

How Fasting Can Improve Your Spiritual and Physical Health

The Bible says the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. We wrote about this in the January issue of *Charisma* in which we covered both fasting and health.

To me, they are somewhat related, as I explained in my Perspectives column. I believe we must be responsible for and take care of the physical body God has given us. I hope for many reasons that our issue on health and fasting is a turning point.

I know some Christians who wouldn't drink or smoke (because it's unhealthy) but were so obese they had very poor health. They wouldn't need God to heal them of their maladies if they had lived healthy lifestyles!

Fasting is a spiritual discipline that brings us closer to God and helps us believe Him at times of great need. And the articles on health in the January issue of *Charisma* can help us improve incrementally and enjoy life to the fullest. No matter how poor or good your health is, you can improve.

A decade ago, I felt led to fast for 40 days. It was a time of great spiritual breakthrough for me. I got a physical exam before I started my 40-day fast, which I recommend before doing something so radical.

The fast had a side benefit—I proved to myself that I was not a slave to my appetite. Turning away dessert or avoiding a bag of chips is not hard compared to the discipline of a long fast! It broke whatever compulsive eating habits I may have had, my body was able to detoxify, and I proved to myself I could do a long fast.

In my mid-20s, I was so out of shape I couldn't run a lap

around a football field without being winded. I had grown up in a family where healthy eating habits and exercise were not emphasized. Several relatives tipped the scales at over 300 pounds. I didn't want to be that out of shape.

Then I read an article about someone who started jogging by running to the next mailbox and then walking to the next mailbox. Soon he could run to two mailboxes before walking and gradually built up to a mile. I decided I could do that, and I did! When I travel internationally, I have enjoyed some pleasant jogs through places like Venice, downtown London and Russia.

Because that article helped me, I read other articles and books and began to educate myself on the value of health and fitness. It may be why we now publish a line of health books, many of which have been very popular, under the brand Siloam. I've also turned to professionals for advice. I go to doctors who can help me with my health! (I personally avoid overweight doctors.) I've found health professionals who can help me work out.

Two years ago this month, I was treated for prostate cancer. Thankfully, I found a procedure called High Intense Focused Ultrasound (HIFU) that is noninvasive and left me cancer free with no side effects. I did a lot of research to determine what was right for me because I found the health professionals recommended whatever they made money doing!

I decided to try to be in as good health as possible before the procedure, so I started going to a trainer. I actually lowered my percentage of fat and added muscle, and I've continued the routine. I also began to set some goals. I ran in some races and decided to increase the pushups, pull-ups and sit-ups I could do. Recently, a military friend told me about the Army Physical Fitness Test all military personnel must pass twice a year. For fun, I pulled the test off the Internet that the Rangers must pass and I passed it!

I participated for six weeks with a group of men who did the program, and each week, we had to do something extreme and post the results on a special Facebook page. For example, one day we had to do as many pushups as possible. I picked a Saturday when I had the flexibility and did a set of 25 and then 20 minutes later, another set of 25. In a 12-hour span, I was able to do more than 700. I would have never guessed this possible.

Then, for my 64th birthday, I did 64 pull-ups. I admit it was fun to prove to myself and others that I could do more than I thought possible. If I can do it, you can do more than you thought possible!

✖ I'm well aware that the apostle Paul said, "Bodily exercise profits a little" (1 Tim. 4:8). There are those who spend so much time working out others call them gym rats! They are almost cult-like in how they focus on physical fitness beyond all else and seemingly worship the human body.

I'm not talking about that extreme. I'm talking about the parable of the talents, which can be summed up as: "If you use it, it will grow, and if you don't use it, you will lose it." Jesus said that about investing talents, but that also applies in exercise.

God created wonderful bodies and gave us health. In 3 John 2, it says, "Beloved, I pray ... you may be in good health." I believe He's glorified when we are responsible to use what He's given for His glory. Everything we do in word and deed—even caring for our health—must be done for His glory.
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