

Yin and Yang

By Lee Yates



Since late winter brings the celebration of Chinese New Year (based on the lunar calendar), it is a great time to explore some of the similarities between Eastern religions and Christianity. One idea that shows up in many Eastern traditions is Yin and Yang. Learn about the symbol, the idea, and what it means for Christians.

For
Young Adult

Season
Winter

Needed

Note-card and pen, Yin – Yang worksheet, Bible

Activity Plan

1. Begin with a short prayer. Here are some words if you need them.

God, you created the universe. You created light and dark. You created the people who share the earth. In this time, may the beauty of others be a blessing to us.

2. One a note card, write down what you think the Taijitu (yin-yang) symbol means.
3. Look at the Yin-Yang worksheet and compare your understanding of the symbol to those from different Asian traditions. Use the following questions for reflection and discussion.
 - How are traditional Asia understandings of Yin and Yang similar to your understanding?
 - How are these understandings different from your understanding?
 - What would you compare the idea of Yin and Yang to in Christianity?
 - How are light and dark used in Christian traditions?
 - How might the idea of Yin and Yang challenge traditional Christian perspectives?
4. Make a list of your questions this reflection raises for you and save it for future reflection.
5. From your Bible read the following scriptures (or see last page).
 - Genesis 1:1-5
 - Psalm 119:105
 - John 1:1-5
 - Ephesians 5:6-14
6. Use the following questions for reflection.
 - If God made both day and night, why do we always make dark mean “bad”?
 - How might suffering and redemption be understood as yin and yang?
7. Close in prayer. Here are some words if you need them.

Lord, help me to be content with questions that have no answers. Help be see the connections between every part of creation. Help me see light in the darkness and even shadows in the light. Amen.



Yin Yang

General

Light and dark, opposites flowing into each other make up this symbol known as the Taijitu symbol. It tells the simple truths of nature, that light and dark follow each other and that all things are connected. The symbol is used in various spiritual traditions and martial arts teachings. It is also found in other cultures around the world.

Geography

Yang refers to the white or light side. Yin is the dark, shadow, or black side. There is a connection to many Asian city names. A city with “yang” in it is often on the sunny side of a hill or river valley.

Calendar

If the white represents light, then the top represents the summer when days are longer and the sun is bright. The bottom is winter with longer nights.

Taoist

In the Taoist tradition, light and shadow are not opposites. They are simply different aspects of the same. Each has a piece of the other within it. One becomes the other in the flow of time. In any given moment, it may seem like one stands as the opposite of the other, but this is our perception rather than reality.

Want to know more? Hop online and begin your search. You will discover great diversity of interpretation and use. (Remember, not everything you read in the internet is true and not all “experts” are created equal.)



Scripture Passages

Genesis 1:1-5

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

Psalms 119:105

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

John 1:1-5

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

Ephesians 5:6-14

Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not become partners with them; for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light.

