



Perspective

By JAMIE BUCKINGHAM

Embarrassing Question

Most Americans feel 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 the person of 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 weather, the Dow Jones, their children, the "good old days" and 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, as we approached the buffet table, I got into a conversation with the couple standing behind me in line. He was an advertising executive and his wife worked for Kodak. We were talking about sports, business, politics, the weather, the Dow Jones and finally got around to our children. Their children, it seemed, were having trouble. Drugs. Rebellion. The whole lot. I thought I'd try again.

"My wife and I decided several years ago that our children were more important than our jobs or our leisure time. We also decided they were given to us by God and the first question we would be asked in the judgment would probably have to do with our children. Therefore, every night, before the kids go to sleep, I go to each one of their rooms, talk with them about things important to them, then lay hands on them and

pray for them — out loud. I want them to know their Daddy believes in prayer."

I suddenly realized everyone around us had grown quiet. All were listening. But when I turned and looked at them, they all turned away. I turned back to the couple I had been talking to and both of them 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 most of us are. But I think I'll keep on asking my little questions. Maybe, someday, someone will answer me back with tears in their eyes.