

# Yoga and Martial Arts for Children: A Dangerous Spiritual Path

February 2, 2015 By [Natasha Crain](#) - [24 Comments](#)



*Today I'm honored to share this guest post from Mark McGee. Mark is a former atheist who was led away from his Christian upbringing by the philosophies he learned in yoga and martial arts. He now shares his story to help warn Christian parents about the possible spiritual dangers of these disciplines.*

“Breathe in slowly, breathe out slowly. Feel your breath. Feel the energy growing through each shakra.”

I sat on the floor of a small room in the local YMCA with my legs crossed in an unusual fashion, eyes closed, breathing “into my belly.” It’s Saturday morning and I’m loving it. Tomorrow is Sunday and I’ll have to go to church, but I won’t think about that right now. I’ll just breathe in and breathe out.

I was 12 years old and yoga offered me something I had never experienced before: a feeling of personal power and a purpose beyond myself. My mother enrolled me in the program believing it would be good for my health. Like many Christian parents, she didn’t know the hidden spiritual dangers that lie beneath the surface.

More than 20 million people in the United States are part of a yoga program today. The majority are young women. They spend billions of dollars on classes, clothing, books and equipment. Why do they do it? Most say they want to improve their flexibility and get relief from the stresses of life. Sounds like a good thing, right?

### **What You Need to Know About the Danger**

What most people in western cultures don’t understand about yoga is that it’s a vital component of one of the world’s oldest religions: Hinduism. While many people think of yoga as a physical system with a spiritual component, it’s really a *spiritual* system with a *physical* component.

A Hindu named Patanjali is believed by many historians to be the “father” of yoga. He codified his understanding of yoga in *The Yoga*

*Sutra of Patanjali* sometime before the birth of Jesus. Patanjali's teachings are known as the "eightfold path of yoga" and are at the core of *how to live a better life through yoga*. Patanjali believed that union with the "Supreme" was the result of restraining, controlling and eventually annihilating the ego. He believed that yoga was the way to overcome the many obstacles of a mortal uniting with the immortal. *Without realizing it, I was learning how to live a better life and become a better person through yoga rather than through Jesus Christ.*

### **How the Danger Can Grow with Martial Arts**

The yoga classroom was next to a larger classroom where another group of children and teens were learning a martial art called Judo. I was a small child often bullied by larger boys. I was fascinated that the small children in Judo were throwing larger children, teens, and even adults over their shoulders and hips as if they were ragdolls. I wanted to do that and my mother thought it would be good for me as well.

Classes in Judo, and later in Aikido, Karate and Kung Fu introduced me to other eastern philosophies. The one that impacted me most was Buddhism. A primary focus of Buddhism is "right living"—doing right things toward the cessation of suffering and achieving self-realization or awakening.

My years of training in Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism as a teenager and young adult always began with a time of meditation and often continued throughout the class. Instructors acted as guides to help students relax and calm the mind to allow the internal power flow to the external naturally and powerfully.

*The better the meditation the greater the impact of technique in martial arts.*

Meditative practices of Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism focus on a power that adherents believe everyone possesses and can tap into. I was taught that martial arts would be the pathway to *spiritual enlightenment*.

As it turned out, meditation did put me on a pathway, but it wasn't to spiritual enlightenment. After five years of training, I became an atheist.

## **How Meditation Can Lead to Atheism**

So why did I become an atheist? One reason was that meditation in yoga and martial arts *focused on me* and what *I* wanted out of life. Christianity *focused on God* and what *He* wanted out of my life.

Yoga and martial arts taught me that I was intrinsically good and could accomplish anything I put my focused mind to. Christianity taught me I was intrinsically bad and needed God to save me from myself.

I had an atheist professor in my freshman year of college. His attacks on religion had a powerful impact on me. I had experienced the teachings of monotheism and polytheism and found both to be both hypocritical and ineffective. Buddhism was the closest to what I thought could possibly be true, and becoming an atheist was an easy step from Buddhism.

I became a radio announcer, journalist and talk show host after college and used the power of the microphone to argue with Christians who called in to the show. My anger toward religion and believers continually grew until I was well-known as an outspoken atheist. My atheism was very hard on my parents, but they never gave up believing God could and would save me. My mother told me she was praying for me and knew I would soon be a Christian. I laughed and told her not to waste her time.

## **Prayers Answered**

I challenged God during one of my shows to sit down in the radio studio and let me interview Him if He really existed. I waited quietly for several seconds, then told my audience God must be sick or on vacation.

God did show up on my show several months later in His own way. I saw that Dr. Henry Morris, a leader in Creation research, was coming to our city to talk about his search for Noah's Ark in Turkey. I invited him to appear on my show so I could make fun of him. What I didn't take into account was the power of the Holy Spirit to use biblical and scientific evidence to put a chink in my atheistic armor.

I invited another Christian on my show soon after that and met a man who had just written a book about archaeology and the Bible. After investigating the truth claims of Christianity for several months, I asked God to forgive me, believed on the Lord Jesus Christ and was saved.

### **What's a Parent to Do?**

I was one of the fortunate atheists who God saved by His grace. I am so grateful for His love, but I can't help but think about the ten years I spent involved in eastern mysticism and atheism. I view it as a loss of precious time when I could have been serving God.

What can you do as a Christian parent to protect your child from the many spiritual and philosophical dangers of the world? *Know as much as you can about what your children are involved in and what their instructors are teaching them.* The more Christian parents and grandparents know about how the spiritual enemy will attack their children, the more they can do to prepare them to defend against those attacks. And, of course, always keep praying and trusting God for your child's eternal future.

All of us are in this together. As the apostle Paul wrote, "If one member suffers, all the members suffer with it" (1 Corinthians 12:26). Our prayers are with you as you raise your children to become faithful followers of Jesus Christ.

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**About Mark McGee:** *Mark McGee is a journalist and former atheist. He has taught martial arts for 50 years and was a student of Eastern philosophies before becoming an atheist. Mark became a Christian after investigating the evidence for the truth claims of Christianity more than 40 years ago. He became a member of Judo and Karate for Christ in 1972 and teaches martial arts from a Christian perspective through [Grace Martial Arts](#) and [Karate for Christ International](#). Mark and his wife have two sons and three grandchildren and live in Alabama.*

***Do you have a question for Mark? Share in the comments!***

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