

Talk of prayer scares 'em stiff

The average American feels uncomfortable discussing spiritual things. We do pretty well when it comes to sports, business, politics, the weather, the Dow Jones, our children and the "good old days." But let someone bring up the subject of God, prayer, miracles, or Jesus Christ—and everyone gets a little fidgety.

I attended one of those before dinner "happy hours" last week in New York. Everyone was standing around with a cocktail glass talking about sports, business, politics, the

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weather, the Dow Jones, their children and the "good old days." I thought it was time to stop wasting time. I turned to the man nearest me, a nice looking fellow with a dark goatee and glasses, and said simply, "Do you ever pray?"

He swallowed his olive. Whole. In fact, I thought I was going to have to pray for him. He finally caught his breath and gasped, "Not very much." He then started coughing violently and walked quickly toward the bathroom.

Later we approached the buffet table and I got into a conversation with the couple behind me in line. We talked about sports, business, politics, the weather, the Dow Jones and finally got around to our children. Their kids, it seemed, were off in drugs. I thought I'd try again.

"Jackie and I pray for our kids. In fact, every night before they go to sleep I go in their bedrooms, lay hands on them, and pray out loud."

I suddenly realized everyone around us in line had grown quiet. All were listening. But when I looked up at them, they all quickly turned away. I turned back to the couple I had been talking to and both were ghost white. "Have I offended you?" I asked innocently, knowing I hadn't offended them—I had just scared them speechless.

They mumbled something about not being "religious" and quickly moved through the serving line. I thought about the fellow who almost choked on his olive and wondered if he would have gotten "religious" if he thought he was going to die. Probably so. In a hurry, too.

That's the way we are. But I think I'll keep asking my little questions. Maybe, someday, someone will answer me with tears in their eyes.