

## VISITATION EVANGELISM

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Visitation Evangelism is a relational experience. It is a relationship with God and others through Jesus Christ.

The secret of Visitation Evangelism is listening. We listen to God and we listen to others. God is seldom revealed in sensational displays of force, but God frequently speaks to us through common people like carpenters, fishermen, tax collectors, and even society's outcasts. God speaks and we hear God's voice. God speaks and we feel the presence of the Almighty. Because of Jesus' presence in our lives, we are able to convey the fact that God loves us and wants us to be Jesus' followers.

Listening, God shows us the way to share Jesus with others, and share Him with joy, and as we continue listening, we learn more clearly what the Gospel is all about, and discover the marvelous vitality in all our relationships that comes from being Christians. When John Wesley commissioned George Whitfield and Frances Asbury to go to America he said to "offer them Christ" and we know the rest of the story. That is our calling.

We have a simple message. We tell others that we are Christians following Jesus, and it is our prayer and hope that others will become followers of Jesus, too. As we share Christ with others, we sharpen our own understanding of the gospel. Sharing Christ with others is a testimony to our faithfulness and our love for God and each other.

The program *Visitation Evangelism: A Relational Ministry* identifies numerous people we may be able to reach by listening and sharing, including newcomers, people who are curious, others who are disenchanted, along with the sick, the shut-ins, and a everyone we meet in a continuing visitation program. If someone isn't a Christian, we have an opportunity to offer them Christ!

An effective invitation to discipleship grows out of a person's felt needs and our understanding the Gospel in the light of our own experience. No matter how someone responds, we accept their response with love, even if their response is not the response we hoped for.

Harold Bales, in his booklet "Leading Persons to Christ," lists Ten Commandments for effective personal evangelism. He prefaces these by stating the practice of evangelism is God's priority; it is God's business. We are dealing with people at their deepest and most profound levels. In Visitation Evangelism, we do not trifle with people's souls; we take them seriously, offering them God's love.

Long ago a young emerging prophet heard a penetrating voice as he stood in a dimly lit temple. "Whom shall I send and who will go for us?" The Lord was speaking and young Isaiah exclaimed, "Here am I, send me!"

The invitation continues to be offered. God invites his followers to lead persons to repentance, obedience and personal and corporate lives of faith. If we open our hearts and minds, we too may hear the voice of God as did Isaiah, and, if our relationship with God is a vital growing one, we will respond in our own unique ways: "Here am I, send me."