



Perspective

By Jamie Buckingham

Should I force my child? Well, if you don't, then someone else will have to.

We live in a mixed-up generation where children give orders to parents — where parents ask children what they want rather than tell them what they need.

I was impressed with a statement made by the dean of Princeton. A group of militant students had just walked into his office, forcibly picked him up and heaved him out the door onto the sidewalk. The dean responded by saying something to the press about this being the natural result of a generation of kids who were picked up every time they cried. Ooooh! That hurts!

Oh, in some areas we exert authority. We see that our kids get to school. We see they do their homework. We powder and pad our little girls and literally push them out onto the dance floor—before they know the difference between an eyebrow pencil and a coloring crayon.

But, when it comes to things eternal, well, here we go slow because we don't want to harm their tender emotional natures through a traumatic experience that will cause them to rebel later.

Poppycock!

For every person who says, "I don't come to church because I was forced as a child," I can name you a hundred who say, "I come to church now because my parents made me go as a child. I established a habit which I have never broken."

When our first-born entered school he couldn't stand the first grade. For a solid month he rebelled. We whipped him up and down the street. He'd get to the door of the schoolhouse and take off like a scared rabbit for home.

On several occasions his mother had to call me from the office to come home, pick him up, carry him kicking and screaming back to school. Into that first grade room I would carry him and plop him down at his little desk, the tears pouring from his eyes.

"Now stay there," I warned him, "And don't you dare run home again." It was hard—on both of us.

Now he's a happy, normal junior higher and the only problem we have is he likes to loiter on his way home from school in the afternoon.

The same principle ought to apply to Sunday school. It's not, "Johnny, would you like to get up this morning and go to church rather than going with us to the beach?"

Rather it should be, "Johnny, get your shoes on. We're all going to church."

Someone is going to force your child. If it's not you—then it will have to be teacher, policeman or warden.

Someone has said there are four pieces of wood necessary to raise a boy—a baseball bat, a plow handle, a church pew and a paddle. All are essential.