

Deepak Chopra

An Evaluation from the Theological Perspective
of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

History, Beliefs, Practices

Identity: Deepak Chopra is a medical doctor, popular author, speaker and advocate for Hindu beliefs and the practices of meditation and yoga.

Founder(s):

Deepak Chopra (born in 1946)

Statistics:

Dr. Chopra's net worth is said to be about \$150 million. He can charge \$75,000 for giving a speech.¹ His books, including numerous New York Times best-sellers, have been translated into over 43 languages.²

History:

Deepak Chopra, born in New Delhi, India, was trained as a practitioner of traditional medicine and attended medical school. He moved to the United States in 1970 to work in hospitals in New Jersey and Massachusetts, obtaining certifications in internal medicine, endocrinology and metabolism. Finding that lifestyle changes and alternative treatments were effective in treating patients, he opened a meditation center. In 1993, Dr. Chopra promoted his book *Ageless Body, Timeless Mind* on "The Oprah Winfrey Show" and the book sold 100,000 copies the next day. He has written more than 90 books and has worked with heads of state, giving advice on social and economic justice.

His Chopra Center for Well Being in Carlsbad, California, founded in 1996, promotes the use of meditation and yoga to supplement conventional medicine. He started the ChopraVerse, a web platform for wellbeing.³ Dr. Chopra hopes to reach a billion people with his teachings and create a more peaceful, just, sustainable, healthier and joyful world. He promotes the practice of *yoga*, a Sanskrit word meaning to yoke or to unite. The complete system of yoga, Dr. Chopra explains, means "the union of all aspects of life—physical, emotional, and spiritual."⁴ He launched a

¹ Bill Heavey, "Living in the Light Review: Bromides of Bliss," *Wall Street Journal*, January 18, 2023 at ['Living in the Light' Review: Bromides of Bliss - WSJ](#).

² [About - Deepak Chopra™](#)

³ Aby Sam Thomas, "In Tune with the Self: Deepak Chopra Believes Entrepreneurs Need to Redefine What Success Means to Them," *Entrepreneur (Middle East)*, January 17, 2023 at [In Tune With The Self: Deepak Chopra Believes Entrepreneurs Need To Redefine What Success Means To Them | Entrepreneur](#).

⁴ Deepak Chopra and Sarah Platt-Finger, *Living in the Light: Yoga for Self-Realization* (New York: Harmony Books, 2023), 4.

wellness app called Jiyo to help users monitor daily habits. He creates Facebook and Instagram videos and broadcasts daily meditations to Alexa users. He is a professor of family medicine and public health at the University of California San Diego School of Medicine. His Chopra Foundation has published research demonstrating the benefits of lifestyle changes in treating chronic diseases.⁵

Texts:

Deepak Chopra's books include *Perfect Health: The Power of Ayurveda to Balance Mind and Body* (2000), *The Book of Secrets: Unleashing the Hidden Dimensions of Your Life* (2004), *The Third Jesus: The Christ We Can't Ignore* (2008), *Metahuman: Unleashing Your Infinite Potential* (2019) and *Abundance: The Inner Path to Wealth* (2022). He has written two books for children: *On My Way to a Happy Life* (co-authored with Kristina Tracy, 2010) and *You with the Stars in Your Eyes: A Little Girl's Glimpse at Cosmic Consciousness* (2010).

Beliefs and Practices:

Illusion

Key topics addressed by Deepak Chopra include teachings about illusion, wealth and success and the person and work of Jesus Christ. Dr. Chopra believes "that we are living in virtual reality, merely creating our experiences in our minds. 'There's no such thing as the real reality,' he says. 'The universe is a human construct.'"⁶ His book co-authored with Sarah Platt-Finger, *Living in the Light: Yoga for Self-Realization* (2023), offers a 30 day program of Royal Yoga. The light in which one is to live is defined as "pure awareness; it is the cosmic consciousness that creates and maintains the universe and everything in it."⁷

This concept of reality as an illusion is a basic principle of Hinduism's yoga system. Dr. Chopra writes, "The world we think we live in is unreal. Like characters in a movie or a novel, we are living a fictional existence. Being unreal, this world we accept causes every kind of problem and suffering."⁸ He also says, "We need Yoga if we want to put a secure foundation under our lives, because, if we don't, eventually we will pay a price in pain and suffering."⁹ Through the practice of yoga, an individual will begin to see life "as a lucid dream, incredibly vivid but an illusion." A person "can improve the dream without getting trapped in it."¹⁰ Through yoga, one can fulfill thoughts, desires or goals by simply paying attention to them. The practice of yoga keeps the focus on the self, not an outside divine power.¹¹ Dr. Chopra writes, "Everything you call the 'world,' including your own body, its sensations, images, feelings, and thoughts in

⁵ Alexandra Wolfe, "Deepak Chopra's Path to Enlightenment Runs Through an App," *Wall Street Journal*, November 23, 2018 at www.wsj.com/articles/deepak-chopras-path-to-enlightenment-runs-through-an-app-1542895200 and [About - Deepak Chopra™](#).

⁶ Wolfe, Deepak Chopra's Path to Enlightenment Runs Through an App."

⁷ Heavey, "Living in the Light Review."

⁸ Chopra and Platt-Finger, *Living in the Light*, 15-16.

⁹ Chopra and Platt-Finger, *Living in the Light*, 17.

¹⁰ Chopra and Platt-Finger, *Living in the Light*, 6.

¹¹ Deepak Chopra, *Abundance: The Inner Path to Wealth* (New York: Harmony Books, 2022), 4.

consciousness.”¹² Human senses send electrical information to the brain and the individual’s consciousness “converts that information into a material universe.”¹³

Wealth and Success

Dr. Chopra recommends that people stop asking, “What’s in it for me?” and ask instead, “How can I serve?” He believes that humanity is heading toward extinction, through climate change, war, terrorism and the destruction of the eco-system.¹⁴ People should listen to others and stop acting in selfish and dividing ways. Dr. Chopra defines success as “the progressive realization of worthy goals, it is the ability to love and have compassion, but it is also true self-esteem.”¹⁵

The practice of yoga is part of achieving success. “By following the principles of Yoga, you will lead the life you were meant to live, one of sustainability, abundance, and joy. And along the way the money to support this life will come to you.”¹⁶ Yet he also cautions, “Measuring wealth by money alone is spiritually empty.”¹⁷

Jesus

As a child in India, Deepak Chopra attended a Catholic missionary school. He was fascinated with the story of Jesus, but felt that the church indoctrinated its members “into a belief system where guilt was actually a virtue.”¹⁸ Chopra studied the Bible to find a Jesus with a state of consciousness to which he could relate. In his book *The Third Jesus*, Chopra explains that the first Jesus is the historical figure, about whom, Dr. Chopra claims, almost nothing is known. The second Jesus, created by the church to fulfill its agenda, “is the Holy Ghost, the Three-in-One.”¹⁹ Jesus’ claim that a person must believe in Him to be saved was, according to Dr. Chopra, put in Jesus’ mouth by followers decades later. The third Jesus is not *the* savior, but *a* savior who “embodied the highest level of enlightenment” and intended to save the world by showing it the path to God-consciousness.²⁰

When people make Jesus the Son of God, Dr. Chopra believes that they “end up worshipping the messenger instead of the message and excluding all the theologies that existed before Jesus was born.”²¹ Chopra explains, “Jesus did not physically descend from God’s dwelling place above

¹² Deepak Chopra, *Mindful Moments: Thoughts to Nourish Your Body and Soul* (New York: Clark Potter Publishers, 2022), no page number.

¹³ Chopra, *Mindful Moments*, no page number.

¹⁴ Nel-Olivia Waga, “Deepak Chopra Talks about Abundance, Inner Wealth and More at the World Economic Forum in Davos, *Forbes*, June 1, 2022 at <https://www.forbes.com/sites/neloliviawaga/2022/06/01/dr-deepak-chopra-brings-consciousness-and-wisdom-to-the-world-economic-forum-in-davos-2022/>.

¹⁵ Aby Sam Thomas, “In Tune with the Self.”

¹⁶ Chopra, *Abundance*, xiv.

¹⁷ Chopra, *Abundance*, 2.

¹⁸ Michelle Nichols, “Who is Jesus? He’s Three People, Says Deepak Chopra,” *Reuters*, February 21, 2008 at [Who is Jesus? He's three people, says Deepak Chopra | Reuters](https://www.reuters.com/article/us/chopra-jesus/who-is-jesus-he-s-three-people-says-deepak-chopra-idUSKBN05100020080221)

¹⁹ Deepak Chopra, *The Third Jesus: The Christ We Can’t Ignore* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2008), 9.

²⁰ Chopra, *The Third Jesus*, 9-10.

²¹ David Van Biema, “Deepak Chopra on Jesus,” *Time*, November 13, 2008 at [Q&A: Deepak Chopra on Jesus - TIME](https://www.time.com/time/health/article/0,9171,1927612,00.html).

the clouds, nor did he return to sit at the right hand of a literal throne. What made Jesus the Son of God was the fact that he had achieved God-consciousness.”²²

A Lutheran Response

Illusion

While Hinduism may embrace the worship of one god or many gods, the one infinite being called Brahman is said to be the only existing reality. “The material world is considered illusory and unreal.”²³ In Hinduism, one possible yoke or path (*yoga*) to reach union with Brahman involves special breathing, posture and meditation.²⁴ Through his teaching and writing, Deepak Chopra promotes Hindu beliefs and practices that cannot be reconciled with the Christian faith.

As Christians we know that the created world is not an illusion, but the real and wonderful work of God our Creator, who continues to sustain His creation (Genesis 1, Psalm 19, Psalm 104). The reality of human sin brought ruin and death into God’s good creation. Jesus our Lord took on human flesh and entered this real world to suffer and die as the atoning sacrifice for the sin of the world. God’s grace and forgiveness also come to us in very real ways, in the Word of the Gospel, through the water and Word of Baptism, and in the bread and wine of the Lord’s Supper as we receive Jesus’ true body and blood.

Dr. Chopra believes that yoga provides a secure foundation that is created through a focus on self rather than on a divine power. As Christians, we know that “no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 3:11). Jesus alone is the secure foundation of our lives and our salvation. When He returns on the Last Day, the new heavens and earth that God will create will also be real, as real as the risen Lord who said to His disciples, “See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see” (Luke 24:39).

Wealth and Success

It is helpful to ask how one can serve others, as Dr. Chopra recommends, and he correctly comments that money is not the only measure of wealth. Yet he also suggests that when individuals practice yoga, money will follow to support their lives. As Christians we seek to serve others in love, and we know the suffering of bearing the cross as we follow our Lord, who bore the cross for us. Money received, not through meditation and yoga but through honest work, is used to provide for ourselves and our families and to help those in need. God’s Word warns against the love of money, an idolatrous love which is “a root of all kinds of evils” (1 Timothy 6:10). We are encouraged to be generous to those in need, because Jesus gave Himself for us: “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9).

²² Chopra, *The Third Jesus*, 3-4.

²³ Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR), “Hinduism: An Evaluation from the Theological Perspective of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod” (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 2013), at <https://files.lcms.org/f/341E068C-A26A-4C61-95C2-D9670799D677> .

²⁴ CTCR, “Hinduism: An Evaluation from the Theological Perspective of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.”

Jesus

Dr. Chopra comments that Christians worship the messenger—the Lord Jesus Christ—instead of the message. We worship Jesus as much more than a “messenger”; He is the Son of God and the promised Messiah who suffered, died and rose from the dead. We do not worship “the message,” but in the power of the Holy Spirit we seek to honor and obey His Word as we follow His teachings. We rightly exclude the false theologies of every century because “there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). Dr. Chopra denies that Jesus is the incarnate Son of God. The apostle John warns against such false beliefs: “By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God” (1 John 4:2-3).

Jesus did not come to lead people to “God-consciousness,” but to lay down His life as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world (1 John 2:1-2; Mark 10:45). Through faith in Jesus, our relationship to our heavenly Father is revealed: “No one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him” (Matthew 11:27). This relationship is not characterized by inward insight or “God-consciousness,” but by a childlike trust in our loving heavenly Father.

Dr. Chopra states that Jesus did not descend from heaven and that He does not reign at God’s right hand. We believe and confess that the Lord Jesus is true God and true man, born of the virgin Mary. The crucified and risen Lord ascended to reign at the right hand of God: “Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us” (Romans 8:34). On the Last Day Jesus will return in glory as King of kings and Lord of lords and “every eye will see him” (Revelation 1:7). It will not be an illusion.

Links and Websites

An Evaluation of Hinduism from a Lutheran Perspective (2013)

<https://files.lcms.org/f/341E068C-A26A-4C61-95C2-D9670799D677>

An Evaluation of Gnosticism from a Lutheran Perspective (2017)

<https://files.lcms.org/f/A226749A-B33D-4E87-BB65-41614A67CD6C>

An Evaluation of Yoga from a Lutheran Perspective (2007)

<https://files.lcms.org/f/16B5F481-5777-442B-B2AF-45A053EA74BC>