

THE FIRST 40 DAYS VISION

HOW TO FAST FORTY DAYS By Bill Bright

Practical aspects of the long fast from his book **THE COMING REVIVAL**
Edited by Robert Fitts and made available worldwide for **THE FIRST FORTY DAYS**

PART ONE THE POWER OF FASTING

GREAT CHRISTIAN LEADERS THROUGHOUT HISTORY HAVE PRACTICED PRAYER WITH FASTING.

Down through the years, godly people who have done mighty things for God have testified to the necessity of prayer with fasting. John Wesley, who shook the world for God during the Great Awakening that gave rise to the Methodist Church toward the end of the eighteenth century, is representative of such great spiritual leaders.

He so strongly believed in the power of fasting and prayer that he urged early Methodists to fast every Wednesday and Friday. In fact, he refused to ordain anyone in Methodism unless they agreed to do it.

Other great Christian leaders who made prayer with fasting a part of their lives were Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Knox, Jonathan Edwards, Matthew Henry, Charles Finney, Andrew Murray, and many more.

Our Need to Fast

The writings of Scripture, the Church Fathers, and many Christian leaders of today offer several biblical insights into the spiritual need for fasting:

It is a way to humble ourselves before God (Psalm 35:13; Ezra 8:21). It brings revelation of our spiritual condition resulting in brokenness and change. It brings personal revival through the powerful moving of the Holy Spirit in our lives. It helps us better understand the Bible by making it more vital and practical. It transforms prayer into a richer and more personal experience.

Fasting to Humble Ourselves Before God

Fasting has always been a primary means of humbling ourselves before God both in the Old and the New Testaments (see Isaiah 58:5, Psalm 69:10, Matthew 23:12, I Peter 5:6, and James 4:8-10).

Humility is an attitude of the heart. "A broken and a contrite heart, O God, you will not despise (Psalm 51:17) (KJV)." God will hear us and respond to our cry when we come before Him in humility and brokenness--acknowledging and repenting of our sins, and asking Him to cleanse us by the blood of Jesus and to fill us with His Holy Spirit.

Fasting is not always the easiest godly discipline to practice. For those unaccustomed to it, going without food can be a struggle. The mental and emotional battles that may break out when we fast can sometimes be unsettling. Veteran fasters say this is a sure sign of the need to abstain

from food and draw close to God. According to Paul in Galatians 5:17, “We naturally love to do evil things that are opposite from the things that the Holy Spirit tells us to do; and the good things we want to do when the Spirit has his way with us are just the opposite of our natural desires. These two forces within us are constantly fighting each other to win control over us, and our wishes are never free from their pressures (TLB).”

Fasting Brings Power

Since Pentecost, the Church has grown from a room full of Jesus’ followers to hundreds of millions of Christians. The discipline of fasting was apparently a common practice in the Early Church (see Acts 13:1-2 and Acts 14:21-23).

The most powerful move of God in the world today is in Korea. The growth of the church from three million in 1974 to eleven million in 1990 can be attributed largely to fasting and prayer. Not only will fasting and prayer transform an individual or church, it can change the course of a nation. When Jonah carried God’s warning of judgment to Nineveh, their king declared a fast (Jonah 3:8). Immediately, the people began to fast and mourn over their sins. “When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he had compassion on them and did not bring upon them the destruction he had threatened (Jonah 3:10).”

The power of fasting and prayer is seen again in the time of King Jehoshaphat. The story is told in 2 Chronicles 20: Some men came and told Jehoshaphat, “A vast army is coming against you from Edom.” Alarmed, Jehoshaphat resolved to inquire of the Lord, and he proclaimed a fast for all Judah. The people of Judah came together to seek help from the Lord (2 Chronicles 20:2-4).

Then the king stood in the assembly of the people at the temple and prayed to God: “We have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are upon you (2 Chronicles 20:12).”

The Holy Spirit responded, speaking through the prophet Jahaziel: “Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God’s . . . Go out to face them tomorrow, and the Lord will be with you (2 Chronicles 20:15,17).”

The king and the people began to praise and worship the Lord and the next day they marched out with their singers in front praising the Lord. As they marched into battle, the Lord breathed confusion into the camps of the enemy, causing them to attack and destroy each other. Judah’s humility in fasting, prayer, and praise had moved the Lord to save His people from sure defeat.

Throughout the Bible we have many examples of great releases and victories through fasting and prayer that changed the course of history. Moses twice fasted forty days (Deuteronomy 9:9,18) till his face shone with the glory of God. In the time of the judges (Judges 20:26) and in the time of Samuel (1 Samuel 7:6), all Israel fasted. David fasted before he was crowned, when his child was ill, when his enemies were ill (Psalm 35:13), and because of the sins of his people (Psalm 69:9,10). Elijah, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Daniel--all fasted in time of need.

PART TWO

THE PROBLEMS OF FASTING

“Lord, Do you want ME to fast?” Because prayer with fasting is not a usual practice in churches today, believers quickly shy away from it. Even those who consider fasting want answers to questions like:

“Won’t I get sick?”

“Should I consult my doctor first?”

“Will God always give me what I want if I add fasting to my prayers?”

Here are some of the most common objections and questions that people have about fasting:

“If I am supposed to fast, why do I never hear about it at church?” The Early Church followed in the footsteps of our Lord and the apostles with prayer and fasting. But by medieval times, fasting as a discipline came to be frowned upon. Believers saw it as a severe, ascetic practice better suited for monks in monasteries. For a thousand years, fasting has lain rusting and forgotten in a dark corner of the church. Fasting as a discipline--except for those who know its special benefits--is still frowned upon.

“Does the Bible really say that we should fast?” Consider the following: Fasting is associated with weeping and other acts of humility before God (Joel 2:12-13, Psalm 35:13, Psalm 69:10, and Isaiah 58:5). God called on His people to fast on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16:29-30 and Acts 27:9). It is also mentioned in Luke 2:36-37 as an act of worship. Jesus spoke in terms of “when” we fast, not “if” we fast (Matthew 6:2,5,16). Jesus also said that after his death, his followers would fast (Matthew 9:15). Prophets and teachers fasted in Antioch (Acts 13:2). Paul fasted often (2 Corinthians 11:27). For believers, then, the question is: not should I fast, but will I fast?

“Does God require us to fast today? Is it a commandment?” Fasting is no more commanded in the New Testament than prayer or giving, but Jesus taught that all three were spiritual disciplines expected of his followers. He said “when,” not “if,” you do these things (Matthew 6:2,5,16).

“Isn’t fasting practiced by ungodly religions?” Fasting is found in all the major religions of the world. Even Hippocrates, the father of modern medicine, believed in fasting; but Christians are the only ones who fast unto the Creator God, the Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Christians, therefore, are the only ones who know the blessings of God that come from spiritual fasting. Others practice it for vain religious reasons or to improve their health.

“How does fasting benefit me?” The apostle James says, “Come near to God and he will come near to you. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up” (James 4:8,10). Fasting prepares us for the deepest and richest spiritual communion possible. It clears our minds to understand what God is saying to us. It also conditions our bodies to carry out his will. When we persevere through the initial mental and physical discomforts, we will experience a calming of the soul and cooling of the appetites. As a result, we will sense the presence of the Lord more than ever before. Fasting with a pure heart and motives brings personal revival and adds power to our prayers. Many who write about the values of fasting point to increased effectiveness in intercessory prayer, deliverance from bondage, and guidance in decisions.

In my own experience, fasting greatly enhances my daily fellowship with God in a relationship that has always been very meaningful to me since our Savior changed my life in 1944. Although I have always loved to read God's Word, my forty-day fast resulted in an even more exciting discovery of many golden nuggets of truth that I had not seen before. My prayer life continues to be more exciting. I find I can hardly wait to see how God is going to answer specific prayers.

“Will God give me what I ask if I add fasting to my prayers?” No, we cannot barter with God. He answers prayers that are in harmony with His will and purpose. God watches over us for our ultimate good (Romans 8:28). He works in us to do his will (Philippians 2:13). You can always expect God to respond to you when you submit to him (James 4:6,8,10). He will always do something special for you when you deny yourself and focus your love, worship, adoration, faith, and obedience toward him.

“Do I fast for blessings for myself or for others?” Praying for ourselves and interceding for others are among the reasons we should fast and pray. I encourage you to bring your personal needs before the Lord, to intercede for your loved ones, your friends, your church, your community, your nation, and the world--and that the Great Commission will be fulfilled.

“How do I know when I am supposed to fast?” Once you learn the purpose and benefits of fasting, you are free to “proclaim” a fast whenever you sense the desire to draw close to God in a dynamic way or feel the need to seek special help from Him. There are times, however, when the Holy Spirit will prompt you to fast.

God impressed me for several months that He wanted me to fast forty days. But I was not sure I could fast that long. Even so, I began my fast with the prayer, “Lord, I will fast as long as you will enable me. I am looking to you to help me. I am claiming your promise in Isaiah 40:31, “Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint (NKJ).” God was faithful to his promise. My fast was the greatest forty days of my life spiritually.

“Is it possible to get ‘caught up’ in fasting and go too far with it?” Once you persevere in prayer and fasting to a place of victory and God's purposes have been accomplished, you do not need to immediately plan for another fast. Fasting is not a lifestyle in itself, although it should definitely be a part of your Christian walk.

“Should I plan a regular schedule of fasting?” Once you understand the purpose of fasting and realize what it does for you, regular fasting will begin to make spiritual sense. The more you fast for the purpose of seeking God's face and for his glory, the more you will want to fast. The rewards are rich beyond measure.

Should I consult my doctor before I fast?” I encourage you to consult your physician before beginning an extended fast. And I strongly suggest that you ask for a physical exam to make sure you are in good health. You may have a physical problem that could make fasting dangerous and unwise. But be forewarned: your doctor may try to discourage you from fasting, even if you are in good health. If this happens, you may be faced with a dilemma similar to mine. Over the years I have fasted many times--often from one to four weeks at a time--without consulting a physician. Since my forty-day fast was beyond anything I had ever undertaken, I called several Christian and secular doctors for their advice. They either knew nothing about fasting or tried to

discourage me altogether, and I realized that I was on my own. Would I obey the Holy Spirit or what those doctors had to say?

Authorities on fasting agree that if you know that you are healthy and you fast properly, you will benefit physically as well as spiritually.

Although I ate no solid foods for forty days, I supplemented my distilled water intake with various kinds of fruit juices. As a result, I actually felt better physically than I did before I began my fast. However, an extended fast on water alone should be conducted with great caution and much prayer. Without proper counsel and supervision, such a fast can be very dangerous.

There are certain persons who should never fast without professional supervision:

Persons who are physically emaciated.

Those who suffer weakness or anemia.

Persons who have tumors, bleeding ulcers, cancer, blood diseases, or who have recently suffered myocardial infarction.

Those who suffer chronic problems with kidneys, liver, lungs, heart, or other important organs.

Individuals who take insulin for diabetes, or suffer any other blood sugar problem such as hypoglycemia.

Women who are pregnant or nursing.

Those who are afraid of fasting because they do not understand its benefits or what to expect.

If you have serious questions about your health, or if you are under a physician's care, you should consult your doctor before you abstain from food or change your diet.

“How does one fast for forty days?” Various kinds of fasts are mentioned in the Bible. I did the partial fast mentioned in the book of Daniel which says that there was a three-week period in which he abstained from “delicacies,” meat, and wine (Daniel 10:3). **I fasted all solid food but drank water and juices.**

I began my forty-day fast on a liquid formula that I have found effective over the years: **one gallon of distilled water with 1 1/2 cups of lemon juice and 1/2 cup of maple syrup added to it, plus 1/4 teaspoon of cayenne pepper.** The lemon juice adds flavor and Vitamin C, the maple syrup provides energy, and the cayenne pepper--an herb--acts to open small blood vessels which, I believe, helps the body as it cleanses itself of stored toxins.

I also drank distilled water and a variety of fruit and vegetable juices. For those unaccustomed to fasting, **I recommend vegetable and fruit juices along with water.** The juices provide strength; and they give you something to look forward to, which helps to alleviate the mental stress that comes from knowing that you are not going to eat that day. **I find it helpful to keep the water or juices beside me for frequent sipping throughout the day.**

“Should I take time off to fast or can I do my normal duties?” How long you fast, the kind of fast you undertake, and whether you adjust your work schedule depends mostly on your

occupation. Persons with office jobs, pastors, or housewives--unlike those who perform heavy manual labor--may naturally find it easier to continue their duties and fast longer periods of time.

When I fasted forty days, I shortened my work schedule to make more time to read God's Word, pray, and seek God's face. Actually, even my speaking engagements and other projects seemed to take on the aspect of worship and became an offering unto the Lord. When I fast unto the Lord—I can expect a supernatural supply of energy.

“Will fasting ruin my health?” This is a legitimate concern because of the limited teaching on the subject. But most nutritionists and health specialists who are knowledgeable about fasting can document hundreds, even thousands, of examples where fasting has been physically rejuvenating.

From my experience, arthritic pains in my thumb and fingers were greatly lessened after fourteen to twenty-one days of fasting; and I experienced relief from a digestive condition I had had for years.

Nothing can compare with fasting and prayer to bring personal revival and renewal to the Church. I believe the next move of God, which is now under way, will restore biblical fasting to the body of Christ.

PART THREE

THE PREPARATION OF FASTING

You may have certain concerns about fasting such as, “How do I begin? Should I go without food entirely? If so, do I drink only water, or are other liquids okay? How long should I fast and how can I maintain a fast? May I keep walking and jogging? Do I need extra rest? May I tell others what I am doing? How do I fast, pray, seek God, and go about my daily duties--all at the same time? What should I do when it's time to end my fast? What kind of change can I expect in my life?”

In Part Three we will look at practical answers to these questions, and I will share several guidelines to help you conduct your fast in a safe and spiritually rewarding manner.

Your first move toward fasting and prayer **begins with an awareness of your need to do it.** For several months before I undertook my forty-day fast, the Holy Spirit had burdened my heart with the moral condition of my country. My heart had grieved over America for at least thirty years, but this was a fresh and special working of the Holy Spirit. God was leading me into a depth of prayer far beyond anything I had ever experienced before.

HOW TO BEGIN

First, set specific objectives. Why are you fasting? Is it for guidance, for spiritual renewal, for healing, to resolve problems, for grace to handle specific situations? Keeping your goal in focus will help you sustain your fast when physical temptations and life's pressures tempt you to abandon it. I personally believe the Holy Spirit has given all believers an urgent call to humble ourselves through fasting and prayer so that He may stir our souls, awaken our churches, and

heal our land according to 2 Chronicles 7:14. I URGE YOU TO MAKE THIS YOUR PRIMARY PURPOSE FOR FASTING!

Second, prepare yourself spiritually. The very foundation of fasting and prayer is repentance. God always requires his people to repent of their sins before he will hear their prayers (Psalm 66:16-20). The Lord is far from the wicked but he hears the prayer of the righteous (Proverbs 15:29).

As you begin your fast, I encourage you to confess every known sin that the Holy Spirit calls to your remembrance. List the sins on a sheet of paper and claim his promise recorded in I John 1:9, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

Use the concept that I call “spiritual breathing.” It has enriched my life as no other truth. Like physical breathing, Spiritual Breathing is a process of exhaling the impure and inhaling the pure. If you sin by committing a deliberate act of disobedience, breathe spiritually to restore the fullness of God’s Holy Spirit in your life.

Exhale by confession. As God’s Word promises, if we confess our sins, he will forgive us. In the Greek, the word “confess” means to “agree with” or to “say along with.” Name your sin or sins to God specifically. Read over the following verses from the Bible asking the Lord to show you if there is anything that you are doing or not doing that you need to confess before Him. Read these verses prayerfully:

I Thessalonians 5:18

Ephesians 3:20

Acts 1:8

Romans 12:3

Ephesians 4:31

Hebrews 10:25

Colossians 3:9

I Peter 2:11

John 13:35

Colossians 3:13

Ephesians 4:28

Matthew 6:24

Matthew 23:28

Philippians 4:8

Make your list of sins on the basis of what God speaks to you as you read the verses above and whatever else God speaks to you that you know is sin. Claim the promise of I John 1:9. When you have confessed your sins before God, also confess that he has forgiven you through Christ's death on the cross (Hebrews 10:1-23). The Holy Spirit will enable you to change both your attitudes and your conduct.

Inhale by appropriating the fullness of God's Spirit by faith. Trust Him to control and empower you according to his command in Ephesians 5:18 to "be filled with the Spirit." This actually means to be constantly and continually controlled and empowered with the Holy Spirit. According to His promise in I John 5:14,15, God hears you and grants your request because you pray according to His will.

Spiritual breathing is an exercise of faith and will enable you to get off the emotional roller coaster and experience God's love, forgiveness, and the power and control of the Holy Spirit constantly as a way of life. As you walk in the Spirit by faith, practicing Spiritual Breathing, you need never live in spiritual defeat.

Third, prepare yourself physically. Do not rush into a fast. If you plan to go without food for several days, you will find it helpful to begin by eating smaller meals before you abstain altogether. This sends your mind a signal that you have entered the time of the fast, and it helps to "shrink" your stomach and appetite.

Some health professionals suggest eating only raw foods for two days before starting a fast. All this makes the drastic change in your eating routine a little easier.

Fourth, ask the Lord what kind of fast you are to do. Does he want you to go completely without food, consuming only water? Or water and juices? Is he asking you to fast one meal a day, one day a week, or several days or weeks at a time? Is God leading you to undertake a forty-day fast? Inviting the Holy Spirit's guidance in this matter will make your fast more meaningful.

I have done many strictly water fasts for a day or several days at a time with special blessing. However, **I strongly suggest adding vegetable and fruit juices to your intake.** The best juices, according to most nutritionists are **fresh cabbage, beet, carrot, celery, grape, and apple.** **Green drinks, made from green leafy vegetables are excellent detoxifiers.** If you choose to do a water-only fast, please do so under the guidelines of a medical doctor trained in how to fast.

I recommend **fruit juices** for two reasons: their natural sugars **provide energy**, and the taste and the strength motivate you to continue your fast. Nutritionists say that **fruit juices are cleansers and are best taken in the morning while vegetable juices are restorers and builders and are best taken in the afternoon.** A water and juice fast is very wise, especially for those who are new to fasting. It helps them concentrate more on the Lord than on their hunger pains and possible discomfort or feelings of sickness that sometimes accompany a water-only fast.

Short fasts of one to three days require no more than water. **Christians regularly go ten days or longer on water--even up to forty days--with good effects both spiritually and physically under the supervision of one who knows about water fasting. We have more food reserves stored in body fat than we realize,** and most of us would be happy to give up the fat. However, until you have some experience in fasting, you may want to add vegetable and fruit juices (preferably without sugar or sweeteners) to your intake.

Christian Nutritionist, Dr. Julio C. Ruibal, believes a person can comfortably fast on juices for as long as he feels God is leading him to do so. He recommends juice intake beginning with the third day. "On a juice fast, your body takes in certain nutrients," Dr. Ruibal says; "Fruit juices provide glucose. Watermelon is excellent because it is basically water with glucose. It is mild and non-reactive. Just put it in a blender without adding water. Juice made from fresh apples also is good. **A green juice made from celery, romaine lettuce, and carrots blended in more or less equal proportions provides the minerals your body needs for many of its nerve functions.** This will enable you to engage in some degree of productive activity."

He recommends that you **avoid coffee, tea, or cola**: "The caffeine, acids, and phosphorous in these drinks are not good for the body. In fact, they are dangerous. When you feel hunger pains due to the absence of stimulants, just increase your liquid intake. **Herb teas are permissible**, but take it easy on the honey," Dr. Ruibal says.

For colder climates, he recommends warm broth. Simply boil sliced potatoes, carrots, and celery in water. Do not add salt. After about a half hour, drain off the water and drink it. This also gives variety of taste in liquids. (add other vegetables to the pot if you like, such as garlic, onions, beets, cabbage, parsley, and turnips) He suggests that you **not drink milk since it is a pure food** and therefore a violation of the fast.

Drink as much water as you like. The body needs plenty of water on a fast--both to cleanse the system and to prevent dehydration. You may want to keep a small bottle of water by your side for easy access. Drinking water **at mealtimes** "fools" the stomach and makes it stop "talking" because it thinks it is being fed.

Drink vegetable and fruit juices through the day but exercise self control. Remember, you are on a fast. If you do not **discipline your quantity of juice consumption**, you may defeat your spiritual purpose.

Fifth, limit your activity level. Exercise only moderately. Rest as much as your schedule will permit. Short naps are very helpful. "Resting is not a sin," Dr. Ruibal explains. "Fasting in the strictest sense is physiological rest. Your body rests from the processes involved in digestion and the assimilation of food to concentrate on excretion. Many experience headaches, stomach aches, nausea, foul tastes in their mouth, or a pasty tongue," Dr. Ruibal says, "Their urine may become darker, and even their sweat may smell worse than usual. Vomiting may occur. This is normal. In a prolonged fast, it is not unusual to experience a fever. Basically, the body is taking advantage of the fast to clean and heal itself."

Sixth, consider your medications. It is particularly important that you consult with your doctor before going on a fast if you are on a prescribed medication. "**You could run into physical problems when you are on a fast and continue with the medication,**" Dr. Ruibal warns.

"Most people can be liberated from medication for high blood pressure when they follow the proper diet, exercise, and stress management," he says. "But you must be very careful. Have your blood pressure checked regularly and, if you see that you need your medication, begin taking it again. Any changes in taking your medication should be done with your doctor's approval and under his supervision."

Seventh, set aside ample time to be alone in prayer. Luke 5:16 says that Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed. Of course, you should “practice His presence” and continue to have fellowship with Him constantly as you “pray without ceasing” throughout the day; but **the more time you spend alone** in quiet meditation on His Word, in unhurried times of “seeking His face,” in fellowship, worship, and adoration during your fast, the greater your effectiveness will be in prayer and **the more meaningful your fast.**

I suggest that you **make a prayer list and add to it daily** as needs come to mind. Pray for your family, your spiritual leaders, your church, your community, and your country. Pray for world-wide revival and spiritual harvest. Pray for the fulfillment of the Great Commission. Ask the Lord to put on your heart the things for which you should pray.

You should go about your daily activities mindful that you are still fasting and seeking the Lord. Some of my deepest spiritual insights have come as I continued my ministry responsibilities while “seeking His face” and “practicing His presence.”

PART FOUR

THE PRECAUTIONS OF FASTING

We have discussed the **POWER** of fasting, the **PROBLEMS** of fasting, and the **PREPARATIONS** of fasting. We will close with the **PRECAUTIONS** of fasting.

Your time for fasting and prayer has come. You are abstaining from all solid foods and have begun to seek the Lord. If you are one who measures spiritual success by your emotions or by how much you visibly achieve, this can be a period when you may feel somewhat confused. Just relax in the Lord and invite the Holy Spirit to help you. As you seek the Lord in faith, you can be assured that He will enable you to complete the fast He has called you to begin. Here are some helpful suggestions to consider while fasting:

First, restrict your activity. Exercises such as cycling, fast walking, and jogging are okay with programs for health and weight loss, but not for fasting. **Walking** a mile or two each day at a moderate pace **can be beneficial** while on a juice fast; but if on a water fast, check with your fasting specialist. If engaged in strenuous labor, you may want to fast only one day a week on a partial fast, or you may want to fast on weekends.

Second, expect to visit the “facilities” often. Drinking lots of fluids will cause this. You may want the cleansing benefits of enemas before, during, or after your fast. **During my forty-day fast, I drank psyllium**, which can be purchased in most drug and health food stores. Mixed in water, psyllium powder becomes like jello. It provided the **fiber** I needed to help cleanse my system.

Third, be prepared for mental discomforts. You may experience some inner conflict when you deny yourself the pleasure of eating. You may, at times, feel **impatient and irritable**. It is not unusual for one to become **cranky and anxious** during a long fast. You can also expect the enemy to oppose you—whispering thoughts that test your resolve. When this happens, invite the Lord to cleanse your mind and empower you with his Holy Spirit.

Fourth, expect physical discomforts. You may experience a case of the physical “blahs” during the first few days. If so, sip water and juices frequently and rest while seeking strength in prayer, worship, and God’s Word.

By the end of the second day, you may discover that you are very hungry—in your stomach and in your mind—but by the end of the third day you may no longer feel hungry. However, you may feel a little weak. You would think that the longer you fast the weaker you would become. But healthy persons report that during extended fasts they actually experience a new vitality. As the body cleanses itself of toxins and begins to feed off of its reserves, the stomach stops demanding food and there is often a sense of physical well-being. I truly felt better during my long fast than when I was eating normally.

Some physical discomforts can be **traced to withdrawal from a diet that includes refined sugar and caffeine** found in coffee, tea, and most carbonated drinks. Since I have never drunk coffee and very little tea or colas, I did not have a problem with headaches, dizziness, or any other difficulties in completing my forty-day fast.

After fasting several days, **dizziness may be caused by a sudden change in position**, such as rising suddenly from a chair. To remedy this, stop for a second or two, recover, and **remember to move slowly**. Headaches or mild dizziness could also be caused by the accumulation of toxins in your colon. **Doctors recommend a tablespoon of psyllium powder morning and evening to hasten the elimination of toxins from your colon** and help to prevent headaches and dizziness for most healthy people.

Sleeplessness and an overactive mind frequently accompany a fast due to toxins in the blood stream. Prayer, meditating in the Word, and a nice slow walk around the block should help.

You may experience some **weight loss**, especially during an extended fast. But do not worry; you will very likely gain it all back! Nutritionists tell us that **after we fast, the body will store larger amounts of reserve food in anticipation of another fast**.

No two fasts will be exactly alike. You may experience some struggles during one fast that do not appear the next time. The degree of difficulty seems to depend on your spiritual and physical condition at the time of the fast.

Fifth, feel free to fast openly. Some feel that we do not have this freedom because of what Jesus said in Matthew 6:15-18 about fasting in secret. But Jesus is dealing with the hypocrisy of the Pharisees who made prayer and fasting a point of ritual and boasting to demonstrate their piety.

In this passage, Jesus is not forbidding us to tell others of our fasting. Rather, He is saying, “Avoid boasting and acting superior to others. Fasting is not an occasion to demonstrate your spirituality or to gain glory for yourself.”

Fasting does not make us spiritually elite. Rather, it creates in us a sense of humility. In fasting, the first thing one does is humble himself before God. If we are fasting with a pure heart, our occasion to tell others will demonstrate a humble attitude. The very thought of exalting ourselves will be abhorrent.

Christians should have the freedom to fast openly. How else can they be mentors of this spiritual discipline to weak Christians? How can they promote fasting on a large scale. How can they participate in a church-wide fast and keep it quiet? If we limited our prayers to the “closet,” we would have no church prayer meetings. I want to encourage believers to fast and pray together in large numbers in their churches so they will be an inspiration to others.

Fasting openly as a testimony of our faith and love for Jesus and our desire to please Him is commendable. We only displease the Lord and lose our blessing when we fast to be seen of men as did the Pharisees.

As you fast, **carefully select those whom you tell.** Some people may try to discourage you. Never expect encouragement from those who do not fast. One of the most demoralizing things that can happen to you is when friends or family disapprove. It can be particularly disheartening when your doctor or pastor frowns on the idea. Before beginning my forty-day fast, I received no encouragement from anyone. And several friends registered grave concern for my health and well-being.

Sixth, end your fast gradually. How you break your fast is extremely important, both for you physical and spiritual well-being. If you end your fast gradually, the physical and spiritual effects will linger for days. But **if you rush into eating solid foods, you may experience diarrhea, sickness, fainting, and even death due to shock.** This is especially true of a fast of forty days. Nutritionists tell us that during a fast the stomach and intestinal tract contract and that breaking the fast should be done with special care. Suddenly reintroducing solid food to your stomach creates defeating effects.

Even a three-day fast requires reasonable precautions. It is wise to **start with a little soup**, something thin and nourishing such as vegetable broth and **fresh fruits** such as watermelon and cantaloupe. As your body accepts these foods, advance to a few tablespoons of solid foods such as raw fruits and vegetables or **a raw salad** and a baked potato. (milk and meat may cause adverse reactions in some people after a fast) Then **several hours later, try another small snack.** The idea is to ease back into regular eating with several small snacks during the first few

days. This requires discipline, but you will avoid the severe pain and other serious physical reactions that come from eating too much too soon.

I terminated my forty-day fast with a cup of soup, followed by small amounts of watermelon and other fruits every few hours for a couple of days until I was comfortable with resuming my normal routine of eating. As you can imagine, that cup of soup and first few bites of solid food were ecstasy. Never had ordinary food tasted so good.

Seventh, expect a change in you. If you sincerely humble yourself before the Lord in repentance, intercession, and worship, and consistently meditate on His Word, you will experience a greater awareness of His presence. Your confidence and faith in God will be strengthened. And you will feel mentally, spiritually, and physically refreshed. My fast proved to be the greatest prolonged spiritual blessing of my life.

But just as we need fresh infillings of the Spirit daily, we also need new times of fasting before God. I encourage you to join me in fasting and prayer again and again and again until we truly experience revival in our homes, our churches, our beloved nation, and in every country in the world.

END

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NOTICE

This booklet is a summary of Bill Bright's teaching on the practical aspects of the long fast taken from chapters six through ten of his book THE COMING REVIVAL. It was compiled by Robert Fitts especially for the worldwide fast by Christians in every country on the FIRST FORTY DAYS of the year 2000. You are invited to translate it and reproduce it for distribution into any and all languages.