NO! I DON'T WANT TO RECEIVE PRAYER!

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Prayer is important and it's probably worth avoiding sloppy language that expresses things that really aren't true.
Category: Observations

I admit it, I'm a bit of a language snob.

I generally don't get very exercised about spelling and punctuation (as you may have noticed). This is partly because I'm slightly dyslexic and correct spelling and the use of commas are a mystery to me. However, I do delight in well formed sentences and correct plurals of Latin words and I don't like the way some people talk about prayer.

However, for once, this isn't my language snobbery, it is a serious theological point.

Take the common phrase, "**Prayer Changes Things**". Does it? Well, the discipline of regular prayer, may well change the prayer-er, but it really doesn't change anything else. God, in response to our prayers, may well change some things; but he is the one who makes the changes, not us and not our prayers.

Over the last few years, I've started to hear the phrase "**Would you like to receive prayer?**"; another phrase that I'm uneasy with. I can receive insults, compliments, chocolate, baffled looks and many other things, but I can't receive prayer. We pray to God; He receives our prayers. We can pray for or on behalf of someone, but those prayers are addressed to God.

You might want to suggest that I'm just being picky; a stereotypical grumpy old man, but I would disagree.

Both of these common phrases exclude God from the picture and I think this is a problem from two angles. Firstly, the fact that God listens to our prayers and acts in response to them is one of the most profound mysteries of the Christian faith. Anything which sidelines this and allows us to take it for granted is, at best, unhelpful. Secondly, both phrases make it seem as though prayer in and of itself is effective. This can easily encourage us to focus on the form and act of prayer, rather than on the the gracious loving God who is listening to them.

The language we use both shapes Â and reflects our thinking and our attitudes and there are some areas in life where we should be particularly careful about the way in which we express ourselves.

By the way, if you would like to pray for us, we'd be delighted! You can sign up to receive our news on the sidebar.