

# Including the Circle of Prayer To Re-energize Your Yoga Practice

- by Dr. Donna Jagielski



I was first introduced to the Circle of Prayer by a friend in our ladies group at church some years back. For someone like me who is very cognizant of time, making the most efficient use of time, having a great level of impact by dividing up my prayer practice in 5-minute chunks with a very specific target focus for prayer, just made sense.

You may have seen some variation of the circle of prayer, sometimes referred to as the prayer wheel. The prayer wheel consists of 12 “categories” of prayer. If each category is addressed for five minutes, it will take you one hour to complete. The categories are:

- Praise
- Waiting
- Confession
- Scripture prayer
- Watching
- Outreach
- Intercession
- Petition
- Thanksgiving
- Mediation
- Listening
- Singing

Integrating each of these components into your yoga practice will provide a renewed energy to your general practice plus elevate your Christian yoga practice. Our goal as Christian yoga practitioners is not just simply layer Scripture on top of a traditional asana yoga practice and label it as “Christian Yoga” but rather to develop authentic ways to embed our faith in our yoga practice that includes asanas, sequences and breathwork.

Our goal is to develop critical understandings of the intersections, commonalities, and interconnectedness of Christianity and the 8 Limbs of Yoga. It is

truly to place God at the center of our practice. Our yoga evolves out of our love for Jesus and our practice as Christians, first. Lastly, as both Christians and yoga students/practitioners, the greatest impact we make with our “practice” is when we are off the mat, and outside of our church walls.

So let’s break down each aspect of the Circle of Prayer and how it relates to our yoga practice.

#### • Praise

In our Christian faith, praise is when we speak well of God, all his does and all his works and creation. Take the time towards the ending, before final rest, of your practice to reflect on your accomplishments in class. Know that you are worthy of being at peace during times of jubilation as well as during times of challenge. On and off that mat, during this rollercoaster, the Lord is with us. Praise God all the time.

#### Scripture suggestion:

*Psalm 99:5*

*Exalt the Lord our God and worship at his footstool; he is holy.*

#### • Waiting

During practice, include places of pause to reconnect with both your practice, your breath and the Lord. Place one hand on your chest at your heart and the other hand on your abdomen. Spend this time in wordless and motionless worship. Recognize that waiting is because we live by God’s clock and not our own. God always knows the best timing for us in all matters. Take this time to honor God. Trust in the Lord. He always knows the best timing for all of us.



**Scripture suggestion:**

Hosea 12:6

*But you must return to your God; maintain love and justice, and wait for your God always.*

• **Confession**

Each time we practice a forward fold such as swan dive or pyramid, honor the Lord by surrendering our thoughts and actions. Pause in forward folds, bowing to the Lord and asking for forgiveness.

**Scripture suggestion:**

Psalm 32:5

*Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said “I will confess my transgressions to the Lord.” And you forgave the guilt of my sin.*

• **Scripture Prayer**

Open your practice with one particular Scripture related to your theme and/or intention. Your theme and/or intention is broad in scope with the scripture serving as the message from the Lord that will guide that intention. This is your time to utilize Scripture aligned to your theme/intention and translate that Scripture into your own conversation with God. Feel free to describe your experiences and how you interpret Scripture, in your own words. This is time for you to have an open no-nonsense conversation with God. Towards the end of practice, revisit this Scripture to examine how you have applied it in your yoga practice and how you can take it off the mat into the world.

**Scripture suggestion:**

1 James 5:6

*If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.*

• **Watching**

This is when we turn our gaze towards the inside to “watch” how we are applying change to the recurring events in our lives, beginning with repeated sequences in our yoga practice. Even though a sequence is repeated many times in practice it is never the same. Take a few moments to reflect on how you performed the sequence previously. What is it that you need to change? Physically, mentally, to achieve greater stability? Balance? Agility? Flexibility? How are you applying such qualities to your Christian life and practice? What lessons is God sending you repeatedly because you still have not learned.

**Scripture suggestion:**

Acts 20:28

*Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.*

• **Outreach**

As part of the intention you set for your practice at the beginning, look at revisiting that intention at the end. Look at developing a plan of how you can translate that intention to action off the mat. This intention might be to grow discipleship off



the mat. Spreading the word of Christ to others and engaging them in Christian values and practices. Recognize that many people need someone to simply “introduce” them to the Lord. It is our responsibility and duty to obey in reaching out to others.

**Scripture suggestion:**

Matthew 9:37

*Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few.”*

• **Intercession**

Each time there is a bow or fold forward, take this time to provide prayer on behalf of others. Surrender your thoughts and prayers to serve others. Know that your prayerful humble pose is one that is between one(s) you are praying for and God. Your pose in the prayer serves as the medium between the ones you pray for and God.

**Scripture suggestion:**

1 Thessalonians 5:25-26

*Brothers and sisters pray for us. Greet all God's people with a holy kiss.*

• **Petition**

At the beginning of practice as you open with your intention and Scripture prayer, include your petition prayer as well. This is your specific request built into your prayer and conversation with God. In your request to God, tell Him how by fulfilling this request you will be better equipped to serve Him. With a petition prayer it is of the utmost importance to always bring your desired request back to how it will serve the Lord.

**Scripture suggestion:**

Matthew 6:11

*Give us today our daily bread.*

• **Thanksgiving**

Thanksgiving is an act of expressing specific gratitude. Yoga can be physically challenging and this is why sometimes we lose our energy, motivation and desire to continue to practice. Rather than giving up, give thanks to the Lord for the challenge both on and off the mat. Take time during challenging poses to thank your teacher and fellow students around you knowing we are all in this together. We are all doing life together. Thank the Lord for knowing he has provided us with what we need to succeed today, in the moment, no matter how challenging. All challenges are temporary. Knowing all is temporary provides us with greater strength to get through the difficult moments. Our home with the Lord is permanent.

**Scripture suggestion:**

Psalm 119:62

*At midnight I rise to give you thanks for all your righteous laws.*

• **Meditation**

After each major sequence such as Warrior, take time to stand firmly rooted in Mountain pose. Ponder on the great depth, completeness and complexity of the Lord. This is a time to revisit the Scripture prayer you selected at the beginning of practice to fully digest the verse. Dig deeper and ask God to reveal why this Scripture was selected for you. How does this Scripture verse reflect your life off the mat and your interactions with others?

**Scripture suggestion:**

Joshua 1:8

*Keep this Book of Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.*



- Listening

When in final resting pose this is the time to tune in and listen to God. Quiet your mind, heart and soften your breath. Know that God will provide you with guidance during this time. Allow for particular scriptures to come to mind as you rest. You may also experience recalling certain events from the Bible and from the life of Jesus. Pay close attention to these messages. God is speaking to you through many ways, events, stories, parables and relating them to your life. We need to listen first before we can be obedient in following God's message. Final resting pose is a very receptive state. Soak in and absorb what the Lord is communicating during this time.

Scripture suggestion:

Psalm 81:13

If my people would only listen to me, if Israel would only follow my ways.

- Singing

Oftentimes during traditional yoga classes chanting could be considered a type of song. After final rest, when you begin to 're-enter' the world from your time on the mat, explore a short song, lifting your voice up to the Lord. In unison and acapella, offer the invitation to sing a few verses of a favorite hymn. As the teacher, prepare and provide index cards of the verse to be sung.

Including index cards with the verses to be sung decreases any anxiety about recalling lyrics to a song. You may also decide to simply create a melodic harmony to accompany a short scripture and/or Psalm. A rich tapestry of individual yet unified voices reinforces the fact that we are all children of God. Whether we choose to sing out loud or silently, nevertheless, we all lift our hearts and our voices to praise God each and every moment of our lives.

Scripture suggestion:

Psalm 59:16

But I will sing of your strength, in the morning I will sing of your love; for you are my fortress, my refuge in times of trouble.

*About the Author: Dr. Donna Jagielski holds a doctorate in education from ASU. She has been an educator, educational administrator and currently works in educational programming for a nonprofit organization. She is actively involved in her church in Phoenix and Flagstaff where she maintains dual residency. She is a RYT-200 and RCYT-95 and is a member of the Yoga Alliance. She currently leads Christ-centered yoga for the Women on the Move program she facilitates at her Phoenix church and also leads yoga at a juvenile detention center in Phoenix.*



  
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