



# Perspective

By JAMIE BUCKINGHAM

## On Success . . .

Success is a relative thing. It is dependent upon the perspective from which it is viewed.

Later on this school year the senior class will choose the man and woman "most likely to succeed." By that they mean the person who, when the class comes together for its 20th anniversary, will have become chairman of the board, U.S. Senator, an admiral in the Navy or chosen to be on the centerfold for *Cosmopolitan*.

But, you see, that's viewing success from an earthy position. Change your perspective, look upon people and things from God's viewpoint, and suddenly success takes on a different hue.

I have stuck on the wall over my desk an advertisement clipped from a magazine several years ago. It is a picture of a man slogging across a jungle river, his back loaded with gear, his clothes wet, his face scratched. It is the picture of loneliness and misery — from an earthy perspective. Un-

derneath is the caption, "Jim was voted 'most likely to succeed' — now look at him."

I sometimes sit and look at the picture for a long time. Then I read the copy below.

"It's too bad. Jim had it made. Personality, initiative, a college degree with honors. Success and the 'good life' were his for the asking.

"Now look at him. Backpacking across some jungle river. Giving his life to a preliterate people barely out of the stone age. Painstakingly creating a written alphabet from a previously unrecorded babble of sounds. Working night and day translating the pages of the New Testament. Exposing the senselessness of superstition and ignorance. Relieving pain and introducing the possibility of health. Building a bridge of love and understanding to a neglected people.

"And to think . . . Jim could have been a success."

The ad is a challenge to today's young people — those who have everything or those who have nothing to live for — to look at success from a different viewpoint. Sponsored by the Wycliffe Bible Translators, it is an invitation — using reverse psychology — for young people to commit their lives to something worth even more than making money and being elected to office. A life of service.

As school starts I hope a number of today's youth — along with their parents — will re-evaluate their priorities of success. I don't think God is very impressed when the newspaper obit says a man died of a heart attack at the age of 48 striving to make his second million. However, when the column mentions that his son took the inheritance, gave most of it to feed the poor and used the rest to finance his way into the jungle where he spent his life as a Bible translator . . . ah, that's a different question.