

# The Plain Truth About FASTING

by Herbert W. Armstrong

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Is it starvation? Is it nature's way of healing sickness and disease? Is it dangerous or beneficial?

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**I**T SEEMS almost no one knows the real TRUTH about fasting. One doctor called it the "Fast Way to Health." Another called it "starvation diet."

One person asked, "If I missed two meals in a row, would I die?" Apparently many people seem to feel that if they missed more than one meal a day they would at least be in serious danger.

Some people believe in fasting from the very moment they feel the first warning signs and pains of a cold or an approaching fever. Many people say: "You should always *feed a cold, but starve a fever.*" But is this true?

Is fasting dangerous? Is it beneficial? Is it nature's way of *healing*?

## Time to Know Truth

You think you already know the answer? *Don't be too sure!*

I know of hundreds, if not thousands of our readers who think they know the truth about fasting—but who *do not*—and EVERYBODY needs, seriously, to read this article!

On the one hand sensible fasting is *not* a starvation diet, and those who have the starvation fear are at one erroneous extreme—whether ignorant layman or professional physician. Most doctors, incidentally, have studied *medicine*, not fasting, as an aid toward elimination of

disease. One doctor said to me: "We doctors have been kept so busy treating sick patients with drugs and medicines, we have had little time to study the *causes* of sickness and disease, or much about diet and nutrition."

In the "healing arts" (an unfortunate and incorrect term) professional men have tended to specialize each in his one field *only*. The medical physician seeks the cure almost exclusively by drugs or surgery. The chiropractor seeks to cure by manipulating the spine—perhaps with the aid of prescribed diet. The naturopath by "natural" means. Medical doctors generally ridicule fasting in the case of sickness or disease, just as they would avoid recommending chiropractic treatments, or any other method outside their one field of *medicine*. Fasting is simply outside their field. A few medical doctors have advocated fasting, but certainly they are in the minority.

But to look on sensible fasting as starvation is an untrue extreme, based on plain ignorance.

On the other hand, some go to the opposite extreme of regarding fasting as a CURE-ALL.

NEITHER EXTREME IS THE TRUTH!

Wise fasting, under proper conditions, *is beneficial, not dangerous!*

On the other hand, just as I say, truthfully, "there is not a *cure* in a carload of medicine," so I say FASTING NEVER HEALS!

Those two statements, in the

paragraph above, will come as a shock to many. Millions firmly believe that medicines cure diseases. I have never heard a physician make such a claim. Many doctors have admitted candidly that medicines DO NOT CURE. "We only use medicines," these doctors have said, "*to aid nature.*"

But, the few who do believe in *fasting* when ill will surely be shocked to see the statement under my by-line that FASTING NEVER HEALS! Yet that statement is absolutely true—and it's about time we come to UNDERSTAND what fasting *is*—and what it is NOT!

## Fasting Never Heals

Fasting does not HEAL!

Healing is a divine miracle. Healing is the *forgiveness of SIN*—and none can forgive sin but GOD. Fasting is self-inflicted—a *human* effort, not divine miracle—and fasting cannot forgive sin.

Jesus Christ healed the sick. It was always HIS WILL. He healed the sick in ancient Israel, long before his human appearance, born human of the virgin Mary. One of his names is Yahweh-Ropheka—which, translated into English, means OUR GOD-HEALER.

To the griping, complaining Israelites in the arid lands approaching Mt. Sinai, he said, "I am the LORD that healeth thee." And in the original Hebrew language, in which Moses wrote this, his name was given as "Yahweh-Ropheka."

David *knew* God heals, as surely as he forgives sin: "Who forgiveth

all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases” (Ps. 103:3). Isaiah explained how. When Jesus was spending a whole night healing *all* that were sick, we read, in Matthew 8:16-17: “. . . and healed all that were sick: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet [Isa. 53:4], saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.”

How, then, did Jesus “take them”—that is, bear them—or pay the penalty in our stead? Peter explains it: “by whose stripes ye were healed” (I Pet. 2:24).

### Sickness Is a Penalty

What is sickness—disease—debility—pain and suffering? It is the *penalty* being paid for the violation of the *physical* laws of the human body.

It is *not natural* to be sick, it is *unnatural*! God so designed the mechanism of the human body that, given *proper* food (and few indeed know what that is!); drinking the *right* amount of *pure* water; *breathing* properly of *pure* air; getting *sufficient* exercise—and that is not necessarily a great amount; obtaining *sufficient* rest, recreation and sleep; maintaining normal *regularity* of elimination, which includes more *frequent* bathing and *rubdowns* than many realize; and keeping the mind in a positive, cheerful, active and peaceful state, *the body would never be sick!*

Very few understand this. I have just named the *seven laws* of health, which God has given each of us, as a human individual, the *RESPONSIBILITY* of regulating.

Of course, it is true that even many if not most doctors know *so little* about *proper* food and diet that they are unable themselves to observe the *dietary* law of health. That law is the one *most* frequently broken.

Most people think they can put anything that pleases the palate into the mouth and call it food. That is not true. Potassium cyanide might *taste* good—I really don’t know, for I never experimented, and never intend to!—but *every* doctor will agree that it is not *FOOD*! It will kill you—*QUICKLY*! The only difference

is that *excess* of starchy “foods,” *sugars* and *greases*, kills you—slowly, gradually, over a duration of perhaps 10, perhaps 60 years—and sets up colds, fevers, rheumatisms, tuberculosis, heart diseases, diabetes, kidney disorders and dozens of other ailments along the way in the meantime!

Very few know that they ought to *breathe* more deeply and be sure to obtain fresh air during sleep—even by leaving a window partly open. And so millions upon millions of people violate this simple health rule. And *all* cigarette smokers!

Almost *no one* knows the value, to health and long life, of *regular* *daily* *RUBDOWNS*—good, brisk,

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*vigorous* (not necessarily over-vigorous or violent) *rubdowns*, with a *bath* towel, brush or other means.

The food we eat passes through the alimentary canal, with needed elements being absorbed into the bloodstream on the way, and the waste then expelled. God has given every normal human a very plain signal to *know* when elimination time arrives—and this can be regulated into an established *HABIT* at regular *convenient* times of day. Yet probably many women, and a large portion if not half of men, are suffering from constipation—due to *pure neglect*, and, probably, faulty diet and in some cases lack of exercise!

### Your Responsibility

The point is this: Obeying *THESE*

seven laws is the responsibility of each individual. This knowledge is *AVAILABLE*! There is no excuse for human ignorance. Such knowledge always has been accessible. These laws we, ourselves, either observe and obey—or else we violate them and bring on lowered vitality, depleted energy, befogged and dulled minds, a feeling of “dopey” laziness, and almost countless diseases.

Now Jesus Christ *never broke a single one of these laws*! And Jesus Christ *WAS NEVER SICK—not for a minute*!

Yet his body was just like our bodies! He set us the example. He demonstrated that, if *WE* obey the laws God has given as our responsibility to obey, the *BODY ITSELF* will function regularly, in perfect health, strong vigor, vitality, energy and strength—and *NEVER* get sick!

It is a far more precision-designed-and-made mechanism than a Rolls-Royce automobile. It *just won’t break down* or get sick—*OF ITSELF*! It functions automatically. But, like your automobile, it needs “being taken care of,” as one conscientious chauffeur put it. Your automobile needs the right kind of fuel, oils and greases. It needs watching to see that there is proper amount of water in the radiator. Yes, it needs attention.

The trouble is, most of you *give* careful attention to your automobiles, but give almost *NO ATTENTION* to the care of *your own bodies*!

Now what is the *BIBLE* definition of *SIN*? Sin is the *TRANSGRESSION OF LAW* (I John 3:4). Of course it means law of *GOD*—but it includes these *physical* laws. These physical laws, too, were set in inexorable living motion by *GOD*.

Sin, *spiritually*, is the transgression of the *spiritual* law of *LOVE*—divided into the *TWO* great commandments, love toward God and love toward neighbor—enlarged into the Ten Commandments, and magnified by Jesus, and all through the Bible—especially the New Testament.

This law is a *SPIRITUAL LAW*! It can only be fulfilled—or kept—

by *spiritual* love, which is the LOVE of GOD, which one can have only by God's GRACE, through his Holy Spirit—which *IS* that spiritual LOVE! The penalty for violation of that law is THE SECOND, and ETERNAL, DEATH!

When you are sick, the *physical laws* that regulate the human mechanism have been violated! Of course, there can be injury from accident or violence. You, yourself, may or may not be responsible for that. Accidents nearly always result from carelessness—but of course it *could* be the other fellow's carelessness! Perhaps you drank a germ in drinking water—supposing it was pure water. Yes it is possible—and sometimes happens—that the sick or injured one did not, himself, violate the physical law. But, regardless, NATURE'S LAWS WERE VIOLATED.

SO, SICKNESS, DISEASE, INJURIES ARE THE PENALTY of physical SIN! Jesus Christ himself said so! Healing is forgiveness of the sin and *miraculous removal* of the PENALTY.

#### Healing Is Forgiving Sin

Once Jesus Christ was in a house in Capernaum. Crowds flocked in. The house became jam packed, many unable to enter. Then came four men carrying on a pallet a man sick with palsy. Unable to get through the crowd, they climbed on the housetop, tore off several tiles and let the man on the pallet down through the roof in front of Jesus.

"When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee."

Immediately the Pharisees and doctors of the law among the crowd began to accuse Jesus of blasphemy—claiming to FORGIVE SIN! He said to them:

"Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house" (Mark 2:1-11).

Jesus Christ performed this HEALING in order to show that healing is THE FORGIVENESS OF PHYSICAL SIN—and, by divine MIRACLE, the REMOVAL of the penalty being suffered.

How is this penalty removed? By the POWER of the Holy Spirit, *because* Jesus Christ was flogged—beaten with stripes—scourged—beaten so that he was disfigured, or marred, more than any man (Isa. 52:14). He, who never broke nature's physical health laws—who never was sick or diseased—PAID THE PENALTY of our physical transgressions IN OUR STEAD. Thus, if we accept his sacrifice (of being so scourged *before* being nailed to the cross), God, by

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*divine miracle*, has promised to remove from us the PENALTY we are paying in the form of sickness or disease.

All humans have SINNED—spiritually. Sin is the transgression of God's LAW. All have broken the spiritual LAW. The PENALTY is the second DEATH—and it is ETERNAL punishment. But we can have this penalty removed. HOW? By the fact that Christ paid the DEATH penalty for us—he *bled to death*—his blood was his physical human LIFE. The LAW took *his* life instead of ours. IF WE REPENT, and BELIEVE, then by divine *miracle* God's Holy Spirit REMOVES the death penalty from us. Our sins are forgiven by the BLOOD of Christ, and we are SAVED from the second death!

God HEALS by *precisely the same principle!* Not by Christ's BLOOD—but by his STRIPES we are healed (I Pet. 2:24). He paid the PENALTY in our stead. He did the suffering *for us*, so God can remove it from us!

God revealed this dual truth about spiritual forgiveness and physical forgiveness through David: "Who forgiveth ALL thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases" (Ps. 103:3). It is as much GOD'S WILL to heal as it is to SAVE!

#### What, Then, Is Use of Fasting?

Now it ought to become crystal clear that FASTING is *not* healing. Fasting *does not forgive sin*. Fasting is *not a miracle*.

Yet, I myself have recommended that people go on fasts who were afflicted with rheumatism, ulcers of the stomach, constipation, high blood pressure, fevers—and after the fast they were *rid of* the sickness or disease.

Well then, didn't the fasting HEAL them? NO—emphatically NO!

Let me explain what happened. Fasting is good for certain things—indeed many things—when intelligently and properly used. But what happened is this: the sickness in these instances was brought on by faulty diet. It was *the penalty* of putting improper things (usually excess starch, sugar and grease) into the stomach. Now the first thing that happened was, that on beginning the fast, these people *stopped sinning*. They stopped, by fasting, putting more of these toxin-producing elements (really poisons, not foods) into their stomachs.

Second, fasting tends to *speed up* the elimination of toxins and poisons. Fasting is not pleasant. The Bible refers to it as "afflicting the soul"—that is, the body. So, *they suffered the PENALTY* of having eaten that POISON, supposing it to be FOOD. In fact, the fasting *intensified* the penalty by speeding up the elimination.

In summary, what happened in fasting was this: 1) they stopped the sinning that *caused* the penalty

they were suffering; 2) they PAID THE PENALTY IN FULL *themselves*, in a speeded-up intensified form; and 3) when it was paid, they simply didn't have the sickness or disease any longer.

But THAT IS NOT HEALING!

Now we come to the question: If fasting is *not* healing, and we *do* believe, and intend to RELY ON JESUS CHRIST as our Healer, should we ever fast, when ill?

### Should We Fast, Then?

The answer is, YES, *always PROVIDED* you understand it is *not* a means of healing—it is *not* a substitute for healing—it actually has nothing to do with *healing!* And provided you are not currently taking prescription drugs and are not afflicted with a chronic illness, in which case you should seek a physician's advice before undertaking a fast. But fasting *does* have a lot to do with STOPPING THE SIN of eating wrong things!

When Jesus healed, he said to go and "sin no more" (John 5:14). One of the CONDITIONS to being healed is that we STOP SINNING—stop breaking nature's laws. We need to learn what we can about God's dietary laws, and about proper nutrition and diet.

In fasting, we do stop the physical sinning of eating wrong things. We let our stomachs *rest* from the effects of improper food. And, in the case of a cold or fever, *any* kind of food is merely pouring more kerosene on the fire!

To prevent sinning, always STOP EATING the very moment you feel the first warning signs of a cold or fever—those little pains around the back of the neck, or down the spine. In fasting, you pay the penalty you have incurred in intensified and speeded-up manner. But, to have the penalty REMOVED, obey God's command of James 5:14-15, and *rely on CHRIST*, not on the fasting!

### The Rational Diet

Nearly everyone, today, is eating an excess of starches, sugars and fats. The Bible FORBIDS the eating of animal fat. Starch is a modern invention—millers take wheat, corn

and rice apart, take out the 12 alkaline mineral elements, leave the four acid-reacting elements. The sugar refiners do the same to natural sugar.

An authority on nutrition said: "Eat *only* such foods as will spoil, and eat them before they do."

WHY do flour millers give us white flour; sugar refiners white sugar? Because freshly ground natural whole wheat will spoil. By removing the real FOOD value—the 12 mineral elements—and in addition perhaps adding an artificial preservative or bleach, they prevent spoilage. Even most so-called whole-wheat flour you buy today contains artificial additives and preservatives.

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What SHOULD we do? If possible (too often it is not), we should procure whole grains, grown in proper soil without synthetic fertilizers, and then, with a home stone-grinder, grind our own grain—using it up before it spoils.

Also, squeeze out a glass of orange or other juice and drink it *immediately*. FOODS OUGHT TO BE EATEN WHILE FRESH!

### More About Fasting

But finally, back to fasting. Jesus never put sick people on fasts for healing. In every case he healed them by divine miracle—and in most cases the healing was *immediate*. The apostles *healed* through the miraculous POWER of God's Spirit in the name of Jesus Christ—but they did not use fast-

ing as a means of healing. Healing is a MIRACLE.

Then WHY do I recommend fasting from the very moment of the first signs of sickness, disease or even a cold or fever? NOT FOR HEALING, but merely to immediately *stop sinning*. Then DISCONTINUE FASTING as soon as you *feel and see that you are healed*. RELY ON GOD for the healing.

But let us get this straight. Seeing and feeling is not FAITH—and God heals according to your FAITH. Faith must *precede* the healing—and remain firm *until* you are healed. FAITH is your evidence that God is healing you. *After* the healing has taken place, then you will *see* and/or *FEEL* that you are healed, and *then* stop fasting.

I simply know that so many, today, do not have the faith for immediate healing. You *should* have—and this FAITH is actually CHRIST's faith, imparted to you—*given* to you through God's Spirit as his GIFT—but if you are so far from contact with God, and so close to the material interests of this world, that you do not have this faith, then I know that it would be better that you PREVENT further violation of nature's law by continuing the fast—until there is the physical evidence of healing.

HOWEVER, even then, fasting must not be continued too long!

*Unwise over-lengthy fasts CAN prove FATAL!*

It is true that both Moses and Jesus Christ fasted 40 days. But they were physically in far better and stronger condition basically than any of us today, and besides, they were fasting *only* for spiritual reasons, to draw closer to God in prayer—not to cleanse the body of toxic excesses. SUCH A FAST WOULD BE MOST UNWISE FOR MOST PEOPLE, TODAY!

Unless one is under the daily observation and supervision of a *competent physician* who is fully experienced in fasting, I would advise, with strongest emphasis, definitely to *limit any fast to SEVEN DAYS*—and if over 65, to THREE DAYS. NEVER GO TO EXTREMES! If necessary, take a series of shorter fasts! □