

# Health

by Samuel Logan Brengle

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*Soul-winners must prioritize their physical health in order to maintain their mental and spiritual well-being and be effective in their work.*

**Topics:** "Health", "Spiritual Well-being"

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## Description

Samuel Logan Brengle emphasizes the importance of maintaining good health for effective soul-winning, arguing that the body is a vital instrument for the mind and soul. He draws on biblical examples, such as Moses and Paul, to illustrate that physical well-being is essential for fulfilling one's spiritual duties. Brengle advocates for a balanced lifestyle that includes proper diet, exercise, rest, and a positive mindset, warning against the dangers of neglecting one's health. He encourages believers to view their bodies as temples of the Holy Spirit and to take care of them as a sacred duty. Ultimately, he reminds us that good health can enhance our ability to serve God and others.

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## Transcript

"Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper, and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth."  
(3 John 2.)

The soul-winner must take the best care he knows how of his body, yet without everlastingly coddling and petting and pitying himself. This is his sacred duty. The body is the instrument through which the mind and the soul work in this world. A good body is as essential to the soul-winner as is a good instrument to the musician, or a stanch boat to the strong rower, and should be no more despised and neglected than is his gun by the huntsman or his axe by the woodsman. "Know ye not," said St. Paul, "that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost?" and "if any man defile" (margin "destroy") "the temple of God, him will God destroy." As the most skillful musician is dependent upon his instrument for the richness and sweetness of the music he makes, so men, in every walk of life, are in a large measure limited by and dependent upon the quality of the body through which their mental and spiritual powers must work.

Most men who have made a mark in the world, though there are some striking exceptions, have had a splendid basis of physical force and power. When Moses died on Mount Nebo at 120 years of age, "his eyes were not dimmed nor his natural force abated," and that notwithstanding the fact that for forty years he had had the tremendous task of of organizing, legislating for, judging and ruling a great nation of slaves just delivered from 400 years of bondage and wandering like sheep in a mountainous wilderness. Paul must have had a robust constitution and fairly good health to have endured the stonings and whippings,

imprisonments and shipwrecks, hungerings and thirstings, fighting with fierce beasts and contentions with yet fiercer men, besides the care of all the churches which fell to his lot daily.

John Wesley was a little man, weighing only about 120 pounds, but his health was superb, and seems to have been due not so much to natural vigor of constitution, though, doubtless he had that, as to the regular habits and healthful plan of living which he adopted. He was one of nineteen children, and his father was a poor clergyman. For several years he had nothing to eat but bread, which may have accounted for his small size, but which he himself said probably laid the foundations of good health which he afterward enjoyed. It must have been whole-wheat bread, however, and not the white, starchy stuff of modern bakers. In after years he always ate sparingly, and only ate a few articles of food at any one meal. He lived much out of doors, preached almost daily and sometimes several times a day in the open air. At the age of 73 he makes this remarkable entry in his journal: "I am 73 years old and far abler to preach than I was at three and twenty. What natural means has God used to produce so wonderful an effect?

"1. Continual exercise and change of air by traveling about 4,000 miles a year." (It is well to remember that he did his traveling on horseback and in a buggy through winter's storms and summer's heat.) "2. Constant rising at four o'clock. 3. The ability, if ever I want, of sleeping immediately. 4. The never losing a night's sleep in my life." (He mentions several all nights of prayer in his journal, however.) "5. Two violent fevers and two deep consumptions. These, it is true, were rough medicines, but they were of admirable service, causing my flesh to come again as the flesh of a little child. May I add, lastly, evenness of temper? I feel, I grieve, but by the grace of God I fret at nothing, but still the help that is done upon the earth God doeth it Himself; and this He doeth in answer to many prayers."

A similar entry was made in his journal in 1782. He says: "I have entered into my eightieth year, but, blessed be God! my time is not 'labor and sorrow.' I find no more pain or bodily infirmity than at five and twenty."

And beside the reason given above he adds: "This I will impute, first, to the power of God, fitting me for what He calls me to do, and, second, to my constant preaching, particularly in the morning." The morning sermon was preached at five o'clock in the summer and six o'clock in the winter.

Young people are usually prodigal of their health and strength, and nature will allow them to make large drafts upon these treasures, but keeps strict account, and will surely require interest and principal in due time. It is a rather remarkable fact that often those who have had poor health in youth so learn to take care of themselves and obey the laws of health and not impose upon their bodies, that they outlast and outwork many who started out with a greater physical capital.

Those who desire good health, long life and a cheerful old age should live simply and regularly; they should seek enough sleep and at the same time be careful not to take too much sleep. Mr. Wesley could get along with six hours' sleep at night, though he had the happy faculty of taking naps through the day, even sleeping on horseback. Napoleon frequently got along with three hours' sleep, but General Grant said that when in the midst of his heaviest campaigns he required nine hours. I have heard General Booth say that he needed eight hours at least. Women usually need at least an hour more of sleep than men. No rule can be laid down to fit every case, however, so that the soul-winner who is a conscientious man must find out for himself what is best for himself, make his own rule and keep it religiously as unto the Lord.

There is a danger of lying in bed too long as well as too short a time. The Duke of Wellington said: "When you find that you want to turn over, you ought to turn out." Lying in bed relaxes the whole system, and if

indulged in to excess tends to a general weakening of the system. George Mueller, the great philanthropist of Bristol Orphanage fame, found the nerves of his head weak and painful, and thought to strengthen them by taking a nap after dinner each day, but instead of getting stronger they got weaker, and he suffered increasing pain. He finally decided that the relaxation of sleep produced the weakness, and substituted a cold bath for his head, and found immediate and increasing benefit from it.

Sleep should be taken in a room that is as well ventilated in winter as in summer. All good physicians and hygienists insist upon this, and also that one should not sleep in any garment worn during the day.

Benjamin Franklin declared that he had made a great discovery. He discovered that the sun came up in the morning. He thought that it would be a great financial saving to the world if people could only be brought to recognize this fact, and instead of turning night into day by artificial light, should go to bed early and get up with the sun. No doubt there would be many dollars saved and also much nervous energy. We have fallen on evil days, however, and it is not likely we shall ever get back to the habits of our forefathers and go to bed with the birds. The soul-winner, though, ought conscientiously to go to bed as quickly as possible after meeting. This can be done, unless he foolishly prefers to sit up and indulge in small talk and late suppers, in which case, if he does not destroy his health, he will at least greatly injure it and cripple his soul-saving power.

Exercise is also very necessary for health. A Salvation Army officer who does the regulation amount of visiting, WAR CRY selling and open-air meetings will get a great deal of exercise in the walking done, and if he throws back his shoulders and breathes deeply, will require very little additional exercise. But as the human body, like a chain, is not stronger than at its weakest point, a little general systematic exercise is useful to keep every organ of the body in good health and vigor.

Caughey went to England, and in six years saw 20,000 sinners saved and 10,000 Christians seeking holiness, then broke down, and for thirty years or more was an invalid. This may have been God's will for him, but I can hardly believe it is His will, generally speaking, for soul-winners, and am persuaded that if Caughey had obeyed the injunction, "Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work," and had religiously taken one day in seven for relaxation, refreshment and rest, he need not have spent those thirty years in retirement. Work is absolutely necessary for health, but so also is rest.

The heart of man works for ninety years and in some instances even longer, but it rests one half the time. Experience has proved that to rest more than one-seventh of the time is not well, as in that case the man rusts out, and to rest less than one-seventh results in wearing out.

The man who never relaxes, however religious he may be, is likely to become morose, irritable, impatient and a source of anxiety and perplexity to his dearest friends; or become melancholy and full of gloom, get into the dumps, and doubt his call to preach.

There is a legend that when the Apostle John was nearly 100 years of age, he was visited by a man who was anxious to see the beloved disciple of the Lord. The man found the old apostle playing with some little children, rebuked the aged saint and told him it ill fitted an apostle of the Lord, at his age, to be indulging in childish games. The old man replied in substance: "A bow that is never unstrung will lose its power; unloose the string and it retains its vigor; so I relieve the tension of my soul by indulging in innocent games with the little ones."

The emotions, the sympathies, and every power of mind and soul, and all the nervous energies of the body have heavy drafts made upon them in soul-saving work, and the mighty tension of the soul and body at their highest point of efficiency must be entirely relaxed periodically in order to maintain this efficiency. In other words, there must be rest. I have found that when I get very tired and am least fit to do anything, that I then feel an imperative necessity for doing something, and then it is that I must put on the brakes and rest by sheer force of will, if need be. A friend of mine who is an unusually successful soul-winner, has a very sensible wife, who, when she finds him nervous and worn, insists upon his going to bed for a whole day and vegetating. The next day he finds his nervous force restored and is ready for any amount of hard work.

Sir Isaac Holden, the noted English Methodist, was a very delicate little man, but by careful attention to the laws of diet, ventilation of room, etc., lived to be ninety years of age. Mr. Stead says of him: "It was his way when ill to nurse his strength by keeping silent." Few people realize the waste of physical force there is in constant small talk.

"Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God," said Paul. Eating and drinking do not seem to have anything to do with soul-saving, but nevertheless they have. "Three-fourths of the diseases that Americans are afflicted with," said a recent writer, "can be traced to improper eating and drinking." "The fewer the sweetmeats, the sweeter the temper. If you doubt it and have a bad temper, my friend, let me implore you to try it," wrote a wise hygienist.

Several years ago a friend took me to visit Neal Dow, "the Father of Prohibition," who was then over ninety years of age, and in good health. My friend asked him the secret of his long life and splendid health. The old man replied: "First, I didn't sow any wild oats in my youth; I never used tobacco nor whisky, nor stimulants of any kind. Second, I have always gone to bed early, slept well and gotten up early. Third, I have always taken an active interest in public morals and in the welfare of my fellow men. Fourth, I never eat anything that I have found out by experience hurts me. I am very fond of baked beans, but they do me harm, therefore, I do not eat them." Baked beans may not hurt everybody, but a soul-winner who puts God's interests and that of other souls before his own pleasure, ought to show the good sense of Neal Dow, and not eat anything that hurts him, however much he may like it.

I know a minister who was afflicted with gastritis. He wanted some meat for supper; it was on the table in the form of mince pie. He ought to have known, and probably did, that with the kind of stomach he had, mince pie was no diet for him, but he liked it. He ate it, and he nearly died that night.

Rich, fatty suppers should not be eaten. Cold bread is preferable to hot bread. It is wise to follow a rule of Gladstone's: "Give thirty-two bites to every mouthful," that is, give every tooth a taste.

Rev. Daniel Waldo once said: "I am an old man now; I have seen nearly a century. Do you want to know how to grow old slowly and happily? Let me tell you. Always eat slowly, masticate well, go to your occupation smiling, keep a good nature and temper everywhere."

Dr. Hanaford in writing to a public singer who was afflicted with catarrh and sore throat, said: "I attribute a part of the trouble to using rich pastry, often a prominent cause of catarrh. I suspect in you the too free use of sugar, confectionery, salt and spices. I am fully convinced that a large per cent of the sore throats, inflamed eyes and nasal passages, and the like, so often attributed to colds, are due to stomach derangement resulting from large quantities of common food, and the too free use of such heating things as sweets, fats and oils and starches, fine flour being prominent"

Here are some short rules for one who wants good health:

Don't worry. Paul says: "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God, and the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your heart and mind through Christ Jesus."

"Never despair. Lost hope is a fatal disease. One of the fruits of the Spirit is hope."

Work like a man, but don't worry yourself to death.

Court the fresh air day and night

Don't overeat. Don't starve. "Let your moderation be known unto all men."

"Feed a cold, and you will have to starve a fever."

Don't forget that "Cleanliness is next to godliness."

Finally. If you have poor health and a broken constitution, don't despair. Baxter, one of the mightiest men of God that ever lived, the St. Paul and the General Booth of his day, was a lifelong invalid and suffered almost intolerable things, but he praised God for it, for he declared it kept him alive to eternal things, weaned him from the world and led him constantly to "preach as a dying man to dying men." David Brainerd, the fragrance of whose holy life and apostolic labors and self-denial have filled and inspired the church for almost two centuries, died of consumption before he was thirty years of age. But few men in health and strength have been so used of God as he was in his weakness.

Personally I have suffered much from broken health, exhausted nerves and sleepless nights, and at one time feared that my work was done, but by prayer and care I have been so far restored to health and strength that I can work six days in the week with all my might, sleep like a kitten, digest my food fairly well, am full of the joy of the Lord, am happy as a lark and am altogether glad that I am alive. Hallelujah!

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