

Hospital Visitation Ministry

By Richard C. Hobbs



**Laborers in the Harvest Series
Church Ministry**

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Most of all the Holy Spirit has quickened my heart and has given me love for all people. I love people and enjoy the opportunity to share the gospel. Also, the Holy Spirit has opened the doors for our ministry to train laborers in the harvest all over the world. For the love, favor, and mercy the Lord has given me, I give Him my life to train laborers in the harvest and share the gospel to the lost.

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me with the many tasks that needed to be completed. My family has shared the call the Lord has on my life and has been part of this ministry since its beginning.

Introduction

Hospital visitation provides a unique setting to minister to people who find themselves with a greater dependency upon friends, family, church, and their faith. Those who prepare themselves to minister in hospital settings and to the sick will discover that a visit, a Scripture, a spoken word, or prayer will bring hope and comfort. Lives can be forever changed from your obedience to the Word of God and compassion for others.

Chapter 1

Minister with Assurance

We have a privilege to be ambassadors and ministers to those who are sick and hurting. It is at times like these that hearts are open to the touch from our Lord Jesus. The Bible says that faith works by love. We also discover in the Word that God has given each of us the measure of faith. We can have confidence knowing that our ability to minister to those who are hurting comes from the heart and our Lord. We can share His comfort, healing, and salvation through His Word and His love for them. We must visit with assurance that the presence of the Holy Spirit will go with us and make known the mercies of God to those we visit in the midst of their uncertainty and illness. Our Lord Jesus does not separate His feelings from ours and when we hurt, He hurts. He seeks opportunity to intervene in a life to bring hope and health.

Matthew 25

44 *Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?*

45 *Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.*

The Holy Spirit is upon this earth to minister to the whole person -- body, soul, and spirit. The Holy Spirit moved upon the face of the earth at creation when God spoke the world into existence. He is ready to move upon those who call upon Him to bring the conviction to the lost and comfort to the hurting. So many times when people face illness they search their heart as fear and despair grips their soul. Some may question their purpose in life and basis for belief. During this time of suffering we want to reach out to support them. We may bring assurance of salvation and lead many into a relationship with Christ, or deepen the existing relationship. Through the Word, we can bring hope and compassion.

One Friday night, I was ministering in the streets and a young man suffering from drug addiction asked me for a favor. He said, "My dad was admitted to the hospital last night. Would you go and visit him?" I agreed and went to the hospital the next evening to visit his father. I sat down and visited with him and took time to listen and to be a friend. I told him that his son had sent me and yesterday he gave his heart to Christ. His father was pleased to hear that his son accepted Christ and then I prayed with his dad. His dad had a request for me and asked if I would visit another relative that was in intensive care. I said that I would go and visit him now.

I went to the intensive care nurse station to get directions to the patient's room. He was unconscious and the family and I held hands and prayed for the young man. They were thankful that I had taken time to visit and to care. Then they gave me a room number of someone they knew that needed prayer and I went to the room to meet the family and to pray for the patient. As I stood in the room, I knew that my whole evening had been directed by the Holy Spirit and the hearts of those that cared. There was no where else that I would had rather been as I knew that I had been in the will of God this day. Visiting people in the hospital need not to be something to fear but an opportunity to show our love for others and to serve our Lord. This experience for me in the hospital had built my assurance that wherever I go the Holy Spirit will direct my path as I minister to others.

Chapter 2

We have a Dependency upon Each Other

We are to represent the church and our Lord Jesus when we visit the sick and those in the hospital. Our care is beyond a sense of responsibility to help another. Our care comes from the heart and is based on the love that God has placed in His creation. We are dependent upon each other. There are many Scriptures in the Bible that describe this dependency we have upon each other. The Lord said in Matthew 18:20, *“For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”* He said in Mark 16:18, *“.. they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.”* Also, He said in Matthew 18:19, *“Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.”* In these Scriptures we can see that God has established many of His principles upon people ministering to people through His Word. Therefore, we have a dependency upon each other. People need friendship and fellowship to feel a sense of wholeness. Realizing this we can see that a simple visit with the sick is so much more as we are showing the same compassion and mercy that has been shown to us.

My own family faced a tragic time when my mother was diagnosed with cancer. The family felt so many emotions and uncertainty about her future. The day before she left the earth, I extended an invitation to her to accept Christ as her Lord. She was a good person and had all of the attributes of a Christian but had never had the opportunity or purpose to make the decision. It was a special dispensation from God that allowed my mother to awaken from a seemingly unconscious state to hold my hand and pray a prayer inviting Christ into her heart. Something changed that day as she or I were no longer afraid of the future and we knew that God was ready to receive her someday into His kingdom. The following day, she left the earth to join her Lord. The assurance of salvation for me still brings me peace knowing that even death could not separate her from her Lord and someday I have the hope to see her again as the Lord receives me into His kingdom as well. My own father on the same day came to Christ as I shared the same Gospel message with Him that I had shared with mom and now he also has found his way home to be with His Lord. I never knew that they were to be the first two souls that I would lead to Christ.

Ensure that those we visit have an assurance of salvation, as when they invite Christ into their lives that they are inviting the very Kingdom of God and all His benefits. Respect their faith and do not try to convert someone from their denomination to yours.

Chapter 3

Principles of Hospital Visitation

Do's

- If possible visit during hospital visiting hours
- Knock before entering the room to respect privacy
- If the call light is on, wait or check at the nurse station
- If a no visitor sign is posted, check with the nurse station
- If you are visiting a child or someone of the opposite sex, leave the door open and consider asking someone else into the room, perhaps a nurse
- Wash your hands before you visit, between patients, and before you leave
- Take time and introduce yourself to the patient and family
- Make your visit brief
- Respect privacy always
- Give the patient and family space
- Wear a name badge from pastoral services
- Listen and let the patient guide the conversation
- Ask the patient what you can share with

others as we must respect confidentiality and HIPAA guidelines (Federal privacy laws)

- Take a business card with you to leave if the patient is having tests or out of the room
- If the patient is a child, take a gift to them

Don'ts

- Don't make promises, but bring assurance
- Don't repeat anything that you see or are told unless you have the patient's permission
- Don't help the patient out of the bed or touch any equipment
- Don't give any medical advice
- Don't whisper to others in the room
- Don't share bad news with the patient
- Don't visit if you are sick as people in the hospital are vulnerable to other sickness or infections
- Don't wake the patient if sleeping
- Don't sit on bed
- Don't give the patient food or liquid
- Don't assume someone is asleep or in a coma and cannot hear you
- Don't place specific information on a prayer list without their consent
- Don't let your visit be stressful to the patient
- Don't try to convert someone from their denomination to yours

Chapter 4

Respect Patient Privacy

On behalf of patient privacy, Congress enacted a law on April 14, 2003 to protect the privacy of patient's health information. These privacy standards were established to allow patients access to their medical records and control over how their information is shared and used. These regulations establish circumstances and communications standards for healthcare workers, physicians, and others involved in the treatment of the patient or involved in the processing or transmission of information. The privacy standards are often referred to as HIPAA.

Therefore, with respect to the hospital policies, privacy guidelines, and respect to the patient pastors, chaplains, and visitation teams from the church must protect patient information. Do not ask nurses regarding details on patients. Only chaplains employed by the hospital or healthcare provider have access to patient records.

You should visit the hospital pastoral services department to discuss their policies and practices for patient visitation and confidentiality. Most departments have a minister orientation that would

provide helpful information to those that regularly visit patients from your congregation.

Remind congregations that the pastoral staff will need to know when someone is in the hospital. They will not know through regular hospital visitation as patient lists are restricted. Patient's family is always the best way to learn that a congregation member was admitted to a hospital. Caution must be used to ensure that you have permission from the patient before any information is shared with the congregation or others.

Chapter 5

Hospital Procedures and Practices

The hospital pastoral services department can assist you with orientation with hospital policies, visitation guidelines, and patient safety information. We must ensure that those visiting do not interfere with the treatment of the patient or cause further injury, sickness, or infection. The following is recommended to help ensure patient safety:

- Wash your hands before you visit, between patients, and before you leave.
- Don't help the patient out of the bed or touch any equipment.
- Don't visit if you are sick as people in the hospital are vulnerable to other sickness or infections.
- Protect yourself and others by not leaving any open wounds on your hands uncovered.

Chapter 6

Waiting Rooms

While waiting with a family in an intensive care waiting room or surgical waiting room, be sure to notice those around you. Many people do not have a pastor or faithful friends to support them. Have compassion on others and offer to get them something to eat or to drink. Many families will stay almost endlessly in a waiting room to be near their ill family member. Take time to help meet their physical needs, and then offer to pray with them for their family member that is hospitalized.

Offer to pray for the patient and family member. Jesus did not wait for opportunities but let His heart direct His actions. He saw the needs of the four thousand that followed Him. After three days, they would have no more food left and were in need. He had compassion on them to meet their physical needs. The Scriptures record many more examples of Him meeting their physical and spiritual needs as He reached out to those who were hungry and hurting.

Mark 8

1 In those days the multitude being very great, and having nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples unto him, and saith unto them,

2 I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now been with me three days, and have nothing to eat:

Our role in ministering on behalf of our church must be driven by the needs of those around us. God knows we cannot meet every need. It is not a sacrifice to minister to others but must become a way of life. Our very nature will be transformed as we open our life to the One who has shown us this same love and compassion.

Chapter 7

Minister with a Calming Influence

Many patients feel isolation and loneliness during their hospital stay. The elderly feel they are a burden to their family. There are so many emotions that patients, family, and friends experience during this time. The support they receive from visitation teams or pastors will bring comfort and be a calming influence to their fears. Many times when people experience emotions they do not understand and many look to others to supply the hope and encouragement they need. Ask them, “How are you doing?” Many will respond and describe their health. Ask them again and say, “How are you doing on the inside?” Many will respond with tears and emotions. Let them show emotion and wait for them to talk. Don't interrupt them as it is important for them to share their hurt with you and help them through prayer and encouragement with the Scriptures. Have a pocket ministry Bible with you and make references that will assist you in times like these.

Bring comfort to them with an awareness that the Holy Spirit is with them through His presence and they are not alone. Pray with them and invite the presence of the Holy Spirit into their life. Check for confirmation of salvation assurance and be

prepared to lead them in a prayer of a renewed or new relationship with Christ. There is much healing of the soul that takes place when we are assured of our relationship with Christ and forgiveness of sin from our Lord.

The elderly will need assurance that they are loved and valued. Tell them how precious life is and it is given from God. Someday, God will receive all of us into His Kingdom as we complete our life on this earth. Bring them joy and encouragement through the Word of God and your fellowship. David's heart suffered separation and He cried out to God to help him. He was in search of the path that God had for his life. Through ministering to others we can help them to find assurance that God will lead them through their own fears and pain.

Psalm 142

1 I cried unto the LORD with my voice; with my voice unto the LORD did I make my supplication.

2 I poured out my complaint before him; I shewed before him my trouble.

3 When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then thou knewest my path. In the way wherein I walked have they privily laid a snare for me.

4 I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me: refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul.

Chapter 8

Ministering Hope and Encouragement

Sickness can bring emotions of fear, doubt, discouragement, and despair. These emotions left unchecked will seek to destroy someone's faith. Our role is to minister to the spiritual needs of the patient to ensure their faith does not fail.

Luke 22

31 *And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat:*

32 *But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.*

Through your prayers, teaching, and encouragement God will rescue them from even their own fears and doubts. Encourage them that they can trust God in times like these.

Ensure the patient that the Lord seeks to bring assurance and comfort in the midst of their suffering. His very thoughts are upon His creation. He cares and looks for opportunity to bring peace to the storms of life. God also is

concerned for the care giver and their need for peace and comfort in these difficult times.

I asked a friend of mine to read the draft of this book and he said that the care giver or family member in most cases will need ministry. Also, he suggested that this teaching address the sovereignty of God. He described the struggle that his wife Maria had faced as her health was failing and she could not find healing. This struggle was seeking to destroy her faith until she understood the sovereignty of God. Below, Tim in his own words describes how we can help in times like these.

Tim and Maria's Story:

As you know usually there is a primary care giver for the patient - be it a spouse, parent, etc. I think we tend to overlook the care giver - they are usually facing different emotions and struggles than the patient - they usually stay in somewhat of a state of exhaustion.

I found with my first wife's cancer struggles and eventual death that most of the support/ministry seems to go to the patient and the care giver is usually in the periphery. She was diagnosed 8 months after we were married and after 19 years including 40+ hospital stays and several major surgeries she passed away. As a believer I was exhausted through it all...the emotional roller coasters, financial struggles, etc.. Looking back

I really needed a support group of believers that understood the long exhausting struggles required of the care giver...cancer is usually a long drawn out affair...and usually ends in death.

What I found through it all...and my wife too was comforted with this is.... the doctrine of the sovereignty of God, the providence of God. Yes, the Lord does require us all to pray, to seek him, to operate our faith...and then there are those times that regardless what we want (life and death) - death does come eventually in this life. And that according to Romans, for believers all things work to our good - including/especially death. God knows every hair on my head at every micro second and he provides every breath I take...nothing can take me from his care - and all that happens to me is designed for my good and his glory. My wife struggled because she thought her faith had to heal her, she struggled and prayed continuously holding onto scriptures...and when she grasped the understanding of the doctrine of sovereignty and providence she became a different person, she was filled with peace and was able to trust our Lord completely.

Jeremiah 29

11 *For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.*

This story touched my life too and it is my hope that many will find peace and trust in the midst of any storm that life brings. We must accept the sovereignty of God in our life as we pray, believe, and agree that His will be done.

Chapter 9

Prayer for the Sick

When you prepare for a visit with someone ill or in the hospital, prepare by searching for Scriptures to share and seek how to pray. Even pray in advance of your visit and invite the Holy Spirit to help you and to touch them before you arrive. We should be prepared to minister with confidence and demonstrate an assuring attitude. The more you visit, the more assurance you will have. However, every visit needs to be personal and heart felt. People can feel the care and know your purpose in visiting them. We can never touch them until we touch Him.

We must take time to prepare our own heart to be sure that we truly believe that God can and will heal His creation. It is the same Word of God that brought salvation and healing to us. Even the Scriptures in Matthew 9, record Christ seeking to explain this to the religious leaders when He said to the Pharisees about the man that was lying on a bed of affliction, *“For whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house. And he arose, and departed to his house.”*

This man's friends brought him to Christ and took time to help him. Their faith had touched Christ as they knew that He would not only change this man's physical state but forever change His heart.

The family members and patient's friends will need ministry as their heart seeks to understand. Be prepared to help them and seek to answer their questions. Many times it may be necessary to create an environment to minister to them by inviting them to the hospital cafeteria for coffee or a beverage. Over two-thirds of this world are lost and without Christ. Many that profess Christ are struggling and have little understanding of His Word. Seek to evangelize through your friendship and love for the lost and hurting.

Ensure that you share a healing Scripture with the patient. When God's Word is released into a life and mixed with prayer, the stage is set for Him to touch the person with His peace and healing. We can see in Proverbs 4 that His Words contain health and can be stored within our own heart. From our heart they can be released into our life and produce health to our flesh.

Proverbs 4

20 *My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings.*

21 *Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart.*

22 *For they are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh.*

23 *Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.*

Our role is to sow seeds into lives and cultivate this Word with our faith and trust in God. These seeds can produce salvation and health to those we visit and bring comfort through God's Word and our care. Let the words you speak be from your heart and have a genuine care for the person. So many people are looking for someone to simply care. God will use your heart and the Holy Spirit to flow His love into this world. Encourage them that as they yield to the promises of God that they will find the healing, strength, and the peace they seek.

Psalm 103

1 *Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name.*

2 *Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits:*

3 *Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases;*

4 *Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies;*

5 *Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.*

6 *The LORD executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed.*

Chapter 10

Healing Through the Word

Throughout the Bible we find God's promises concerning healing. His Word not only contains His promise but the very essence of healing and the faith to receive. It is with faith that His promises are received. Sow many of these Scriptures into your own life and be prepared to share Scriptures with the patient as the Holy Spirit leads you. When you pray for the patient, remember that Jesus is the Word that was made flesh. The Word is alive and will touch a heart and bring salvation, healing, and assurance. Believe that God can and will touch lives with His Word and pray expectantly. We represent a living Christ!

Exodus 23

25 And ye shall serve the LORD your God, and he shall bless thy bread, and thy water; and I will take sickness away from the midst of thee.

Deuteronomy 5

33 Ye shall walk in all the ways which the LORD your God hath commanded you, that ye may live, and that it may be well with you, and that ye may prolong your days in the land which ye shall possess.

Psalms 30

2 O LORD my God, I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed me.

Psalms 34

19 Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all.

Psalms 107

20 He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions.

Isaiah 53

4 Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

5 But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

Isaiah 55

11 So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.

Jeremiah 17

14 Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved: for thou art my praise.

Matthew 4

23 And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.

Matthew 8

14 And when Jesus was come into Peter's house, he saw his wife's mother laid, and sick of a fever.

15 And he touched her hand, and the fever left her: and she arose, and ministered unto them.

Matthew 9

20 And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment:

21 For she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole.

22 But Jesus turned him about, and when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour.

Matthew 18

19 Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.

Matthew 19

1 And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these sayings, he departed from Galilee, and came

*into the coasts of Judaea beyond Jordan;
2 And great multitudes followed him; and he healed them there.*

Matthew 21

14 And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple; and he healed them.

Mark 11

23 For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith

.24 Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.

Luke 4

18 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,

Luke 5

12 And it came to pass, when he was in a certain city, behold a man full of leprosy: who seeing Jesus fell on his face, and besought him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

13 *And he put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will: be thou clean. And immediately the leprosy departed from him.*

Luke 9

11 *And the people, when they knew it, followed him: and he received them, and spake unto them of the kingdom of God, and healed them that had need of healing.*

Luke 10

8 *And into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you:*
9 *And heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.*

John 9

1 *And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth.*

2 *And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?*

3 *Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.*

4 *I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.*

5 *As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world*

6 *When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground,*

and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay,

7 And said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing.

John 14

13 And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

14 If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.

John 15

7 If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

John 16

23 And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.

24 Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.

25 These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs: but the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall show you plainly of the Father.

26 At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you:

Romans 10

17 So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

James 5

14 *Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:*

15 *And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.*

1 Peter 2

24 *Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.*

1 John 5

14 *And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:*

15 *And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.*

It is my prayer that God will use you to bring salvation, comfort, peace, and healing to those that are ill and in the hospital. You are not alone when you minister as the Holy Spirit will be with you as promised in God's written Word. May God bless you in all that you do for Him.

Richard C. Hobbs M.Div., is founder of Mercy Street Ministries, a ministry devoted to training laborers in the harvest and church ministry. He has spent thousands of hours training churches to share Christ in all situations. He hopes that this book will help others to bring comfort and assurance to those in need.

**Accept the challenge
to minister to others!**



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