words for "take advantage" and "ignorant" in this verse, strongly implies that Satan targets the believer's mind; but God has provided protection by unmasking Satan's schemes in Scripture, along with providing the counteracting truth⁵.

The word translated devices is actually the word usually translated "mind" everywhere else in the New Testament. Paul says don't be ignorant, don't

⁵ John F. MacArthur, Jr., *The MacArthur Study Bible*, (Dallas: Word Publishing) 1997.

IGNORE the devil. What part of the Devil are we to watch out for? Guard against his powerful mind.

This and similar passages of the Word of God teach that Satan is a personal being; that the great systematic theologian Charles Hodge once said *"he exerts great influence over people's minds; that although he is finite (and therefore not everywhere present), he nevertheless works on people's minds generally and not merely on those in any one place. His powers of intelligence and agency must, therefore, be unimaginable. No individual and no community can ever be sure that he is not plotting their destruction"*⁶.

Satan had the greatest created mind in the universe. His mental powers are so great that even the Apostle Paul says, "Don't ignore what he has the capability to do". Satan has such a high-powered mind he is capable of jamming our signals, distorting our minds, and basically using any means to distract and distance us from God.

❖ What is the lesson for us from II Corinthians 2:11?

In the context of the entire chapter it is, beware of Satan's powerful, mental influence in the realm of his "accusations" that makes us believers feel our case is hopeless when we have sinned.

The Holy Spirit convicts us of sin so that we will confess it and turn to Christ for cleansing; but Satan accuses us of sin so that we will despair and give up. **Solution:** thank Jesus right now for becoming sin for you, bearing your sin away forever. Tell Him you believe and thank Him for your salvation He purchased. That is how we tighten the strap of our helmet of salvation!

Now, turn to II Corinthians 11:3 where we see Paul using the same word "noema" as he enlarges upon our need as believers to keep our heads (our minds) protected from the work of Satan. Here we see that we must not ignore the Devil's attempts to "corrupt" our minds as believers. We are to walk with Christ in "simplicity" which means single minded obedience; but that desire can get corrupted by Satan's influence upon us.

⁶ Hodge, Charles, *2 Corinthians: The Crossway Classic Commentaries*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books) 1997.

*2 Corinthians 11:3 But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness [panourgia (3834) 5x craftiness, trickery], so **your minds may be corrupted** from the simplicity that is in Christ.*

Paul here compared the church in Corinth to **Eve**. Instead of resisting the devil's inducement to disobedience (as James 4:7 and 1 Peter 5:9 command us as believers to do) Eve listened and succumbed (as we saw last week in Gen. 3:1-6). The serpent enticed her by his **craftiness** (*panourgia*, "trickery"; as in 2 Cor. 4:2). Each time we, like Eve, listen to Satan's lies, we become guilty of disobedience to God and disloyalty to Christ; and are no longer single mindedly loving and obeying Him⁷.

Satan's focus is on the mind, he is a liar and tries to get us to listen to his lies, ponder them, and then believe them. Remember what he did with Eve in Genesis 3:1-5. First, he *questioned* God's word ("Yea, hath God said?"), then he *denied* God's word ("Ye shall not surely die!"), and then he *substituted his own lie* ("Ye shall be as gods").⁸

Note the following "mind war" Satan is capable of. This is the New Testament usage of the Greek work in v. 11 'noema'.

Satan blinds minds: *2 Corinthians 4:4 whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.*

Satan corrupts minds: *2 Corinthians 11:3 But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.*

Jesus wants to captivate your mind: *2 Corinthians 10:5 casting down arguments (NKJV) [speculations (NASB); arguments (NIV); imaginations (KJV)] and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, **bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ**, (NKJV)*

Jesus wants to guard your mind: *Philippians 4:7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, **will guard your hearts and your minds** in Christ Jesus.*

⁷ John F. MacArthur, Jr., *The MacArthur Study Bible*, (Dallas: Word Publishing) 1997.

⁸ Wiersbe, Warren W., *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books) 1997.

Beware of allowing Satan to corrupt your mind. You have if you are not single-minded for Christ. Satan can corrupt your mind, his mind is super-powerful yours apart from Christ is no match.

Solution: repent of any corruption as in any double-mindedness (living one way here, another way there, and so on—invites Satan’s corruption); and then ask for Christ's ‘simplicity’ which means “single-mindedness”. Christ's desires for our minds is that we avoid that dangerous tendency we all have of compartmentalizing our lives; God wants to fill all of life; **Christ's gracious Lordship wants to permeate every room of our life.**

2. We don’t ignore the Devil when we remember that **Satan can appear to be a messenger from God (angel of light) when he and his servants masquerade themselves.** metaschematizo (3345) 5x “transform, masquerade, changing the outward form” [That is why Paul says, “I command you to keep on your belt of truth]

*2 Corinthians 11:13-15 For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ.14 And no wonder! For **Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.**15 Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.*

Don’t ignore the reality that Satan has always is peddling a counterfeit gospel (Gal. 1:6–12) that involves a different savior and a different spirit. The *preachers* of this false gospel (and they are with us yet today) are described in 2 Corinthians 11:13–15. Instead of being empowered by the Spirit, these ministers are energized by Satan. Three times, Paul used the word *transform* in referring to their work (see 2 Cor. 11:13–15). This Greek word simply means “to disguise, to masquerade.” There is a change on the outside, but there is no change on the inside. Satan’s workers, like Satan himself, never appear in their true character; they always wear a disguise and hide behind a mask⁹.

If we carefully study the various religions and cults of the world, we soon discover that each are founded on some variety of human effort and works righteousness. All religions and cults that have any supernatural elements,

⁹ Wiersbe, Warren W., *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books) 1997.

also trace their origins to angels, extraterrestrial creatures, or other spirit beings.

For example, the angel Moroni is said to have presented the Book of Mormon on golden plates to Joseph Smith; the angel Gabriel supposedly dictated the Koran to Mohammad; and it was on supposed angelic revelations to Mrs. Herbert Armstrong that Armstrongism (the Worldwide Church of God) was founded.

In addition to that, every human religion and cult denies the Deity of Christ, denies the tri-unity of Father, Son, and Spirit; and denies Christ's substitutionary and complete sacrificial atonement for man's sin.

The only protection is wearing the 'belt of truth' as Paul tells us is our armor. Study God's Word the source of truth, then know the truth, remind yourself of the truth, teach others the truth and defend the truth.

3. We don't ignore the Devil when we remember *that **Satan looks for and uses landing places like anger, lying, pride, and lust.*** (5117) *topos* "any spot, place, or position" [That is why Paul says, "I command you to keep your *sword always ready*]

Ephesians 4:27 nor give place to the devil.

Anger can give Satan great power over us, as it furnishes a motive to yield to his evil suggestions. With the article (**the devil**) this always means Satan, the great accuser, the prince of the demons or fallen angels, who is the great opposer of God and seducer of men, against whose schemes we are commanded to be constantly on our guard.

When anger begins to control the believer, rather than the believer being under Christ's control, the devil gets **a foothold** (lit., "a place") an opportunity for leading that Christian into further sin.

According to Jesus, anger is the first step toward murder (Matt. 5:21-26), because anger gives the devil a foothold in our lives, and Satan is a murderer (John 8:44). Satan hates God and God's people, and when he finds a believer with the sparks of anger in his heart, he fans those sparks, adds fuel to the fire.

What are some of the Footholds or Landing Places

for the Devil?

I spoke at a retreat last month at GLM, and it was fascinating to watch the rock wall climbers conquer that wall—one small foothold and handhold at a time. They could never make it rapidly, but feeling along for a spot to place a foot and then stretching out and feeling for a firm handhold—they clambered and conquered that wall. So any hand and foot holds left unguarded in our lives become Satan's spots to slowly overwhelm us.

When Paul taught the Ephesian believers about the strategies of Satan in Acts 19:19-20, they collected and burned all of the objects associated with demonic and satanic contact. Do you remember how Paul taught them to rid their lives of these dangerous areas that invite Satan's influence over our lives?

Acts 19:19-20 And many of those who practiced magic brought their books together and began burning them in the sight of all; and they counted up the price of them and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. 20 So the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing.

Have you carefully avoided any of these snares of the devil?

Here is a brief list of the places believers can actually contact and get defiled by exposure to Satan and his army.

- IMAGES: ***Worshiping any image*** is a place for demon snares or contact. That is the most literal and obvious kind of a place for demon intrusion, the kind so frequently denounced in the Old Testament. It is the kind in which a person makes an image with his own hands and then "falls down before it and worships; he also prays to it and says, 'Deliver me, for thou art my god'" (Isaiah 44:17). Even statues or other images of Christ are not to be revered or worshiped. Only Christ is to be worshiper, not likenesses of Him. They do not represent Jesus Christ, no matter what our claims and intentions are. "God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:24). Even non-liturgical Christians should be on guard, whether in public worship or private devotions, about associating any place, picture, or pattern of worship too closely with God. It is easy for such a thing to come between us and Him, though we may think it helps draw us closer.

- ANGELS: **Worshipping angels** is a place for demon snares or contact. Paul warns, "Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels" (Col. 2:18). When, overcome with awe, John fell at the feet of the angel who was speaking to him, the angel said, "Do not do that; I am a fellow servant of yours and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus; worship God" (Rev. 19:10). Angels are created beings and, whether holy or fallen, are not to be venerated or worshiped.
- DEMONS: **Worshipping demons** is a place for demon snares or contact, and is closely associated with worshipping images, behind which are often demons. In Satan cults demons are worshiped directly. Speaking of the Tribulation, John foretells that "The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, so as not to worship demons, and the idols of gold and of silver and of brass and of stone and of wood" (Rev. 9:20).
- DEAD PEOPLE: **Worshipping dead people** is a place for demon snares or contact. Referring to a place for demon intrusion that Israel learned from Moab, the psalmist wrote, "They joined themselves also to Baal-peor, and ate sacrifices offered to the dead. Thus they provoked Him to anger with their deeds; and the plague broke out among them" (Ps. 106:28–29). We do not worship human beings, whether they are alive or dead, saintly or otherwise. Even the great heroes of Scripture—such as Abraham, Moses, David, the prophets, Mary, or the apostles—are never to be worshiped. That is a place for demon intrusion.
- SELFISHNESS: **Supreme loyalty in our heart to anything other than God** is a place for demon snares or contact. Every person is tempted with ambitions, desires, possessions, recognition, and a host of other such things that easily can become idols. "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also," Jesus said (Matt. 6:21). The greatest heart treasure, or heart idol, is self.
- GREED: **Covetousness** is a place for demon snares or contact. Those who covet or are greedy worship at the shrine of materialism, one of the most popular and powerful idols of our day. But Paul says, "For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God" (Eph. 5:5; cf. Col. 3:5). Acts 5:3 But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan

filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself? (NKJV)

- LUST: ***Inordinate desire, or lust***, is a place for demon snares or contact. Paul speaks of “enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things” (Phil. 3:18–19). The person whose mind, desires, longings, and appetites are set on fleshly things is an idolater. The feeding of one's mind on the lewd information and photographs so widely and easily available gives a ground of entrance for the demons of sensuality.
- AMUSEMENTS: ***Intentionally exposing your mind to satanic ideas and stories*** must be constantly avoided as a place of demonic snares or contact. Some examples are:
 1. Movies that follow the theme of Satan and his demons.
 2. Science fiction that portrays superhuman powers available from cosmic sources leave unguarded minds open to endless fantasies about what if this may be true, and thus a conflict with the authority of God's Word.
 3. Television programs dealing with the occult directly or indirectly.
 4. Music that popularizes demonic activities, through satanic words and occultic mantras.
 5. Plays promoting contact with demons.
 6. Games which encourage contact with demons and their related activities should be avoided and burned! (This is the scriptural method of dealing with all such things that offend God, grieve His Spirit, and defile and ensnare us as believers.)
 7. Actual Occult Practices (these are things which bring with them demonic contact): black magic, astrology, fetishes and talismans, fortune-telling, séance meetings, witchcraft, palmistry, spiritism, ESP (extra-sensory perception), pictures of witches and occult propaganda, voodoo dolls, candles with occult significance, incense, excessive superstition, religious practices that highlight the emotional, cults, Satan worship, tarot cards, Ouija boards, crystal balls, black cubes and related occult practices.

When Paul taught the Ephesian believers about the strategies of Satan in Acts 19:19-20, they collected and burned all of the objects associated with demonic and satanic contact.

Acts 19:19-20 Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them, and it totaled fifty thousand pieces of silver.²⁰ So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.

Have you carefully avoided any of these landing places of the devil?

4. We don't ignore the Devil when we remember that **Satan can buffet God's servants.** *kolaphidzo* "with fist" (2852) [That is why Paul says, "I command you to keep your feet shod"]

2 Corinthians 12:7 And because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me—to keep me from exalting myself!

In the Bible the idea is often presented that bodily diseases are at times produced by the direct agency of Satan, so that they may be regarded as his messengers, sent by him.¹⁰

"Thorn in the flesh" (lit. "a stake for the flesh") was a demon or a physical illness. Of the 188 uses of the Gr. word, *angellos*, in the NT, at least 180 are in reference to angels. This angel was from Satan, and may even have been a demon afflicting Paul.

We need to endure the struggles and afflictions of life in the grace that our God of all comfort can give to us. The way we resist this attack is to affirm with Paul in

2 Corinthians 12:9-10 And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.¹⁰ Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

5. We don't ignore the Devil when we remember that **Satan uses a variety of hindrances to disrupt our ministry for God.** *egkopto*

¹⁰ Hodge, Charles, *2 Corinthians: The Crossway Classic Commentaries*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books) 1997.

“interrupts, cut into” (1465); [That is why Paul says, “I command you to always pray]

1 Thessalonians 2:18 For we wanted to come to you—I, Paul, more than once—and yet Satan thwarted us.

Here Paul says that Satan was ‘thwarting’ him like one army hindering the advance of their enemies. The literal meaning of ‘hindered’ here that Paul used was for Satan “breaking up the road and putting up obstacles”.

Satan is always at work seeking to tear down the church that Christ promised to build (cf. Matt. 16:18). Throughout the Scriptures we find Satan present at the churches of Jerusalem (Acts 5:1–10), Smyrna (Rev. 2:9,10), Pergamum (Rev. 2:13), Thyatira (Rev. 2:24), Philadelphia (Rev. 3:9), Ephesus (1 Tim. 3:6,7), and Corinth (2 Cor. 2:1–11). And so you can be assured that he and his evil influences are presently arrayed against each of us in Christ's church this morning!

6. **We don't ignore the Devil when we remember that *Satan is a master hunter and very skilled at using snares*** (3803) *pagis* 5x “snare, trap, noose” from *pegnumai* ‘to get stuck or fastened’ [That is why Paul says, “I command you to wear your armor of righteousness over your heart]

*1 Timothy 3:7 And he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he may not fall into reproach and the **snare of the devil.***

*1 Timothy 6:9 But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and **a snare** and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction.*

*2 Timothy 2:26 and that they may come to their senses and escape **the snare of the devil**, having been taken captive by him to do his will.*

Paul uses a word translated *come to their senses* (2 Tim. 2:26) that describes a person snared by Satan as needing to come out of a drunken stupor. Satan snares people by getting them drunk with his lies, and then without the restraint of God's Word--they disobey the Lord. Serving God

means we use the Bible to instruct them 'sober them up', for this is the only way they are rescued from Satan's captivity. Satan is a liar (John 8:44); and he captures people by his lying promises, as he did Eve (see Gen. 3; 2 Cor. 11:3).

7. **We don't ignore the Devil when we remember that Satan has the capability to swallow up believers who do not resist his constant** . The word Peter uses is to drink down (*katapino*) and not eat down (*kataphago*) as we would equate with the lion metaphor. [That is why Paul says, "I command you to wear your sword"]

*1 Peter 5:8-9 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, **seeking whom he may devour**. 9 Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.*

Our confidence in God's sovereign care does not mean that we can live carelessly. Satan's evil forces which come against us demand that we stay alert. Satan and his forces are always active, looking for opportunities to overwhelm the believer with temptation, persecution, and discouragement (cf. Pss. 22:13; 104:21; Ezek. 22:25). Satan does everything he can to drag the Christian out of fellowship with Christ and out of Christian service (cf. Job 1; Luke 22:3; John 13:27; 2 Cor. 4:3,4; Rev. 12). And he constantly accuses believers before God's throne, attempting to convince God to abandon them (Job 1:6-12; Rev. 12:10).

Resist him, steadfast in the faith. Just as we saw in James 4:7 we are to "resist" which means "to stand up against." The way to resist the devil is not with special formulas, or words directed at him and his demons, but by using the truth of God's Word to defeat his lies in our mind. When believers know sound doctrine and obey God's truth, Satan is withstood by the sword of God's Word (cf. Eph. 6:17). **The same sufferings.** Believers around the world are always going through similar trials brought on by the roaring lion who never stops trying to devour believers.¹¹

¹¹ Adapted from John F. MacArthur, Jr., *The MacArthur Study Bible*, (Dallas: Word Publishing) 1997.

Any Christian who participates in a martial arts practice (or healing program such as reiki, or exercise program such as yoga) that involves a spiritual energy (ki, chi, qi, prana, etc.) is engaging in a belief system that cannot be reconciled with the Word of God, that fosters a false view of God, and that offers powers that are very likely supplied by the Adversary of God and his demonic spirits. The Bible gives many examples of demonic powers, from Satan afflicting Job and others to the superhuman strength of a demon-possessed man who couldn't be restrained by chains. Scripture indicates that Satan will use such deception to keep people from receiving the gospel ("...after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved" — **2 Thessalonians 2:9-10**)

Obviously, a Christian needs to steer clear of anything that promotes "spiritual energy." Even martial arts programs that avoid such practices need to be closely scrutinized by parents who are considering enrolling their children. More important, parents need to question the value for each child. For some, it may be detrimental, while for others worthwhile. Yet the bottom line is, will the activity be consistent with their godly obligation to raise their child in the fear and admonition of the Lord? Again, this is a faith decision that needs to be submitted to the Lord and supported in prayer.

There is nothing wrong with stretching exercises, and Christians are called to meditate upon the Word of God, but the practices of Yoga, both historic and current, are not about mere stretching.

The Subtle Body – Should Christians Practice Yoga?¹²

When Christians practice yoga, they must either deny the reality of what yoga represents or fail to see the contradictions between their Christian commitments and...

me questions we ask today would simply baffle our ancestors. When Christians ask whether believers should practice yoga, they are asking a question that betrays the strangeness of our current cultural moment — a time in which yoga seems almost mainstream in America.

It was not always so. No one tells the story of yoga in America better than Stefanie Syman, whose recent book, *The Subtle Body: The Story of Yoga in America*, is a masterpiece of cultural history. Syman, an engaging author who is also a fifteen-year devotee of yoga, tells this story well.

Her book actually opens with a scene from this year's annual White House Easter Egg Roll. President Barack Obama made a few comments and then introduced First Lady Michelle Obama, who said: "Our goal today is just to have fun. We want to focus on activity, healthy eating. We've got yoga, we've got dancing, we've got storytelling, we've got Easter-egg decorating."

Syman describes the yoga on the White House lawn as "sanitized, sanctioned, and family-friendly," and she noted the rather amazing fact that a practice once seen as so exotic and even dangerous was now included as an activity sufficiently safe and mainstream for children.

In her words:

There certainly was no better proof that Americans had assimilated this spiritual discipline. We had turned a technique for God realization that had, at various points in time, enjoined its adherents to reduce their diet to rice, milk, and a few vegetables, fix their minds on a set of, to us, incomprehensible syllables, and self-administer daily enemas (without the benefit of equipment), to name just a few of its prerequisites, into an activity suitable for children. Though yoga has no coherent tradition in India, being preserved instead by thousands of gurus and

¹² Al Mohler blog: <http://www.albertmohler.com/2010/09/20/the-subtle-body-should-christians-practice-yoga/>

hundreds of lineages, each of which makes a unique claim to authenticity, we had managed to turn it into a singular thing: a way to stay healthy and relaxed.

In her book, Syman tells the fascinating story of how yoga was transformed in the American mind from a foreign and “even heathen” practice into a cultural reality that is widely admired and practiced.

In telling this story, Syman documents the ties between yoga and groups or movements such as the Transcendentalists and New Thought — movements that sought to provide a spirituality that would be a clear alternative to biblical Christianity. She traces the influence of leading figures such as Swami Vivekananda and Swami Prabhavananda, along with Pierre Bernard and the now lesser-known Margaret Woodrow Wilson. Each of these figures played a role in the growing acceptance of yoga in America, but most were controversial at the time — some extremely so.

Syman describes yoga as a varied practice, but she makes clear that yoga cannot be fully extricated from its spiritual roots in Hinduism and Buddhism. She is also straightforward in explaining the role of sexual energy in virtually all forms of yoga and of ritualized sex in some yoga traditions. She also explains that yoga “is one of the first and most successful products of globalization, and it has augured a truly post-Christian, spiritually polyglot country.”

Reading *The Subtle Body* is an eye-opening and truly interesting experience. To a remarkable degree, the growing acceptance of yoga points to the retreat of biblical Christianity in the culture. Yoga begins and ends with an understanding of the body that is, to say the very least, at odds with the Christian understanding. Christians are not called to empty the mind or to see the human body as a means of connecting to and coming to know the divine. Believers are called to meditate upon the Word of God — an external Word that comes to us by divine revelation — not to meditate by means of incomprehensible syllables.

Nevertheless, a significant number of American Christians either experiment with yoga or become adherents of some yoga discipline. Most seem unaware that yoga cannot be neatly separated into physical and spiritual dimensions. The physical *is* the spiritual in yoga, and the exercises and disciplines of yoga are meant to connect with the divine.

Douglas R. Groothuis, Professor of Philosophy at Denver Seminary and a respected specialist on the New Age Movement, warns Christians that yoga is not merely about physical exercise or health. “All forms of yoga involve occult assumptions,” he warns, “even *hatha* yoga, which is often presented as a merely physical discipline.” While most adherents of yoga avoid the more exotic forms of ritualized sex that are associated with tantric yoga, virtually all forms of yoga involve an emphasis on channeling sexual energy throughout the body as a means of spiritual enlightenment.

Stefanie Syman documents how yoga was transformed in American culture from an exotic and heathen practice into a central component of our national cult of health. Of course, her story would end differently if Americans still had cultural access to the notion of “heathen.”

The nation of India is almost manically syncretistic, blending worldviews over and over again. But, in more recent times, America has developed its own obsession with syncretism, mixing elements of worldviews with little or no attention to what each mix means. Americans have turned yoga into an exercise ritual, a means of focusing attention, and an avenue to longer life and greater health. Many Americans attempt to deny or minimize the spiritual aspects of yoga — to the great consternation of many in India.

When Christians practice yoga, they must either deny the reality of what yoga represents or fail to see the contradictions between their Christian commitments and their embrace of yoga. The contradictions are not few, nor are they peripheral. The bare fact is that yoga is a spiritual discipline by which the adherent is trained to use the body as a vehicle for achieving consciousness of the divine. Christians are called to look to Christ for all that we need and to obey Christ through obeying his Word. We are not called to escape the consciousness of this world by achieving an elevated state of consciousness, but to follow Christ in the way of faithfulness.

There is nothing wrong with physical exercise, and yoga positions in themselves are not the main issue. But these positions are teaching postures with a spiritual purpose. Consider this — if you have to meditate intensely in order to achieve or to maintain a physical posture, it is no longer merely a physical posture.

The embrace of yoga is a symptom of our postmodern spiritual confusion, and, to our shame, this confusion reaches into the church. Stefanie Syman is telling us something important when she writes that yoga “has augured a truly post-Christian, spiritually polyglot country.” Christians who practice yoga are embracing, or at minimum flirting with, a spiritual practice that threatens to transform their own spiritual lives into a “post-Christian, spiritually polyglot” reality. Should any Christian willingly risk that?

Stay Sober – Don't Inhale.

Now you ask, what is the poison? Can it be analyzed for content? Yes, clearly... Five deadly elements make up this killer poison gas [Chuck Colson has found these five:].

Poison gas # 1 Secularism

Secularism - As an adjective, meaning “of this world” or “or the present age”.

- ü It's the idea of life consists of merely the 'here and now', seize the moment, 'grab the gusto', only 60 around once...
- ü The results or effects are: instant gratification needed in sex, food, cars, vacation, clothes, drugs, things.... It's the motivation for all crime: “If I want what I want when I want it, why not take it!”
- ü It's the exaltation and desperate lunge for the momentary at the expense of the eternal.

Poison gas # 2 deconstructionism

Deconstructionism is to make society Anti-historical: This is the curse of our schools. It is currently called “revisionism”. No objective truth, so- No objective meaning to language, literature, etc.

Result: look at the movies: Dancing with Wolves - dismantles history and rewrites it to suit secularist. Robin Hood - Costner finds the skill of Azeem in medicine, science and ethics to be superior. But, where did a Moslem come from in Sherwood Forest? It's rewriting history until it's eroded to meaninglessness.

Did you know Genesis is history? God wants you to know how you and everything else got here! Sin, government, the family and all! Have you been carelessly sniffing this poison?

Poison gas # 3 Naturalism

Naturalism (not humanism - we are past the man centered, now it is nature centered!) If evolution were true then all life came from the same cosmic soup so owls, whales, trees and people are of equal value!

WATCH OUT. Creationism was a doctrine God established!

Poison gas # 4: Utopianism

Utopianism - better and better. All are good basically, but it's why: Hitler and holocaust, Two world wars, Genocide, serial killers, rape, greed, horror and undesirable evil? Because all of us are victims.

WATCH OUT for blaming how you are on your parents, education, on Vietnam, poverty, etc. Start with real problem of personal sin...

Poison gas # 5 Pragmatism

Pragmatism - If it works it's okay! Therefore, Satan has made moral relativism the law so all humanity seems to have both feet firmly planted in mid-air and is lost in the cosmos without meaning or purpose.... What's the solution?

1 Pet. 5 (turn there please)

V. 5-11 Divide into three crucial points of truth.

V. 8-9 The warning (watch out)

- “sober” - don't inhale, don't get intoxicated with the: moral relativism - not relative but absolutes; I think...my rights. Materialism - not here but heaven; hear Thou...me-ism - no me but Christ; me first. Secularism - not this moment but the eternal; live for now.
- “stay awake”: be vigilant, **Rev. 3:2**, watch for Christ; **Phil. 3:20**; **Rom. 13:11-14**; **I Thess. 3:13**.
- “stand firm”: resist, **Eph. 6:13** – withstand; **James 4:17** - resist devil; don't yield to the poison, breathe the air of heaven. Turn off TV, stereo, radio, and read, read, read. Pray, pray, pray.