

**Sermon Notes Aug 25, 2019 Focus Unshakable-ness - Hebrews 12**  
[Lectionary Readings for Aug 25](#)

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Hebrews 12 -- "*Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heaven.*" This phrase, "*Yet once more,*" indicates the removal of what is shaken-- that is, created things-- so that what cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us give thanks.

Today I want to do something a little different. These sermon notes are a personal meditation on faith, especially regarding "unshakable-ness." My particular journey has been a little funky - from "Old Catholic" choirs, to Zen Temples in the South, to Mega churches, and countless yoga classes (domestic and abroad) -- I have been a spiritual omnivore. You may not have done some or any of these things (or maybe other things far funkier). May my own journey provoke "unshakable-ness" in you.

My question for you is multipart, "*What is unshakable about your life in God? AND what do you experience as unshakable love?*" **OR** *If everything has been shaken down to the ground, what do you **hope** would be unshakeable?*

If you have settled for less, try again. Keep asking God to reveal the bedrock of love's presence *in a way that you can understand*. When God gives this gift, it can't be shaken by any change or chance of this life.

**My deepest spiritual insecurity** - are we just making up everything as we go along? What if the whole of our lives is just one big spitball session?

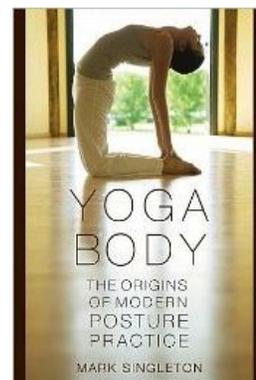
This question has plagued me for years. In the 1990's and early 2000's I was fairly certain about faith. I was certain, even with a global church of countless compromises. We have a universal Christian church that has been plagued with power plays, outright evil, and placating the powerful governments. I had made peace with our collective history and thought I had a seasoned view of things.

But still underneath all that supposed sophistication - I craved purity. Therefore, I thought yoga and mediation was doing a better job than the church. These practices were not ad-libbed through history, right? How silly that was.

**Yoga** You probably know yoga has been a huge part of my life for over 10 years. In yoga classes, teachers would piously tell us that yoga is old; really old; like 5000- years- old- got- the- hieroglyphs- to- prove- it- Pantanjali- old. It all seemed so uncorrupted as a prayerful, physical and personal practice handed across the millennia.

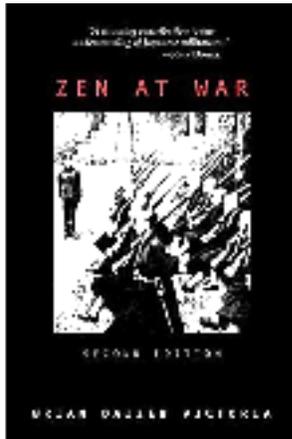
I believed I was part of a tradition even more ancient than the church and that this could complement and support my faith in Christ. Yoga was personal dogma for me, that is until I read a book called [Yoga Body](#). Mark Singleton blew up every shred of every piety that drove me to conclude that old = authentic = yoga. He blogs an excellent summary of yoga history if you would like to blow your yoga mind. Read his [summary of yoga body's history lesson](#) or follow the link mid paragraph to buy his book!

Superstars like Vivekananda and Krishnamacharya *marketed* themselves a mysterious, foreign, and enlightened gurus as they cobbled together skandinavian gymnastics; hindu mysticism; and authorianism to great effect. I still practice yoga, but it was in this "yoga faith crisis" that I really began to question the very nature of my faith.



*Is faith just throwing things on a wall to see what sticks?* I hoped not. So I went hunting. I hung out with Roman Catholics - Basilians and the nuns of the Villa de Matel. Had coffee with an Antiochian priest and Ukranian Orthodox monks. Maybe with all their emphasis on tradition they were unshakable - *nope*.

With the monks who taught music to an "Old Catholic" church quartet, it got weird. Great singers, but one monk from Big Spring, TX would not even shake hands with people because he was so holy. The monks never stopped talking about how they were authentic, unlike those terrible *Russian* Orthodox priests. I got sick of that quickly.



### Zen at War

So next was Zen. The Buddhists are so peaceful and uncorrupted by history, aren't they? I did week - long "rainy season" rohatsu sesshins (*long* meditation retreats). Bring metamucil if you know what's good for you.

I thought here, in silence, the churning of the mind could find brief moments of unshakability. I listened to ancient stories about super devoted monks. The only thing it succeeded in doing was to stoke my fantasy of giving the speaker a good beating because they were so aggressively boring. We had to dissect - ad nauseam - every stroke of Zen Japanese texts.

The second book to mess with my ultimate purity project was *Zen at War* (*especially the WWII history*.) Many Soto Zen priests in the war had completely married emperor worship, nationalism and Zen into a martial faith - literally. The most shocking part for me was where priests were teaching young Japanese kids how to stab American GI's in the event of a siege. Also entertainingly, priests would tire of praying the sutras, so they devised a genius plan to wave stacks of sacred texts over the Altar in order to amp up the prayer power for destroying the Allied forces.

After the war, as now, Japanese Soto Zen is marketed as historically disengaged and above the grim realities of life. That book undid it for me. I realized my meditation as purity project was neither pure, nor flowering from a history of non-violence. So I had to go back to basics - God's presence, God's love.

### **My experience**

- Roman Catholicism promises millennia of tradition.
- Orthodox Christianity promises an as old, but purer, tradition.
- Southern Baptist and Assemblies promise a code of ethics.
- Zen promises unshakable, ahistorical peace.
- Yoga promises ancient connection to the universe.
- Penecostal traditions promise a sealing of the Holy Spirit.
- Episcopalians value the questions as much as the answers.

**But the only thing I am sure of -- my experience of a living God who is always present, always breathing, always loving no matter how the tree of my life gets shaken.** Church institutions will ebb and flow. The church will sell out. It will stand up. The church will shrink. It will grow. Our own faith will go through seasons of life and death. But this shaky hell cannot overcome, understand, or outlast the living presence of God in us.

*Hebrews 12 - what cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us give thanks, Todd*