



The Shambhava Experience

In March of 2008, I completed the first half of my 500-Hour Teacher Certification. It was a 16-day adventure to Colorado to attend the Shambhava School of Yoga. As you may know, it is very difficult to find yoga training at the 500-hour level that is from a Christian perspective, so it was with the Holy Spirit's guidance that I carefully and prayerfully chose a school where I could learn more about the asana (yoga postures) and pranayama (breathing/relaxation techniques) and philosophy of yoga and meditation. I share this summary of my joys and struggles to inspire you to keep going with Jesus and the things He has put in your heart concerning yoga.

May you be blessed, and may the glory and power and love of Jesus inspire you along the yoga journey.

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It was a challenging experience, but one that has recharged me in teaching yoga from a Christian perspective. On a scale of 1-10, the asana instruction was a 7, the anatomy a 10, the meditation an 8, the pranayama an 8, the philosophy an 8, the practice teaching that I had to do a 10, the notebook a 10, the food an 11!, the accommodations an 8, the surrounding Colorado mountains and night sky a 100, the people and staff of the ashram a 9, and the Temple a 2. If it had all been from a Christian perspective, I'd probably give all components a 10.

All in all, I was greatly pleased with what I learned. The anatomy was superb. A young woman, Yogini, was in charge of it and she was also a Physical Therapist by trade, so her knowledge and application of physical therapy to yoga was priceless. I learned about my personal practice and habits, and my own yoga practice now encompasses a greater understanding of my elbows, knees and low back.

The asana was fun and challenging. I was happily surprised to discover that I could do all the poses, or at least to feel like I could do them in the near future with a little practice. The toughest poses were the ones that incorporated lotus. I just don't have the external rotation in my left hip for lotus . . . yet.

The philosophy was interesting, as was the teacher. I could easily translate most of it into Christian terms, but some just had to be thrown out such as reincarnation and second lives and past lives, etc. I'm now very inspired to keep writing yoga philosophy from a Christian perspective and to get all these pieces floating around in my mind onto paper so that I can pass them on to other Christians who are teaching and practicing yoga. God still needs to be glorified in this area!

I really enjoyed the meditation and pranayama. It was gently presented to us in a very doable, almost casual form, one that will be easy to incorporate in a Christian's practice of yoga. I will like it even more once I modify the practices to more specifically relate to Christians and the building of their faith. I have lots of ideas and hopes for these two components.



The practice teaching gave me a taste of what those who have had to practice teach for me went through! I was definitely better at it by the third and fourth times I did it. At first I was nervous, high strung, and felt like I needed to prove something, but then I realized I could relax and just be myself, breathe a little more, and let the Holy Spirit flow through me. By the end of the 4th practice session, my teacher said I had done a complete turn-around for the better. She said it was as if I had come back to something I had once known but had forgotten... Ahhhh, yes, resting in Jesus always works.

I was totally impressed by their teaching materials and have been thoroughly inspired to write a comprehensive notebook for teacher training. I wish I could take off 6 months or more to devote to the writing of it. I have so much I want to get down on paper!

The FOOD - all organic, vegetarian, gourmet taste and fresh flavors! And I didn't have to think about it, cook it, or clean up after it! Heaven on Earth!!!

The cabin was my refuge. I had communion every morning before I went to my first yoga class and every evening before I went to bed. It was great being alone with the Holy Spirit, remembering Jesus' work on my behalf and the Father's love for me before I started my day at the ashram and when I ended each day there. I took down all the posters and pictures of the Hindu deities and set up my communion table. I took my favorite picture of Jesus and carried it in my notebook with me every where I went.

The scenery was breath-taking. Gorgeous trees, snow, mountains, and a night sky FILLED with stars. Every night I left Temple, I would look up at the sky and see myself as one of Abraham's children marked by a star in the sky . . . It helped me to get over the pain in my heart over the Temple ceremony I'd just witnessed . . .

The nightly requirement of attending Temple was the hardest part, as I knew it would be. At Temple we did different programs that were not from a Christian perspective. Tuesday night the ceremony for the "Medicine Buddha" was performed, and Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday nights the ceremony of "Ariti," the "waving of lights," was performed. The first time I watched Ariti I was grieved and conflicted. The music was beautiful and performed live and had a wonderful melody that made me want to sing along, but I couldn't participate, not in chants that praise Shiva and Shakti, etc. . . . So I watched. Seeing the beauty and devotion given to this mythological entourage of Hindu deities and Buddha and Consciousness made me so sad. Here were young, intelligent, gifted, strong, beautiful people who were "worshipping" Consciousness (for that is what they said all the deities represented - elements of the greater consciousness that resided in each one of us), but they were not even considering the Creator of Consciousness!

Although Ariti was a difficult part of the training (and one that I was required to attend), other nights at the Temple were not as hard to take. Sometimes we just did silent meditation. During the meditation, I could pray my own prayers and meditate with Jesus without any outside distractions. I sensed the Lord's presence the whole

time. I never felt alone or "defiled." I felt He was with me continually, and I so enjoyed His presence. When I was shocked about Ariti, He reminded me that He'd been watching those ceremonies for thousands of years . . .

As of now, I believe that my purpose in going was to learn what I learned and to now come home and turn this around for God's glory. There is much to be done. There are so many people turning to yoga for all kinds of reasons, and I want to be there and ready to tell them how Jesus is what they are really looking for. They can use yoga to enhance their faith and to keep focused on their goals for physical health and strength, etc., but God/Jesus/Holy Spirit is the True Source of their seeking. He alone is worthy of their praise, devotion and life's energy.

Well, this is a long summary, but I hope you got a good picture of all that I experienced, and I pray that you, too, will be inspired to keep going with what God has put in your heart concerning yoga from a Christian perspective!

I love you my friends and co-laborers! The harvest is ripe! Let's keep working while it is still day and bring more and more souls to Jesus, helping them to grow and mature in His presence!

