

# The Joy of Prayer

WITH C. S. LEWIS

# Home-made or Ready-made?

- ▶ At the end of his life, Lewis wrote a book on prayer published posthumously under the title *Letters to Malcolm*.
- ▶ Lewis claims that he tried to pray without words, with only mental images, when he first became a Christian.
- ▶ It doesn't matter who first put the words of a prayer together.
- ▶ Lewis uses his own words as the staple with a modicum of the ready-made.

# Prayers to and for the Dead

- ▶ “If we can ask for the prayers of the living, why can’t we ask for the prayers of the dead?”
- ▶ Lewis notes that devotions to saints have the benefit of reminding us that we are very small compared to them, how much smaller compared to their Master.
- ▶ Lewis maintains that all Christians should be agreed about praying *with* the saints.
- ▶ Lewis answers Malcolm’s potential objection that there is not a great difference between praying with the saints and praying to the saints.
- ▶ Regarding prayers *for* the dead, Lewis asserts that it is a spontaneous and all but inevitable action on his part since most of the people he loves best *are* dead.

# When and Where to Pray

- ▶ Our chief prayers should not be left to the end of the day because we need energy and concentration to pray well.

# The Why and What of Prayer

- ▶ “Why pray when God knows all?”
- ▶ How important must an object be before we can, without sin or folly, allow our desire for it to become a matter of serious concern to us?

# Festooning the Lord's Prayer

- ▶ Festoonings are the private overtones we give to certain petitions.
- ▶ When we pray “Our Father” we put ourselves in the place of children of God.
- ▶ To “thy kingdom come” Lewis adds the meaning “may your reign be realized here as it is there.”
- ▶ Lewis views “thy will be done” as primarily an act of submission.
- ▶ Lewis suggests that we can use “Give us this day our daily bread,” to pray for both spiritual and physical needs.
- ▶ Lewis confesses that the hard part about forgiveness is to keep on forgiving others every time their offense comes back into our minds.
- ▶ “Lead us not into temptation,” raises the question of whether God is a fiend.
- ▶ God would deserve our worship whether God was all-powerful or not.

# Penitential Prayer

- ▶ Lewis prays for the daily dose of self-knowledge that he can handle.
- ▶ There are different levels of penitential prayer.
- ▶ Lewis does not agree with the Puritans who suggest that we ought to have a permanently horrified perception of our own sin.

# Petitionary Prayer

- ▶ “Why pray if the future is already certain in God's mind?”
- ▶ What sort of evidence would prove the efficacy of prayer?
- ▶ Does prayer work?
- ▶ “God instituted prayer in order to lend to his creatures the dignity of causality.” Pascal

# The Prayer of Faith

- ▶ What we are to do with Jesus' words in Mark 11:24, "Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours."
- ▶ The answer to some prayers is "No," even when we pray in faith.
- ▶ Lewis concludes that Mark 11:24 contains truth for advanced disciples.
- ▶ We should not try to work up a subjective state of faith.

# Adoration & Thanksgiving

- ▶ Adoration can start, for example, from a waterfall, which is an exposition of God's glory.
- ▶ Pleasures can become "patches of Godlight" in the woods of our experience.
- ▶ The contrast between adoration and thanksgiving is like the difference between "looking at" and "looking along."

# The Duty of Prayer

- ▶ Lewis refreshingly and humbly admits that prayer is irksome!
- ▶ “Why should we read Lewis on prayer?”