

THE HOSPITAL WORKER



THE FULL GOSPEL CHURCH OF GOD

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Scripture: Matt. 25:34-40 "I was sick, and you visited Me"

When a person is ill, he is more receptive for discussions of a spiritual nature. Normally people are too busy or too rushed to create time to speak about the things of the Lord, but when they are indisposed and have no option but to be quiet and listen, these same people become eager hearers of God's Word.

It is crucial that the spiritual worker should realise when he visits the sick, the visit should always be uplifting. REMEMBER – THIS IS A MINISTRY!

The sick person often experiences a whole lot of emotions ranging from faith to discouragement, insecurity, loneliness, fear, anguish and stress because of possible future operations. By showing love the concerned spiritual worker can be a life-line for these people to whom they eagerly reach out. This kind of opportunity should compel the dedicated worker to convey God's love to the sick.

See to it that you always have a Bible with you, however, don't walk into the ward with your Bible in your hand. Try to acquire a small Bible which can fit into a jacket pocket or handbag. A suitable portion of Scripture is always of great value.

Never talk to the sick person about his illness, unless he so chooses. If he wants to talk about it, have patience and listen with sincere interest.

VISITING THE SICK AT HOME

GENERAL GUIDELINES:

Visits at home are as important as hospital visits.

1. Try to establish what the most convenient time for a visit would be, keeping in mind that the ill person may become exhausted at home where there are no visiting hours as in hospitals.
2. Always consider the family members: Have they already had their meal? Are they prepared to receive visitors? Are they perhaps preparing to retire for the night?
3. Considering the circumstances, your visit should not be too long. It can, however, be longer than a hospital visit.
4. Inquire if there is anything you or the assembly can do to help; should there be a task which you cannot accomplish on your own, contact the church office immediately for assistance.
5. If you hear about a sick person from another source than through the church office, inform the secretary immediately so that the necessary attention can be given to the matter.

6. Send an encouraging letter or card to the patient directly after your visit, even if the illness is of short duration. This will assure him of your genuine concern.
7. If the person is ill for an extended period, you should visit him more regularly.
8. Leave good literature, books, CD's, etc. with the patient. Be wise in your choice. Titles such as "Death pays an unexpected visit" and similar titles, are obviously in poor taste. (Remember always to retrieve the material at a later date).
9. In the event of a person being ill for an indefinite period of time, or persons who are disabled, you could possibly arrange to take Sunday's sermons to him on a CD.

HOSPITAL VISITS

Hospital visits certainly account for the greater part of visiting the sick, because in a strange environment, the patient needs more support than elsewhere.

THE ADJUSTMENT OF THE PATIENT:

In the hospital one has to deal with the patient and his family as well as the staff and all the demands of the establishment. Whilst always being mindful to comply with the regulations, the patient as an individual should never be forgotten.

We should always remember that we deal with an individual, an emotional being created by God. The patient has the added burden of illness/injury and is possibly struggling with personal problems, worries, anguish and the terrible fear of being separated from his loved ones. Although he can suppress his feelings among others in his new environment, he might still be deeply troubled about his true state of health. He may secretly hope that his illness can be cured through medication, therapy or by an operation – and on the other hand he may have a hidden fear that his illness is incurable.

If he is the breadwinner of the family, he could possibly be concerned about the financial position of the family, and rightly so. If the patient is a woman and mother, she will be particularly concerned about the well-being of her husband and children whom she has left at home. Children that are hospitalised will feel tense and anxious because they no longer experience the security their parents provide.

In the event of the patient being unknown to you, politely introduce yourself: You may say a) how you came to know about him. b) who requested you to pay a visit. Always act in a dignified manner.

Although most patients welcome the offer of prayer and the reading of Scripture, you should rather first ask if it would be in order – particularly if it is a stranger.

GUIDELINES FOR HOSPITAL VISITS

It is essential to prepare for the visit by praying for guidance from the Holy Spirit for the correct Scripture to read to the patient and for the correct words at the right time.

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1. Keep the visit short; five minutes are usually enough. Never wake a sleeping patient who might be exhausted from previous visits; rather leave a calling card, or have a staff member tell the patient you were there. _____
 2. Introduce yourself if you are unacquainted and then state your reason for being there e.g. you responded to his request, or you noticed his name in the assembly newsletter, or someone asked you to pay him a visit. _____
 3. Be neat, wear suitable clothes and be friendly: smile, be cheerful, positive and sure of yourself. This is a ministry of love – this is not work. Do it as unto the Lord. _____
 4. Try to avoid visits during mealtimes, but if you must, encourage the patient to have his meal before it is cold and unappetising. _____
 5. Ask the patient if there is anything you can do for him e.g. take a message, or make a phone call. Don't offer any form of food or beverages. _____
 6. Don't mention the patient's illness (heart-attack, cancer, pneumonia, etc.), unless he wants to Speak about it. _____
 7. Use the opportunity to read the Word e.g. a passage which encourages and portrays God's love. When you pray, it should be a very short and personal prayer. _____
 8. Use a mouth freshener and deodorant. Try to avoid heavy perfume as it is repulsive to the severely ill. _____
 9. Don't touch the patient's bed. Don't bump it or place your foot on the rail – you will disturb the patient. _____
 10. Don't sit on the bed. You may sit on a chair if available and the occasion allows for it. _____
 11. Never eat while doing hospital visits. _____
 12. If you are walking on uncarpeted floors, rather walk on your toes, because the sound of your shoes (other than rubber) can be disturbing to patients. _____
 13. Pay attention to the tone and volume of your voice – avoid a monotone. _____
 14. Don't forget the patient and continue to visit him regularly. Visit him at home once he has beendischarged. If you are unable to visit a person, make use of telephone calls or suitable cards. _____
- Remember that the patient, prior to your first visit may not have known Christ. Spiritual follow-up is therefore necessary. Invite him to visit the Church with you. Become his friend and make sure that he finds Christ. _____
15. If the patient's spiritual need is greater than the help you can offer, you must inform the pastor immediately. (You should take care NOT to refer every case. Sometimes all cases appear difficult). _____

16. Bring good news to the patient. Forget the headlines, negative news items, your son's broken leg, your traffic ticket, etc.
17. Provide the patient with suitable spiritual literature. Even CD's can be used in certain cases. Your church office has such material – use it.

DO'S AND DON'TS OF HOSPITAL VISITS

DON'T:

1. Recommend another doctor
2. Contradict the doctor's order
3. Become involved in an argument
4. Try to impress the patient with your knowledge of medicine – it may cause confusion
5. Criticise the hospital, the patient may have to return to it in future
6. Discuss another person who died of the same disease
7. Try to make your own diagnosis
8. Insist that the nurse provide more medication. She is under orders of the doctor
9. Distribute controversial tracts about death etc.
10. Speak about medicine that helped you – it could kill him
11. Adjust the height of the bed without being asked
12. Give the patient water to drink unless you know that it is in order to do so
13. Speak about death, it can be terrifying. If the patient wants to talk about it, let him do so
14. Ask to see the assembly's bouquet – the flowers may be disposed of already. This could put the patient in an awkward situation.
15. Whisper in the passage. The patient may assume it concerns him, and this could cause him anguish.
16. Summarily lay hands on the patient when you pray.
17. Ask any questions which may embarrass the patient.
18. Pray in tongues – definitely not loudly, except if the other patients have requested that you pray for the whole ward.

YOU MUST:

1. Allow the patient to speak as he wishes if he is able;
2. Be honest and sincere in your interest of what is being said;
3. Feel free to ask whether you may offer a prayer;
4. Leave something of spiritual relevance e.g. a card with a Bible verse or an uplifting message;
5. Be a good listener;
6. Allow the patient to talk about his past, or sin if he wishes to. He may need this release;
7. Obey the hospital regulations strictly and leave if you are asked to do so;
8. Always be friendly and courteous towards other visitors of the patient.

GOD BLESS YOUR MINISTRY OF LOVE