

LAGOS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

YABA, LAGOS



HEALTH BENEFITS OF FASTING

BY

ELDER DR. JOHN O. EGBUTA

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FASTING AND HEALTH BENEFITS OF FASTING

Nutrition (also called nourishment or aliment) is the provision, to cells and organisms, of the materials necessary (in the form of food) to support life. Many common health problems can be prevented or alleviated with good nutrition. Malnutrition (which can occur as a result of undernutrition or overnutrition) can set in when the Nutrition of the individual is not well managed. Malnutrition due to undernutrition can manifest as wasting, stunting, or underweight. Malnutrition due to overnutrition can manifest as obesity, hypertension, diabetes, and bulimia. Fasting therefore becomes an essential spiritual exercise to regulate the body's nutritional processes.

I should be able to look at a delicious meal and boldly declare to myself that “Food shall not have dominion over me”.

Paul urged the Galatians to do every thing possible not to gratify the desires of the flesh (Galatians 5:16). “So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature”. You are able to shun food, no matter how attractive and delicious, by the power of the Holy Spirit. Paul continued to admonish the Galatians as he does to us today: “For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want (vs 17).

As the 40-day fasting and prayer period draws near, you are likely to receive suggestions from the sinful flesh not to participate in the exercise because it is harmful, unsafe, and dangerous. Those suggestions are absolutely untrue!!!

WHAT IS FASTING?

Fasting is a period of abstinence from all food or specific items (meat, sleep, sex, breakfast, lunch, dinner, alcohol, etc). In long fasting, Water is consumed in sufficient quantity to satisfy thirst and physiologic requirements.

During the absence of food, the body will systematically cleanse itself of everything except vital tissue. Starvation will occur only when the body is forced to use vital tissue to survive. **Although protein is used by the body when fasting, a person fasting for 40 days on water will not suffer a deficiency of protein, vitamins, minerals or fatty acids.**

FASTING AS A PROCESS OF CLEANSING THE BODY

The human body has several ordinary modes of achieving elimination and cleansing: the liver, lungs, kidneys, colon, skin are organs for cleansing and elimination. When these are overloaded, the body will resort to "extra ordinary" methods of elimination and cleansing: boils, mucous and other discharges, sweats, vomiting, diarrhea, and many others. Should elimination be impossible or uneconomical of body energy, the toxic overload will go into storage forms in the joints, vessels, muscles, organs; almost any tissue in the body. While fasting, the body is highly conservative of its energy and resources. During this deep and profound rest, toxin intake and production are reduced to a minimum while autolysins and elimination proceed unchecked. Anabolic processes such as tissue and bone healing also proceed at a maximal rate during the fast period.

In the body, the first stage of cleansing removes large quantities of waste matter and digestive residues. The first few days of a fast can be rough due to the quantity of waste passing into the blood stream. The tongue becomes coated and the breath foul as the body excretes waste through every opening. After the third day of the fast, there is little desire for food. The second stage is the cleansing of mucous, fat, diseased and dying cells, and the more easily removed toxins. As the fast continues, the cleansing process becomes more thorough. The last stage is the cleansing of toxins that have been accumulating in your cellular tissue from birth, and the microscopic tubes that carry vital elements to the brain. Cleansing of the last layer is only possible through a combination of juice fasting, water fasting, and a healthy diet high in raw foods. To overcome a severe disease like cancer, it is important to continue through a series of fasts,

to the point where the full scouring action of catabolism removes the disease from the tissue.

Fasting, also, is primarily the act of willingly abstaining from some or all food, drink, or both, for a period of time. A fast may be total or partial concerning that from which one fasts, and may be prolonged or intermittent as to the period of fasting. Fasting practices may preclude sexual activity as well as food, in addition to refraining from eating certain types or groups of foods; for example, one might refrain from eating meat.

FASTING AS AN INSTRUMENT FOR HEALING

Fasting is an exceptionally ancient, and powerful, approach to healing many common disease conditions. **It allows the body to rest, detoxify, and to heal.**

Detoxification: This is the removal of toxic elements (poisons) from the body. The liver, and to some extent the kidneys, are the organs of the body responsible for the process of detoxification and cleansing of the internal system.

During fasting the body moves into the same kind of detoxification cycle that it normally enters during sleep. It uses its energy during a fast, not for digesting food, but for cleansing the body of accumulated toxins and healing any parts of it that are ill.

As a fast progresses the body consumes everything that it can that is not essential to bodily functioning. This includes bacteria, viruses, fibroid tumors, waste products in the blood, any build up around the joints, and stored fat. The historical record indicates that human beings are physiologically and anatomically designed to fast. It is an incredibly safe approach to healing and the body knows how to do it very well.

FASTING AND HEALING

Fasting has been found to help a number of disease conditions, often permanently. There have been a number of intriguing clinical trials and studies treating numerous disease conditions with fasting. Here are some of those findings.

- * In one clinical trial of hypertension and fasting, 174 people with hypertension were prefasted for 2-3 days by eating only fruits and vegetables. They then participated in a 10-11 day water only fast, followed by a 6-7 day post fast in which they ate only a low-fat, low- sodium vegan diet. Initial blood pressure in the participants was either in excess of 140 millimeters of mercury (mm HG) systolic or 90 diastolic or both. Ninety percent of the participants achieved blood pressure less than 140/90 by the end of the trial. The higher their initial blood pressure the more their readings dropped. The average drop for all participants was 37/13. Those with stage 3 hypertension (over 180/110) had an average reduction of 60/17. All those taking blood pressure medication prior to fasting were able to discontinue it. Fasting has been shown in a number of trials like this one to be one of the most effective methods for lowering blood pressure and normalizing cardiovascular function. Blood pressure tends to remain low in all those using fasting for cardiovascular disease once fasting is completed.**
- * Fasting is exceptionally beneficial in chronic cardiovascular disease and congestive heart failure, reducing triglycerides, atheromas, total cholesterol, and increasing HDL levels.**
- * Fasting has been found effective in the treatment of diabetes, often reversing the condition permanently.**
- * Because of its long term effects on metabolism, fat stores in the body, leptin, and disease conditions associated with obesity, fasting has been found to be one of the most effective treatments for obesity.**
- * A number of studies have found that fasting is beneficial in epilepsy, reducing the length, number, and severity of seizures. Fasting is especially effective for helping alleviate or cure childhood epilepsy.**
- * In a 1988 trial of 88 people with acute pancreatitis, fasting was found better than any other medical intervention.**

Neither nasogastric suction nor cimetidine was found to produce as beneficial effects as those from fasting. Symptoms were relieved irrespective of the etiology of the disease.

- * A number of studies have found that fasting is effective for treating both osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis. Fasting induces significant anti-inflammatory actions in the body and researchers found decreased ESR, pain, stiffness, and need for medication.**
- * Autoimmune diseases such as lupus, chronic urticaria, and acute glomerulonephritis have all responded well to fasting.**
- * Severe toxic contamination has been shown to be significantly helped with fasting.**
- * Poor immune function improves during fasting. Studies have found that there is increased macrophage activity, increased cell-mediated immunity, decreased complement factors, decreased antigen-antibody complexes, increased immunoglobulin levels, increased neutrophil bactericidal activity, depressed lymphocyte blastogenesis, heightened monocyte killing and bactericidal function, and enhanced natural killer cell activity.**
- * The historically lengthy claim that fasting increases life span is beginning to garner some support in research literature. Regularly repeated 4-day fasting has been found to increase the life span in normal and immunocompromised mice.**
- * Although the use of fasting in the treatment of cancer is controversial, there is some emerging data **SHOWING** that fasting helps prevent cancer. Intermittent fasting (2 days weekly) has shown an inhibitory effect on the development of liver cancer in rats.**

PEOPLE WHO SHOULD NOT FAST

Although most people can fast, there are a few who, because of special conditions, should not.

- * People who are extremely emaciated or in a state of starvation
- * Those who are anorexic (extreme loss of appetite) or bulimic (overt longing for food, insatiability)
- * Pregnant, diabetic women
- * Nursing mothers
- * Those who have severe anemia
- * Those with an extreme fear of fasting
- * People with a rare, genetic, fatty acid deficiency which prevents THE INITIATION OF KETOSIS. This is a deficiency involving the enzyme acetyl-CoA, a mitochondrial fatty acid oxidation enzyme, that is essential to ketosis.

WHY YOU NEED TO FAST

The other very important aspect is that your self-awareness will be elevated. If you are sick and depressed, then this might be the most important thing you can try in your healing program, because it gives you immediately an energy boost and increased awareness which might allow that you see things more clearly, allowing you the first step out of your sickness and onto the path of recovery. While fasting you become more aware of your body process, your life and with everything you are doing. It becomes a period where you can evaluate all that you're doing more objectively, and you naturally have more time for contemplation because you aren't using time amassing, preparing, eating, eliminating and cleaning up all which is used to prepare food. You become more aware of what your body likes and doesn't like when you start to eat again. You gain self-confidence in your ability to control your life process, to set a goal and carry out an intention.

Finally, I suggest that we all be guided by Paul's declaration and affirmation to the church in Philippi "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" Philippians 4:13.