

## Should We Still Visit?

Most of us have heard that the days of going to the homes of prospects or the unchurched are over. Some workshop speakers and writers have said, "Visitation just doesn't work anymore!" and "People don't like to be visited." So, we should ask the question, "Are they correct, or is there still a place for visitation?" Can a church effectively utilize the method of home visitation today?

I would like to suggest that it is wise to keep a variety of tools in our ministry toolbox. Let me suggest some ways that we may effectively utilize visitation today.

### To Those In Our Ministries

The most obvious and easiest visitation is to the homes of people who are already in our Sunday School class, Deacon Care group, Bible Study group, or who have special needs at the time. With these folks, we need to call ahead and ask permission to stop by at a time convenient for them. It is logical for leaders to come to a home to extend the ministry outside of the class or group. These can be rich times of learning about each other, communicating group information, encouraging, and sharing prayer needs. The caller should always have a clear purpose for their call and be sensitive to spend an appropriate amount of time in the home.

When a person or family is going through a time of hospitalization, bereavement, or are shut-ins, visits can be very welcome and helpful. Sometimes a small gift, literature, or a CD/DVD can be taken along and given as well.



### To Prospects For Our Church

There are times when a home visit is a good strategy for ministering to the unchurched or those new to the community as well. When the prospect has visited a church event, a home visit can be especially welcome and effective. While it is helpful if you have previously met the visitors, it is not required in order to be effective. Here are some suggestions for creating a good impression and to be welcomed at the home:

- Try to phone ahead and ask permission or make an appointment while the prospect is at a church event.
- Sometimes a letter from the church, letting folks know that you will be coming, will set you up with a welcome.
- When possible, take a small gift. Some churches follow up their visitors with a jar of jam, a decorative candle, or a book/CD/DVD as a gift.
- Some churches have been very effective functioning much like the "Welcome Wagon" of a few years ago. They collect coupons and awards from area merchants and deliver them to families that have just moved into town. Many people have responded to this and other acts of kindness by visiting the church.

There are abundant rewards for those who engage in a genuine and caring home visitation ministry. Some of the rewards include:

- Developing friendships.
- Better understanding the needs of others.
- Building good will for the church.
- Sharing answers to the questions and needs of the prospect.
- The visitor is much more likely to return to visit again.
- Sometimes a home visit leads to the eventual conversion of the family to Christ.

These are some thoughts on the method of home visitation. It is still an effective and needed method in the 21st century if done with love and preparation. As we use this method, however, it is important to remember that all outreach methods are much more effective when accompanied by **personal relationship building**. The more we build bridges and relate to prospects, the more likely we are to be blessed in the process, and the more likely the visitor is to find new friends, a new church, and perhaps even the Savior.

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