

THE ART OF VISITATION

INTRODUCTION.

- A. Scripture text: **none**. From Roy H. Enoch (04-18-1994).
- B. According to the practice of some of our "more godly" members, Job's friends were dedicated and exemplar examples of the art of visitation to console and comfort.
 - 1. They went when they heard of his tragedies.
 - 2. They must have had great inconvenience because of the distance: they came from different countries.
 - 3. They spent a great deal of time wearing him down.
 - 4. They told him how righteous God is, and therefore he must be a very wicked sinner to have deserved all of that.
 - 5. They "kept at him" until he could protest and object no longer.
 - 6. They only gave advice and criticism, but did not even offer to do anything for him.
- C. But we need to realize that "visiting" is not making a social call.
 - 1. *Strong's*; to inspect, i.e. (by implication) to select; by extension, to go to see, relieve.
 - 2. See Jas. 1:27; Ac. 15:36.
 - a. Paul gives the reason for the "visit" as "see how they are doing."
 - b. This was not an inspection, or a social visit, but an investigation of their needs, and meeting them.
 - c. In fact, the description in Ac. 14:21,22 is closer to the facts.
- E. In this brief presentation, we want to identify some of the reasons for visits and how to effectively fill those needs. A primary source for this lesson is a booklet by J.A. McNutt, *Let's Go Visiting*.

I. THERE ARE SEVERAL REASONS FOR VISITS.

- A. Those who are sick have special needs.
- B. Those who are shut-ins and lonely need comfort and encouragement.
- C. The bereaved often need one's presence more than words.
- D. Delinquent members must be brought back w/ gentleness.
- E. Newcomers to the community and especially to services need a "made welcome" visit.
- F. New members who transfer and new converts should be made welcome.
- G. Prospective members should be visited and encouraged to study.

II. THERE ARE SEVERAL REASONS FOR A SYSTEMATIC VISITATION PROGRAM.

- A. Many are willing to visit, but feel that they do not know how.
- B. Often only a few are doing about all of the visiting.
- C. Those who have specific responsibilities of an assignment to visit feel more a part of the work of the church.
- D. We are more consistent where there are guidelines for the work.
- E. Members working together in teams get to know each other better.
- F. Leadership skills are developed in Elders, overseeing the work.
- G. Leadership skills are developed in team leaders.
- H. Those who need visiting will be visited more regularly.
- I. Those not visiting at all will be encouraged to visit some.
- J. Those already visiting will be encouraged by others doing more.

II. SOME SPECIFIC GUIDELINES FOR DIFFERENT KINDS OF PEOPLE THAT NEED VISITED.

- A. Those sick in the hospital are a special class.
The following suggestions are given by Mrs. Margaret Wheeler, a R.N., and a faithful member of the Central Church of X in Tuscaloosa, AL. She speaks from many years of experience. "A person who

does not know how to visit the sick, may not only contribute to the discomfort of the patient, but positively retard his recovery. As Xians there are several ways that we may help and comfort the sick. Here are some of them:"

1. The initial approach should be one of friendliness, cheerfulness, and optimism.
 2. Enter the room quietly and speak in soft tones.
 3. Visits should be very brief since patients tire easily.
 4. If two visitors or more are in a patient's room when you enter, do not stay although the family may insist that you stay for a while.
 5. Visit major post-operative patients on about the fourth or fifth day as by this time secondary pains a chance to subside.
 6. If asked to stay w/an irrational or semi-conscious person keep in confidence anything that they might converse about. These people are not responsible and are helpless to the environment about them.
 7. Don't compare or discuss your operation or sicknesses with the ill, because he is suffering enough from his own illness.
 8. Never ask a patient what is wrong with him. If you think that you must know, ask if he is hospitalized for medical or surgical treatment. If he wants you to have more information, he will tell you.
 9. Be considerate of other people in wards and semi-private rooms. They may be ill.
 10. Be a good listener. Avoid discussions which may be depressing or disturbing to the patient.
 11. When visiting a critically ill person especially remember:
 - a. NO VISITORS sign on the door means just what it says. Do not knock or enter.
 - b. Do not stand just outside a patient's door and talk to relatives. It may disturb the patient.
 12. In presence of the dying especially remember:
 - a. Unnecessary conversation should be avoided. Hearing is supposed to be the last sense to leave the dying person.
 - b. We should preserve peace and cheerfulness about him and his loved ones by our own poise and faith in God.
 13. Remember the golden rule and the patient will be able to say, "I am glad that you came."
- B. The shut-ins and lonely at home have special needs.
1. This is particularly true when they live alone.
 2. They sometimes need help w/ housework and appreciate some freshly prepared food.
 3. The elderly in good health often are too feeble to clean out their gutters, do yard work or even thorough housecleaning.
 4. Even if their basic needs are met, they appreciate and need company to cheer them up.
 5. If they are healthy, but lonely, a longer visit is appreciated.
 6. In visiting the lonely, try to find what things you have in common w/them such as jobs, interests, hobbies et cetera.
 7. Anything you would do for a good friend is appropriate for your visit to the lonely--and remember the golden rule.
- C. The bereaved are the most difficult group to visit.
1. It is difficult to know what to say, and even more difficult to know when nothing needs to be said: Your presence is the most important part of the visit.
 2. Your feelings of bewilderment may be your best indication of how they feel in trying to cope with tragedy.
 3. There are some obvious things that can be done, especially for those close to the family:
 - a. A few close friends should be with them.
 - b. Food needs to be brought for the family and visitors from out of town.

- c. The house may need to be cleaned.
 - d. The car may need to be washed.
 - e. The lawn may need to be mowed.
 - f. The laundry may need to be done, and clothes to be worn to the funeral may need to be taken to the cleaners.
4. As important as what should be said may be to know what not to say, as some old clichés that need to be avoided:
 - a. "Time heals all wounds," is of no comfort when people are hurting at the time.
 - b. "After a while you will forget," is even more painful. They do not want to forget.
 - c. "He (or she) would have wanted you to..." is very common. Is it wise to be giving advice at a time of first grief? This is a time of consolation not advice.
 5. Often, a firm handclasp or a gentle embrace which expresses genuine heartfelt sympathy is the greatest consolation that most are able to give.
- D. Visiting delinquent members is a task for the spiritually strong (Gal. 6:1,2).
1. Delinquent members fall under two categories:
 - a. Those who have left this congregation, and
 - b. Those who have move to town and have not begun to attend or place membership.
 2. This may be a group that the elders should consider visiting themselves, and they could ask some of the delinquent's close friends in the church to help.
- E. Newcomers should be visited soon after they arrive, and especially soon after they visit your worship services.
1. If members of the church, they should be encouraged lest they drift away.
 2. If they are not members, they may be more receptive, before they make other friends, or start attending some other church.
- F. New members who have moved to town and new converts need friends.
1. It has been said that if a new convert does not become close to at least five to seven people in the first few weeks, that they will soon fall away.
 2. They should be invited into homes, and involved in social lives of members as well as the activities of the church.
- G. We should always be on the lookout for new prospects.
1. The best prospects are friends and neighbors of members.
 2. The best way to influence them is w/a faithful example of personal devotion to the Lord.
 3. We should remember the advice of Paul to Timothy (2Tim. 2:24).
 4. I can think of no place where the golden rule is needed more.

CONCLUSION.

- A. We have only been able to look at the scope of the task, and have not had time to go into much detail.
- B. One the greatest assets we can have in visiting others is a love for X that we can't keep to ourselves, and a love for others that compels us to share our joys and blessings with them.