Types of Prayer and Fasting

Let’s just start with the nuts and bolts of different types of fasting that are mentioned in the Bible. Of course the names we label them are not labels you will see in the Bible, just an easy way to explain them.

Let’s start with the “Partial Fast” or a lot of folks call this a “Daniel Fast”. With this fast it is a restriction of diet rather than complete abstention. A common diet choice consists of fruits, vegetables and drinking only water. Some people do not consider this a fast, however, we find Daniel, Shadrack, Meshach and Abednego participated in this fast so they would not defile themselves before God. (Daniel 1:8-15) What I enjoy about fasting is the results, Daniel was requesting to be served only veggies, so he could be obedient to God and in verse 17 God not only made them healthier the those who ate the kings food, God gave the four of them “Knowledge and Understanding”. Then again in Daniel 10, we see Daniel wanting to receive understanding from God concerning a vision God had given him. Daniel began fasting using this method for three weeks before he received an answer from God. (Daniel 10:3-11) Now this was not just a gut feeling answer, God sent an Angel to deliver it personally. Would you like to move God’s heart and have Him send an Angel to you?

Another type of a partial fast is to fast from sun up to sun down. The participate in this type of fast you are abstaining from food all day and only drinking water. You then have a light dinner after sunset, however no type of food restrictions.

Also, with a partial fast you can give up just one item or area of items like desert, or caffeine or maybe breads. You are looking for a food you crave more than spending time with God, and when that craving starts, pick up your Bible and read your favorite passage or go to your knees in prayer asking God to increase your desire for Him over the food.

Next is our “Absolute Fast”, it is abstaining from All Food and All Beverages including water. This fast is usually done for only three days to avoid dehydration; Esther called all the Jews to fast 3 days no food or water to inquire of God to move on behalf of the nation. (Esther 4:15-16) FASTED FOR THEIR LIVES

Ezra was a priest that led many Jews back from exile. On his journey he stopped for three days and “proclaimed a fast so that we might humble ourselves before our God and ask him for a safe journey for us and our children with all our possessions.” (Ezra 8:21) FASTED FOR SAFETY

When they reached Jerusalem safely he found a situation that made him heart sick. The people, priests, Levites and rulers had once again intermarried with their Idolatrous neighbors; a thing God had again and again forbidden the Jews to do. This time Ezra fasted by himself for three days for God to move the hearts of the people to repentance. Ezra humbled himself and prayed for the whole nation and instruction on what God wanted to make things right with Him. (Ezra 10:6-9) FASTED FOR REPENTANCE OF A NATION

Saul found himself blind and confused concerning the things he thought he knew about God. So, when Saul became blinded, he fasted for three days to have his eyes open naturally and spiritually. (Acts 9-9) FASTED FOR WISDOM, UNDERSTANDING AND HEALING

Jesus shows us an example of a “Normal Fast”, abstaining from all food solid or liquid, but not from water. Jesus’ fast lasted for 40 days in the desert, it is believed that Jesus had water during this time because in Matthew 4:2 at the end of the 40 days it indicates Jesus was hungry only. When you are involved in a normal fast the length of time is not as important. *“The importance of any fast is to abstain from food for spiritual purposes. Fasting is also often
linked with prayer, it should be considered a spiritual exercise all its own. In fact, fasting can be called prayer without words” *quoted from footnotes from NIV Full Life Study Bible (Jesus fast Matthew 4:1-11)

Other Bible examples of fasting for longer periods David fasted 7 days for his sick child (2 Samuel 12:15-20) Then we have Moses, and Elijah who fasted from food for a period of 40 days. Long extended types of fasts like these should be based and directed from God. It takes supernatural ability given by God to complete this fast. It certainly can be done today, if God leads you because He is the same today as yesterday. (Deuteronomy 9:9-18, Exodus 34:28, 1Kings 19:8)

“Non Food Fast” Although not mentioned in the Bible, many of us today commit to fasting from other activities. Some families fast together and give up TV or movies to concentrate on family time including prayer time and Bible reading. Other activities could be weekly sports, pleasure reading or some type of technology like Facebook. The whole purpose for fasting is to humble yourself, repent and build your relationship with God and if giving up an activity to add more time with God, then I would say you are on the right path. Of course it is not what I think or what anyone else thinks on Mount Oak Staff that counts it is what God is calling you to do. I would however encourage you to read Isaiah 58 this week and ask God to speak to your heart and see what it is He desires of you.