

## FASTING: A MUCH NEGLECTED CURE

Dr. Mary Ruth Swope

It is no secret that thousands of Americans have deep-rooted health problems. For example:

- People have drug and alcohol-related problems.
- They have cancer, heart disease, high blood pressure, hardening of the arteries, arthritis, gout, diabetes - many of which are said to be incurable.
- They have mental health problems. Some are very fearful, anxious, and frustrated by life.

There is a well-documented cure for most of these and many other conditions that has been buried, replaced by new but "unproven" technologies in health care. The cure to which I refer is **FASTING**.

While you are pondering that last statement, let me give you another thought for your consideration.

**Probably the most unbeatable combination for total healing of the body is FASTING and PRAYER.**

These are two of the most powerful "weapons" in our personal arsenal for eliminating illness, even the so-called incurable illnesses. I believe, like a scientist who said, "I do not believe there is any incurable illness but I admit there are millions of incurable people." Many who refuse to believe in **fasting** and **prayer** would, in my estimation, fall into that category.

When I think of fasting, two distinct things immediately come to mind:

1. The spiritual aspects of **fasting** with all the lessons to be learned and
2. The physical benefits of **fasting** with all the case histories of success.

Through years of experience in nutrition, I have learned that few people know about **fasting**. Very few have followed the biblical pattern of **fasting** one or two days each week. In fact, schools of theology and medicine both teach virtually nothing about either **fasting** or nutrition.

I have heard many orthodox doctors speak negatively about **fasting** - warning patients that it can be very dangerous. Under a few circumstances, it can be! There are untold benefits, physically and spiritually for those who do it.

Let's define what I mean by **fasting**. Experts use slightly different terms and give varying examples. For the purpose of this article, **fasting** is denying yourself food and/or beverages of all kinds, except water, for a given period of time. There are three basic ways to fast:

**I. The TOTAL TAST** - just what you might guess. It means no food or beverages of any kind. The Bible records that Moses completed two 40-day total **fasts**. These are recorded in Deuteronomy 9 and 10. Also in I Kings 19:8. Elijah went for 40 days and nights on a total **fast**. Don't try it yourself unless God tells you to do that. No one can survive more than three days at the most without water. Forty days without food is no problem for most of us - but only a supernatural **fast** could keep us alive 40 days without water. Most other biblical records of total **fasts** are from 24 hours to three days in length. Esther told her people not to eat or drink - day or night - for three days (Esther 4:16). But let me repeat: Most people, unless told by the Holy Spirit, should not go off water for three days.

**II. The Absolute Fast** - this means no food or liquid of any kind except water. This is the kind I have practiced regularly for more than 15 years. I deny myself food from Friday night after dinner until Saturday night dinner. This has caused me to humble myself before God. It "afflicted my soul," as the Scripture says. Overtime, it gave my spirit power over my mind, emotions, and will. I consider these to the greatest possible benefits.

I started **fasting** on Saturdays because I was really hungry to know God better. I wanted to feel closer to God - to hear Him speak to me, if He wanted to. Also, I wanted to learn to **pray** more and more effectually. Certainly these goals have been achieved to a satisfactory level. I believe I understand true repentance and true humility more after **fasting** for a few months. It caused me to become more God-conscious and less worldly minded - and I'm happy about that.

In addition my physical health has definitely improved. Some of these changes are only partially documented by medical records but other things are clinically observable. For example:

- My cholesterol level lowered from slightly above 200 to 154 in a relatively short period of time;
- My bad cholesterol count is down;
- My good cholesterol count is up - so I have less chance for heart disease;
- My tendency toward hypoglycemia has leveled - I have no more energy swings from high to low as I once did. I'm energetic all the time;
- My tongue is never coated;
- My eyes are clear and very free from signs of disease;
- I don't have cravings or go on food binges anymore. Food isn't preeminent in my thinking all the time. I don't give a hoot about candy, doughnuts, cakes, pies, ice cream, and many other poor nutrition foods;
- I've given up most of my caffeine, so my heart doesn't have irregular palpitations;
- I'm hardly ever sick. I have a constant high level of energy - physical and mental;
- I sleep well and feel rested when I awaken.

**III. The Partial Fast** - is the third method of **fasting**. This is when you deny yourself certain foods and drinks - like the Catholics giving up meat on Friday, or Daniel, who gave up bread, meat, and wine for 21 days (Dan. 10:3). A vegetarian diet would not be an example of a partial **fast**, in my way of thinking. They are not giving up meat for an occasional meal or period of time, but rather have adopted a vegetarian lifestyle. A partial **fast** simply means eating very light meals, or fruits, or freshly-squeezed juices of fruits or vegetables - no heavy foods - no proteins, fats, complex carbohydrates, or grains. Daniel's fast included all the grains, but no meat, milk, eggs, or cheese. So partial **fasts** include giving up some of your favorite foods, especially those that we crave and overeat.

In my estimation, a teaspoon or two of [BarleyLife](#) is an excellent food to take when **fasting**. Your cells are "satisfied" with the nutrients they receive, while the digestive system continues to rest. Six calories per teaspoon is not enough to stimulate metabolic processes. I'd also like to suggest that maximum benefits of **fasting** occur when you accompany your food and drink **fast** with a **fast** from your television viewing, newspaper reading, and radio listening, as well as your hobbies and pleasure-giving indulgences.

**In fact, prayer and fasting is the winning combination - physically, mentally, emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually.** You feel enriched and at peace, especially when **fasting** is accompanied by your being quiet in your spirit. Wholeness of body, soul, and spirit can be best achieved by **prayer** and **fasting**. This has been my own experience.

An in-depth presentation on Prayer and Fasting may be found in my book [THE ROOTS AND FRUITS OF FASTING](#) .

### **RULES FOR FASTING**

Rules for getting ready for a **fast**:

1. Determine the length - set a time limit.
2. Begin by refraining from huge meals.
3. Plan to spend long periods of time in **prayer**.
4. Read large sections of Scripture.
5. Select key verses to memorize.
6. Worship the Lord.

### **Rules about breaking the fast:**

- Be wise - don't undue quickly all you've gained. That means:
  1. Begin with a very light meal - no greasy, fatty foods. Start with soup, toast, or fruit.
  2. For the next meal, have a big, raw salad as the main dish - this acts like a brush in your intestines.
  3. The longer you **fast**, the more gradually you should break it. Show real self-control.
  4. One more point: As a result of **fasting** - even if it's only for a couple of days - your stomach will have contracted, and it is usually not wise to expand it again to the former size. Most people in Western civilization have an over-expanded stomachs.

You will find that as you start eating after a **fast**, you will begin to feel full sooner than you would before you **fasted**. Habit will make you go on eating the rest of the meal, but wisdom says, "Why not stop there? You've had enough." Therefore, **fasting** is a way to change eating habits, which many of us need to do.