

VIII hard hats must be worn

I wonder whether we have become too comfortable in our church services. To put it another way, do we really expect that God will answer our prayers or have we lost all sense of expectancy? If we really thought that God was going to answer our prayers maybe things would get very explosive and we really would need to wear hard hats before entering church.

Perhaps, to save us any embarrassment, God answers our prayers by saying 'are you sure you really want that?' For example, prayers are often said expressing a desire for more young people in the church but what would happen if the prayer was answered? Who would teach them in the junior church? Could the older people cope with the extra noise and the new songs? Sometimes, the unwritten assumption is that we like young people but only when they are grown up.

Consider another example. Countless prayers are said for the growth of the ecumenical movement. Does your church really want that? It will certainly mean a much greater cooperation with other denominations. It may mean that some of your own activities need to cease and it may mean more joint services and the church that is so close to your heart may have to close.

The hard work of prayer is to consider the implications of what we are praying for. The easy way out is to pray for situations that we can do very little, if anything about, for example Afghanistan. The danger is to leave it all to God in the vain hope that he has a magic wand. Rather than wave a wand I think God promises something more important - that he will be with us in all situations. That is very comforting and more faithful to the New Testament. The future can be lived through because God is there with us.

At the end of any prayer, the unspoken question is, what is God asking me to do in this particular situation? Hence the hard hat!! All this raises the question of what God desires and how we determine that.

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