

Why Prayer is Hard Spiritually vs. Physically

Matthew 6:5-6 (NLT) *"When you pray, don't be like the hypocrites who love to pray publicly on street corners and in the synagogues where everyone can see them. I tell you the truth, that is all the reward they will ever get. But when you pray, go away by yourself, shut the door behind you, and pray to your Father in private. Then your Father, who sees everything, will reward you."*

Most Christians know they should pray. Many feel guilty that they don't pray more. Few understand why prayer feels so hard. Struggling to pray does not mean you are spiritually weak. It means you are human—learning to live by faith.

I. The conflict between physical and spiritual

Humans are both physical and spiritual—but the physical is immediate

1 Corinthians 15:46-49 (NLT) *What comes first is the natural body, then the spiritual body comes later. Adam, the first man, was made from the dust of the earth, while Christ, the second man, came from heaven. Earthly people are like the earthly man, and heavenly people are like the heavenly man. Just as we are now like the earthly man, we will someday be like the heavenly man.*

God designed us to live in a physical world, using Sight, Sound, Touch, Time, and Space. Because of this, we naturally respond to: what we can see, what we can measure, and what gives immediate feedback.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (NLT) *Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body.*

The physical world shouts; the spiritual world whispers.

1 Kings 19:12-13 (NLT) *And after the earthquake there was a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire there was the sound of a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave.*

Prayer feels hard because it does not cater to the flesh. Prayer lacks the reinforcements we expect from physical activity. Spirituality is harder for the Natural Person

II. We must not forget the Spiritual side of us!

Matthew 6:6 (NLT) *But when you pray, go away by yourself, shut the door behind you, and pray to your Father in private. Then your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.*

Often, there is no sensory confirmation!

1 Corinthians 2:14 (NLT) *But people who aren't spiritual can't receive these truths from God's Spirit. It all sounds foolish to them and they can't understand it, for only those who are spiritual can understand what the Spirit means.*

Prayer is a Spiritual act more than a physical one!

1 Corinthians 6:17 (NLT) *But the person who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him.*

1 Thessalonians 5:23 (NLT) *Now may the God of peace make you holy in every way, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ comes again.*

Romans 12:1 (NASB 2020) *Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.*

Even believers still live in mortal bodies, and spiritual attentiveness must be cultivated. Difficulty in prayer does not equal lack of faith—it reflects the ongoing tension between flesh and spirit.

Matthew 26:40-41 (NLT) *Then he returned to the disciples and found them asleep. He said to Peter, "Couldn't you watch with me even one hour? Keep watch and pray, so that you will not give in to temptation. For the spirit is willing, but the body is weak!"*

III. It's all by faith!

Matthew 6:6 (NLT) *... Then your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.*

2 Corinthians 4:18 (NLT) ... we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever.

2 Corinthians 5:7 (NLT) For we live by believing and not by seeing.

Hebrews 11:6 (NLT) And it is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to him must believe that God exists and that he rewards those who sincerely seek him.

Prayer is challenging because it requires us to trust God's presence without physical evidence.

James 1:6-7 (NLT) But when you ask him, be sure that your faith is in God alone. Do not waver, for a person with divided loyalty is as unsettled as a wave of the sea that is blown and tossed by the wind. Such people should not expect to receive anything from the Lord.

Mark 11:22-24 (NASB 2020) "Have faith in God. Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and thrown into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it will be granted to him. Therefore, I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they will be granted to you.

Next week -- Prayer is a Connection, Not a Switch