



Foreword

Prayer has long been a vital interest of mine. I've stopped counting the years since a desire to experience the Holy One first awakened in me. Suffice it to say that I now gather those many years by decades. In spite of continuous reading and study, daily meditation, and faithful attention to the inner and outer components of my existence, I often feel like a neophyte when it comes to "the spiritual life." There is so much more to learn and relearn. There is always a need for further awakening and an ever greater acceptance of the mystery that weaves through the deeper part of who I am.

Robert Wicks points this out clearly when he notes, "True prayerfulness is not captured once and for all but must be continually embraced." How cognizant he is of both old-timers and newcomers to the spiritual life, of all of us who need to be constantly inspired, nurtured, and offered practical help in order to increasingly embrace prayerfulness.

If you hear Dr. Wicks at a conference, you experience a marvelous combination of high energy, quick wit, skilled storytelling, and valuable insight. When you read his publications, you discover that his thought reflects someone well-versed in both psychology and spirituality. He brings a depth of wisdom and a sturdy commitment to what is of greatest value. All of these gifts shine through *Prayerfulness*.

Robert Wicks brings his best to a topic that has been perused by countless authors. What makes *Prayerfulness* stand out is his unfailing honesty and his ability to unite our everyday life to our relationship with the divine. Dr. Wicks not only presents a solid foundation for the spiritual life but also gives numerous helpful suggestions for how to grow in “experiencing God and life in dynamic new ways.” He does so with an engaging manner, assuring us that we are quite capable of attaining what he proposes.

One cannot help but recognize both depth and practicality in the list of characteristics that Robert Wicks considers to be essential to prayerfulness. His list contains equal amounts of inspiration and challenge. This author is not pushy or preachy. His writing reflects the openness that he suggests as essential for prayerfulness. Yet, he is also firm about what is required in order to have an authentic, spiritually focused life.

One of these necessities is that of paying attention to our spiritual blinders, those personality traits that bushwhack us at such times when we are overly busy, caught in a darkness of mind or heart, unaware, or nonreceptive. Dr. Wicks insists that true prayerfulness requires a change in attitude and a deliberate choice to act with love. He reminds us that we cannot avoid the tough issues that haunt most of us: the suffering and difficult times, the questions, doubts, addictions, and concerns that often attach themselves to us. With gentle nudges, he reminds the reader that only by facing and befriending these aspects of our lives will we grow in prayerfulness.

One of the many features I appreciate about Robert Wicks's published works is his sense of humor. He gives his reader an opportunity to see the contradictions and foolishness that keep us from prayerfulness, and he does so without creating a playpen spirituality. While he keeps the reader focused on the seriousness of the issue, his witty phrases and stories enable one to not feel overwhelmed by the truth of what he presents. For example, Dr. Wicks describes those whose life gets overly cluttered or addictively stimulated with activity as people who "rush around like a gargoyle on roller skates." I could easily have fallen back into my old discouragements, remembering a history of feeling inundated with activity, of succumbing to poor-me-isms and irrational frustration due to my struggle with inner and outer balance. Instead, I chuckled at his description, smiling to myself, "Been there, done that." (There are certain places in this book where I also thought, "Still doing that!")

We never completely outgrow what keeps us from entering fully into prayerfulness, but we can get much better at recognizing which parts of us lead us away and which parts draw us closer. Thanks to the guidance of *Prayerfulness*, readers will be better able to move in a direction that orients them toward spiritual maturity.

I always feel safe among the pages of Robert Wicks's writings. He is grounded in healthy spirituality and writes about what he has lived. He also allows us to listen in on what others have experienced and shared with him, so we know we are not alone in our hopes and struggles. He never underestimates his reader's desire to draw more closely to

the divine. At the same time, Dr. Wicks wisely cautions: “Take care of yourselves.” I like that. His advice leaves me with the conviction that this author not only teaches well, but does so with a compassionate heart.

—Joyce Rupp