

## Chapter 1

### Why Pray?

“Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you.” Jeremiah 29:12.

I remember the very first time I ever prayed.\* I remember it so well because I compared my prayer with my brother Joe’s prayer. You see, both of us had prayed for the first time that night before we went to bed. I was twelve, and he was eleven. Afterward, I asked him, “What did you say in your prayer?” smugly thinking that mine was probably better said than his. But as I listened to him relate his simple prayer to God, I knew that his was the better one. Mine was mechanical and formal, while his was heartfelt and sincere. That experience taught me my first lesson about prayer.

\* This book was written as a joint effort by a husband and wife team (Manuel and Nancy). However, in order to make it more readable and flowing, it was written as if there was only one writer. Therefore, when personal experiences are used, “I” refers to Manuel.

I learned that prayer is the opening of your heart to God, as to your most trusted Friend, without fear or reservations. And when you need Him, He is always there. Prayer is an audience with the Ruler of the universe - both a privilege and a duty. P-R-A-Y-E-R is God’s 800 number, which you can access to talk to Him at any time.

Prayer is also the breath of spiritual life and vigor. But some Christians are becoming spiritual asthmatics and slowly dying for lack of prayer.

How do you rate your prayer life?

On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate your prayer life? Is it good, average, or just so-so? Do you still pray as you used to, or have you been so caught up in the fast lane of life that your private moments with God are becoming fewer and farther between? Does the blessing on the food and a short prayer at bedtime constitute the extent of your prayers?

When was the last time you opened up your heart to God in quiet communion and received spiritual healing, forgiveness, direction, or a hug of assurance? Maybe you believe because of past sins or a current lifestyle that prayer would be an exercise in futility. Or it may be that you're praying more but nothing seems to change, and you wonder, Is anyone up there?

Perhaps you have a viable prayer life but want to have a closer walk with the Lord. But you want to make sure you don't get caught up in the so-called innovative counterfeits of intimate communion with God such as astral projections, out-of-body experiences, or dialoguing with "Christ" and "angels." Whatever your experience is or has been, don't give up on prayer, for it is the all-important line of communication between you and your Creator.

Is prayer still relevant?

For many of our forebears, prayer was a prominent activity, a vital part of their lives. Prayer has played a vital role in our church. It was through much prayer and Bible study that the doctrines of our church were formulated. The gift of prophecy to the Adventist Church, through the ministry of Ellen Harmon White, began during a prayer session.

Great revivals have taken place because of prayer. Lives have been changed. Miracles have happened in answer to prayer. Destinies of people and nations have been affected by prayer. More than once, prayer has brought fire down from heaven.

But in this fast-paced, media-saturated society, prayer seems to have lost its relevance to some. They have relegated it to the shelf of obsolete spiritual practices. Others have tried to replace it with mystical meditation. Still others are caught up with the self-awareness that looks within for answers, and many wonder, Is prayer still the answer, or is it just another option?

Prayer is a divine science and worthy of our study. It is a relatively untapped storehouse of power - and God is longing for you to claim that power. God is able to intervene in your life in answer to prayer

because it allows Him to do things that He would not otherwise do if you did not ask (see James 4:2).

Prayer is the conduit through which we receive spiritual strength from the Holy Spirit to live a victorious Christian life. Through prayer, we can call on the heavenly forces to be at our side, causing the devil and his demons to flee. Why is it, then, that we don't use God's 800 number more?

Prayer is the answer

I believe prayer is as relevant today as it was in biblical times, especially as we approach the twenty-first century. Like Christ, prayer is the answer to the problems and difficult situations we face. Prayer is the way we get close to Christ and stay close to Him. If we only prayed more, things would be a lot different.

Let me share with you a very relevant and inclusive description of prayer that speaks of its power and potential:

Prayer is the answer to every problem in life.

It puts us in tune with divine wisdom which knows how to adjust everything perfectly.

So often we do not pray in certain situations, because from our standpoint, the outlook is hopeless.

But nothing is impossible with God. Nothing is so entangled that it cannot be remedied; no human relationship is too strained for God to bring about reconciliation and understanding; no habit so deep-rooted that it cannot be overcome; no one is so weak that he cannot be strong. No one is so ill that he cannot be healed. No mind is so dull that it cannot be made brilliant. Whatever we need, if we trust God, He will supply it.

If anything is causing worry or anxiety, let us stop rehearsing the difficulty and trust God for healing, love and power." (Quoted by R. A. Rentfro, "My Last Day on Earth," Review and Herald, 7 October 1965, 7.)

The unknown author of this text understood the biblical teachings of the true dynamics and benefits of prayer. Nothing is impossible with God, as Gabriel declared to Mary (Luke 1:37) or as the Lord told Jeremiah (Jeremiah 32:27). In prayer you are addressing the Creator of the universe, who spoke our world into existence; the Source of life who breathed into Adam's nostrils the breath of life; the One who called all the stars by name.

No matter how big or complicated your problem is, He can handle it. He is Jehovah-jireh, the One who will "see to it" and provide for you. He is your Healer, your heavenly Father, who loves you and longs to help you.

As we near the second coming of Jesus and the times of trial that precede it, personal prayer should play an ever greater role in our lives. We are told that the only safeguard against the last great deception, in the days just before the return of Jesus, will be the study of the Word of God and prayer - much prayer.

In this book we will study the science of prayer, looking at its conditions and requirements. We'll look at what it takes to build a meaningful and lasting relationship with God. We'll see that God longs to interact with us. We'll find out why prayer works for some and not for others. We'll look into intercessory prayer. And finally, we'll talk about how to ask for and receive the Holy Spirit through prayer.