

Tips for Effective Hospital Visitation

Hospitalization presents a unique opportunity for you as a leader in your church to minister. Perhaps at no other time in a person's life do spiritual issues warrant so much concern.

Following are some practical suggestions for effective hospital visitation.

Observe Hospital Rules

- Use the parking area designated for visitors.
- Obtain room numbers at the information area.
- Make visits only during hospital visiting hours.
- Identify yourself to the nurse.

Observe the Patient's Environment

- Look for signals. Notice any call lights above the door or signs attached to the door, such as "Universal Precautions" or "No Visitors." If the signs are there, consult with the nurse or leave a note and some devotional material with the nurse.
- Blend visit with the patient's treatment schedule. The patient's day begins early with blood tests, treatments, and altered meal schedules.
- Ask yourself, "How do I make the best use of the time?"

Observe Good Hospital Manners

- Knock for permission to enter and wait for an invitation to enter the room.
- Focus on the patient once you are in the room.
- Position yourself in the line of the patient's vision.
- Introduce yourself to the patient.
- Let the patient invite a handshake.
- Sit down only at the invitation of the patient.
- Never sit on the bed.
- If you arrive at mealtime, make your visit brief.
- Let the patient do most of the talking.
- Instead of asking, "How are you feeling?" you might ask, "How are things going today?"
- Do not speculate about the patient's physical condition or hospital procedure.
- Make short visits. Normal visits should last 5 to 10 minutes depending on relationship, purpose, and the patient's state of health.
- Do not wake a sleeping patient. Leave a handwritten note along with a devotional magazine.
- When it is time to leave, offer a prayer with the patient's permission, and, when possible, hold the patient's hand or gently place your hand on the patient's arm or shoulder.
- When praying, be comprehensive and specific. Pray for the patient's freedom from pain, family concerns, and God's will to be accomplished in this sickness and recovery.

When Not to Visit

- When you have a cold or other illness (call, send a card, and arrange for others to visit).
- When you are going out of obligation instead of love.
- When you have unresolved issues with the patient that would keep the visit from being helpful.



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