

3 Centers Meditation - Christian Yoga Style

by Dr. Donna Jagielski, Owner, Blessings, Balance & Breath Yoga

Since February, I have been working towards my 300-hour yoga certification. While on this journey, we have been taking deeper dives into the complexity of the practice. One particular area has been meditation. Meditation is often associated with yoga, yet it crosses all boundaries, including Christianity. We not only pray on scripture, but we also meditate on it. Somehow, it is easier for most people to have a clear picture of what "prayer" is, yet not so much when it comes to meditation. Many misconceptions surrounding meditation include images of solitary disengagement, sitting quietly with the goal of "emptying the mind." Some people may meditate this way, but there are many different approaches, like anything else.

In my course of study, we have focused on particular overarching categories that impact all our lives and practice, such as gratefulness, humility, clarity, presence, relaxation, surrender, and several others. The 3 Centers Meditation is one way we have explored these areas deeper. The 3 Centers relate to the head, heart, and core. Whatever we meditate on, we examine first through the head, which takes us through how we think, conceptualize, and the associated cognitive actions. Continuing meditation through our heart center brings us to how we feel, empathize, and emotionally relate. Third and lastly, our core center is where we focus on expanding our reach, past our minds, past our hearts, and ourselves. Meditation, at our core center, takes our practice off the

mat and into the world. This center challenges us to determine how we make our meditation an actionable way of life. Meditation using the 3 Centers will provide insight into whether we are in alignment or if there are disconnects. The Prodigal Son provides an excellent example of utilizing the 3 Centers Meditation in yoga practice.

Exploring this classic parable from our head center, we may agree that the father should welcome and forgive the younger son. Through our heart center, we may compassionately and empathically believe that people who fall from grace, such as the younger brother, make mistakes and are capable of change and forgiveness. It is not uncommon for our head and heart centers to be aligned as we typically "think" or "believe" the same as we "feel." The challenge arises at the third core center. It is easy to recognize what should happen in our heads and hearts, but does that stay the same when reality hits? When it comes to daily living, do we demonstrate what our head and heart tell us, or do we divert? Our core center confronts us with how our faith will be in action. Typically, our head and heart centers stay aligned because they are internal.

On the other hand, our core is external. We can keep our thoughts and empathy to ourselves, but our actions are outward; thus, they are now subject to judgment and criticism from others. When we become influenced by and judged by others, our actions conflict with our heads and hearts. How often do we find ourselves "knowing"



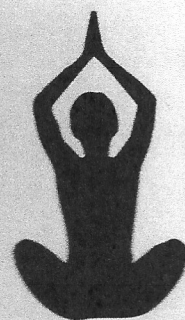
and “feeling” as though we need to forgive our family members, yet we don’t take action? Returning to The Prodigal Son, we may suspect that the elder brother knew in his heart and mind that the right thing to do was to forgive his younger brother, yet he resisted and allowed his ego to take over, stating it was unfair since he had seemingly been the loyal son. Internal in conflict with the external.

We can take our 3 Centers Meditation one step further, past the Prodigal Son parable and into our daily lives as we examine generosity and care for others. As we meditate through our head center, we may believe people who are homeless should receive assistance. The heart center may stir sympathy and compassion for people who are homeless with limited access to food, water, and adequate health care. We may even use terms such as “my heart bleeds for them...” or “my heart goes out to them...” Yet the core center may lead us to actions that may not be congruent with our thoughts and feelings. Do we hand the bottle of water to the homeless person?

We may or may not. Sometimes it depends on if we are alone or in the company of others. And if we are in the company of others, do those individuals influence our decision to “do the right thing,” or do we fear and fall victim to judgment, our ego, and justify our actions of non-assistance based on our interpretation of “God helps those who help themselves”?

Utilizing the 3 Centers Meditation approach, as we study scripture, we must first recognize if there is an authentic alignment or disconnect. Second, if disconnects exist, determine the root cause. The third and last is deciding how to reconcile the misalignments. Use this meditation time to be honest with yourself, reconcile the differences, and ultimately choose faith over fear.

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