

# Pilates Principles

by Genelle Pepple

Pilates is a very common exercise people use to strengthen and tone. While it certainly accomplishes this, it also integrates the principles of universal energy, breath control, and Eastern meditation. The Christian should be aware of this. Below is a very quick overview, taken directly from: <http://www.reformandride.com/classes/about-pilates/>

## **Principle #1: Concentration**

Because Pilates focuses on the natural connection between your mind and body, it encourages intense concentration. At any point during the exercises, you should be intensely focused on how your body reacts to them. According to Pilates, performing the exercises by rote memory dilutes their potency. Deep concentration helps your body and mind work in unison.

## **Principle #2: Breathing**

According to Joseph Pilates, proper breathing is crucial to long-lasting health. He claimed that blood circulation was closely linked to breathing. Specifically, deep inhalation and complete exhalation helped the blood's circulation remove waste gases from your body. Further, he insisted that you could not achieve full inhalation without forcing the air from your body through focused exhalation. Like any exercise, breathing should be done with control and precision, helping you to hone your concentration while performing your entire routine.

## **Principle #3: Control**

Consistent with the other principles, Pilates encourages absolute control when performing the exercises. Each breath and movement of your limbs should be devoid of sloppiness. Joseph Pilates believed that controlled muscle movement was the key to leveraging your muscles' development. Rather than focusing on the number of times an exercise was performed, he felt it was more worthwhile to maintain the proper form through absolute muscular control.

## **Principle #4: Precision**

The Pilates exercises encourage an economy of movement. There are few moves without a purpose. Because of this, the exercises should be performed with precision. The alignment of your body, the direction your limbs point and your breathing throughout influence the efficiency of your body.

## **Principle #5: Centering**

Joseph Pilates relentlessly promoted the idea that your body's energy and vitality sprung from what he called the "powerhouse." This powerhouse included the lower back, the area under the lower ribs, the abdomen and the hips. Today, most people refer to this area as the core muscles. An important component of the Pilates system, developing core muscle strength is critical to moving with efficiency, energy and balance.

### **Principle #6: Flow**

The last of the 6 guiding principles of Pilates, each exercise in the program should be done in a flowing movement. Doing so helps the body and mind tap into the energy emanating from the core (or "powerhouse") and allows it to flow evenly throughout the body to the extremities. Flow is considered the cornerstone of Joseph Pilates' idea that the body should move naturally with grace and balance.

The discipline of Pilates focuses on establishing and maintaining the natural connection between your mind and body. By following the principles above, Pilates encourages the energy within your core to develop and flow outward through your entire body. Each of the 6 principles combine to create a cohesive, fluid exercise program that promotes lifelong health.

Other sources identify Pilates as a practice involving principles that run contrary to the Bible. Here is what Women of Grace say on their web post:

“The inventor of pilates, Joseph Pilates, was heavily influenced by yoga and Zen meditation when he created the technique. He was also a big endorser of the power of positive thinking, a movement that eventually became absorbed in the New Age’s Human Potential Movement.

In his book, *Return to Life Through Contrology* (Contrology was the original name for pilates), Pilates wrote: “One of the major results of Contrology is gaining the mastery of your mind over the complete control of your body.”

“The biggest problem with pilates is not that the exercises themselves are New Age, but that modern versions tend to incorporate yoga and other Eastern techniques as well as New Age practices.”

<http://www.womenofgrace.com/blog/?p=11396>

Pilates is also placed in the same camp as yoga and other Eastern meditative practices. See: “Feel Good Yoga & Pilates” <http://www.feelgoodyogavictoria.com/universal-energy/>

As you consider methods to exercise, gain strength, and improve yourself, please be careful to question whether the practice you’re interested in aligns squarely with biblical principles and therefore honors God.