

# **“Is Hypnosis Spiritually Safe for Childbirth Pain Control?”**

My friend, a Christian for about four years, is a doula [a trained childbirth assistant and labor coach]. One of her recent clients has expressed an interest in hypno-birthing as a method for laboring. I expressed my concerns to my friend and she assures me that it is harmless. She says that you are in total control and place yourself in the hypnotic state where you would not do anything that goes against what you believe. I'm not so sure that I believe hypnotism is harmless; can you help me?

According to the trustworthy book *Mind Games: Exposing Today's Psychics, Frauds, and False Spiritual Phenomena* by André Kole and Jerry MacGregor, hypnosis can have legitimate medical benefits such as pain control, weight loss and smoking cessation. They report that your friend's assurance that a person undergoing hypnosis can't be forced to do anything that goes against one's will or one's beliefs is valid.

They explain that hypnosis is not truly understood and cannot be empirically proven (i.e., there is no brain wave difference for those undergoing hypnosis). There is no clear definition of a trance, and no one knows how it works. They say,

*“The simplest way to understand hypnosis is to regard it as a state of mind characterized by increased suggestibility—the acceptance of an idea without being critical of it. It is a method of bypassing the conscious mind. Whatever is presented to the subconscious mind, under certain conditions, may be automatically accepted and acted upon.”*

The power of hypnosis, then, is faith. The person being hypnotized must want to be hypnotized, they must trust the hypnotist, and they have to be consciously open to whatever is

suggested to them. They have faith in the hypnotist and in the process, and willingly submit to it. Kole and MacGregor say, "In one sense, when you submit to hypnosis, you actually give control of yourself and your mind to another individual. Therefore you should be extremely cautious about who you submit yourself to." Since we are not to be controlled by anything except the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18), the "green light" to use hypnosis would have to include accountability to make sure that the hypnotist, for laboring or anything else, is honorable in their intentions and in their practice.

Hope you find this helpful.

Sue Bohlin

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## **"Is Smoking a Sin?"**

**Is it a sin to smoke? I have always thought it was, with the caveat that the Bible does not expressly forbid it. However, if smoking is wrong, why isn't eating high fat foods or candy wrong? I realize that these foods do provide something positive, but they are still bad for you.**

It's interesting that you should link smoking with eating junk foods. Probe field associate Todd Kappelman makes this connection often in discussing the "Christian" position on smoking, as he points out that people who condemn tobacco are often the first ones to pop Twinkies and Ding Dongs in their mouths and not think anything of it. Is one so much worse than the other?

So I asked Todd how, exactly, he would respond to your question, and took notes as he answered.

He said that there are three positions that can be taken concerning questionable behaviors, which are appropriate to the discussion of smoking.

First is *prohibition*: "I don't, and you shouldn't either." Pedophilia and abortion, for instance, would fall in this category.

The second is *abstinence*: "I don't, but I won't say you shouldn't." For many people, drinking and watching TV fall in this category.

The third is *moderation*: "I do, but I also practice moderation in it." For many other people, drinking and watching TV fall in THIS category. A number of Christians take this position in regard to smoking.

Moderation is a Biblical standard in non-moral issues: Phil. 4:5 says, "Let your moderation be known to all men."

It's interesting that the culture of North American Christianity has made smoking an unacceptable, "unChristian" behavior, while in Europe, many Christians don't think twice about smoking, but consider American Christians' materialism and women's makeup unacceptable, "unChristian" behavior. So much of what we think is wrong is culturally bound.

Still, the issue of our bodies being a temple of the Holy Spirit needs to be taken into account. Is it possible to smoke to the glory of God? To bring us back to your original question, is it possible to eat fatty foods with empty calories to the glory of God? [When I had my husband Ray read this response, he added here that if you had nothing else to eat but fatty foods, they are still calories which would keep one alive, whereas nicotine is a drug without redeeming qualities, and there is nothing good that smoking does for you. Even junk food provides calories that may enable someone to live, but smoking only hurts you.]

Todd said that smoking is a non-moral issue. The rightness or wrongness of smoking wasn't even discussed before the health consequences of tobacco were discovered. [Note: not all the Probe staff is convinced of this argument.]

Todd conceded that these arguments are all weak and sketchy, which is why there is danger in taking a hard stance. One person may have freedom from the Lord to smoke, especially pipes and cigars which have moderation built in (so I hear). Others may sense His leading to quit or stay away from tobacco in the first place.

The two best questions that each person should ask, I believe, are 1) Can I do this to the glory of God? -and- 2) Is it OK with the Lord for me to do this? It is entirely possible, given different cultures and groups of people we minister to, that He could give freedom to one person and tell another no.

I hope this helps!

Sue Bohlin  
Probe Ministries

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## **A Doctor's Journey with Cancer**

When you suddenly learn you might have only 18 months to live, its a good time to sort out what really matters in life.

Last December, Yang Chen, MD, dismissed an aching pain under his shoulder as muscle strain. Five weeks later, as the pain persisted, a chest x-ray brought shocking results: possible lung cancer that might have spread.

A highly acclaimed specialist and medical professor at the University of Colorado Denver, Yang knew the average survival rate for his condition could be under 18 months. He didn't smoke and had no family history of cancer. He was stunned. His life changed in an instant.

I wondered how I would break the news to my unsuspecting wife and three young children, he recalls. Who would take care of my family if I died?

## **Swirling Vortex of Uncertainty**

When I heard his story, I felt a jab of recognition. In 1996, my doctor said I might have cancer. That word sent me into a swirling vortex of uncertainty. But I was fortunate; within a month, I learned my condition was benign.

Yang did not get such good news. He now knows he has an inoperable tumor. He's undergoing chemotherapy. It's uncertain whether radiation will help. Yet through it all, he seems remarkably calm and positive. At a time when one might understandably focus on oneself, he's even assisting other cancer patients and their families to cope with their own challenges. What's his secret?

I learned about Yang's personal inner resources when we first met in the 1980s. He worked at the Mayo Clinic and brought me to Rochester, Minnesota, to present a seminar for Mayo and IBM professionals on a less ponderous theme, Love, Sex and the Single Lifestyle. With the audience, we laughed and explored relationship mysteries. He felt it was essential that people consider the spiritual aspect of relationships, as well as the psychological and physical.

Later he founded a global network to train medical professionals how to interact with patients on spiritual matters. Many seriously ill patients want their doctors to discuss spiritual needs and the profession is taking note.

# Reality Blog

Now a patient himself, Yang exhibits strength drawn from the faith that has enriched his life. He has established a website [www.aDoctorsJourneyWithCancer.net](http://www.aDoctorsJourneyWithCancer.net) to chronicle his journey and offer hope and encouragement to others. The site presents a compelling real-life drama as it happens.

As a follower of Jesus, Yang notes [biblical references](#) to Gods light shining in our hearts and people of faith being like fragile clay jars containing this great treasure. He sees himself as a broken clay jar through which Gods light can shine to point others who suffer to comfort and faith.

As he draws on divine strength, he reflects on Paul, a first-century believer who wrote, We are pressed on every side by troubles, but we are not crushed. We are perplexed, but not driven to despair.

A dedicated scientist, Yang is convinced that what he believes about God is true and includes information about evidences for faith. Hes also got plenty to help the hurting and the curious navigate through their pain, cope with emotional turmoil, and find answers to lifes perplexing questions about death, dying, the afterlife, handling anxiety, and more.

With perhaps less than 18 months to live, Yang Chen knows whats most important in his life. He invites web surfers to walk with me for part, or all, of my journey. If Im ever in his position, I hope I can blend suffering with service while displaying the serenity and trust I observe in him. Visit [his website](#) and youll see what I mean.

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