

INCREASING  
EFFECTIVENESS  
IN EVANGELISTIC  
VISITATION

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# INCREASING EFFECTIVENESS IN VISITATION

I. In the work of evangelism, visitation is supremely important. The evangelist greatly increases the probability for people to make positive decisions through a series of 4 - 6 visits throughout the crusade.

## A. Visitation accomplishes FIVE important purposes:

1. It causes the evangelist to love the people by establishing personal relationships with them. "We are called upon to love souls as Christ loved them." EV 431
2. Visitation determines whether the individual understands the message and can help set conviction and the desire to follow the truth.
3. Through visitation the needs of the people, their obstacles and questions are discovered and dealt with. When these questions, objections and needs are understood it will influence the evangelist's nightly preaching to that specific audience.
4. Visitation reduces the friction people feel when new doctrine is presented.
5. Many people will not make their decision in the meeting but will make their decision in their home.

"A few words spoken in private will often do more good than the whole discourse has done." EK 429

"Your success will not depend so much upon your knowledge and accomplishments, as upon your ability to find your way to the heart." EV 437

## B. VISITATION STRATEGY

### A. First Visit - ESTABLISHING THE RELATIONSHIP

1. Visit them as a friend.
2. Always begin with, "I can't stay but for a few minutes." This immediately puts them at ease knowing you are not going to stay all afternoon.
3. Spend no more than 5-7 minutes on the dog, family, house, etc.
4. The main part of the visit contains a series of questions:
  - "How did you hear about the meetings?"
  - "Have you ever been to meetings like this before?"
  - "Where is your home? Where were you raised? "
  - "What do you do for a living?"
  - "Do you enjoy your job?"
  - "What church did your parents go to?"
5. Thank them for coming and close with a short prayer.

**B. Second Visit - CLEARING AND SETTING ON THE SABBATH**

1. In clearing and setting any doctrine there are "threatening" and "non-threatening" questions.
  - a. THREATENING QUESTION: "Isn't the Sabbath truth wonderful?"

This question can cause people to be defensive, hostile and closed.
  - b. NON-THREATENING QUESTION: "Last evening we talked about the Bible Lord's day Sabbath as being Saturday. Was that new to you? "

I am not asking him for his opinion, belief or what he is going to do about it.
2. As an evangelist you will either have a positive or negative response to the clearing and setting process with the Sabbath or any doctrine.

**A POSITIVE EXPERIENCE - 3 DIAGNOSTIC QUESTIONS TO DETERMINE CONVICTION**

Question One - *"Last evening we talked about the Bible Lord's day being Saturday. Had you ever heard that before? Was that new to you?"*

Question Two - *"Is it clear to you from the Bible that the Lord's day, seventh day Sabbath is on Saturday?"* After this question I usually verbally review 4 texts to reaffirm the validity of the Sabbath truth.

Genesis 2:1-3

Exodus 20:8-11

Luke 4:16

Revelation 14:12

Question Three - *"Because you love Jesus, is there any good reason -why you could not keep the Lord's Day Sabbath of Christ?"*

This question will determine a Sabbath work problem, church or family issues that might hinder the action to keep the Sabbath. Most importantly it helps clarify the person's conviction on the Sabbath.

If the interest has given very positive answers to this point, endeavor to set the conviction to follow the Sabbath deeper into the heart of the individual. Say something like, "The Sabbath must be very important to God and Jesus. He wrote it in the Ten Commandments and Jesus lived in harmony with the Sabbath. I know as you keep the Sabbath, Jesus will give you great peace and joy because you will be living in harmony with Him. Let us thank Jesus for this important decision on the Sabbath." End with prayer thanking Jesus for the blessings of the Sabbath and for their decision to follow.

Remind them of the big Saturday Sabbath morning meeting and say something to the effect, "We are going to be having a great celebration of Christ's Sabbath this coming Saturday. It is part of the Amazing Discoveries programs. Do you think you can make it to this meeting?"

### **A NEGATIVE EXPERIENCE - SAME 3 DIANOSTIC QUESTIONS**

Question One - Interests reply negatively - example:

"I've heard of that all my life and I don't think it is that important."

Question Two - Another negative reply:

"I think that is just the -way you interpret the Bible. I don't think it says that at all."

Question Three - Abort this question and say something like the following:

"May I make a suggestion? Don't make a decision today. (You have removed the pressure of the situation) I hope you will keep reading and praying about the true Lord's day Sabbath. But before I leave, let me ask you a question. If you knew that following the seventh day Sabbath - was Jesus' will for your life, would you be willing to keep it? (wait for an answer) That is all God expects of us. He only desires us to do His will. Because you are honest I know the Holy Spirit will continue to impress you with what is right and true. Let us pray together that if it is truly Jesus' will that He will help you see it clearly from the Bible."

3. Ellen White emphasizes the clearing and setting process.

- a. "Inquire how the subjects presented appear to the hearers and whether the matter is clear to their minds." EV 429
- b. "The sacred responsibility rests upon the minister to watch for souls as one that must give an account He must interest himself in the souls for whom he labors: finding out all that perplexes or troubles them and hinders them from walking in the light of the truth." R&H, August 20, 1892

### **C. Third Visit - CONTINUING CLEARING OF DOCTRINES WITH "A" INTERESTS WHO HAVE CHECKED FOR BAPTISM, SETTING THEM FOR THE FIRST ALTAR CALL**

The goal of this visit is to make certain that other doctrinal subjects that have been covered in the meetings are clear. As you see conviction in the individual, prepare them for the first altar call by saying, "I know you believe the Sabbath and have indicated an interest in baptism. This Sunday night I am going to have a special prayer at the front for all those like you who want to be baptized and follow Jesus. I would like to include you in that very special prayer." At this time in the crusade, spend the majority of your visitation time with those who have the most conviction or those who have already begun to keep the Sabbath, or those who have indicated a desire for baptism. Casual interests, even if they are still coming to the meetings and are full of questions, should be second priority and visited only after the "A" interests have been thoroughly cleared and set.

**D. Fourth Visit - THOSE THAT RESPOND TO THE FIRST ALTAR CALL**

The purpose of this visit is to set their decision and begin to clear them on the doctrinal issues necessary for baptism. If certain principals are not clear, begin to go over these questions so that they are ready for baptism. During this visit a complete Gospel Presentation is given.

**E. Fifth Visit - THOSE WHO KEEP ATTENDING BUT DID NOT RESPOND TO THE FIRST ALTAR CALL**

The purpose of this visit is to continue to work with those who are slower and continue to set conviction and answer objections. Begin this visit with a casual statement and question: "I again want to thank you for coming to the meetings. Do you have any questions over -what we have been studying from the Bible?" If there are no questions, again see if the Sabbath is clear. If it is, ask them the following, "Have you ever been baptized by immersion Jesus way?" You probably know the answer to this question already from the decision card given out the night Baptism was presented. However, by asking the question, especially if they have not been baptized, helps set conviction by having them answer that they haven't been baptized. Say rather casually, but earnestly, in response, "Well, you certainly will want to take care of that very soon, won't you?" If they answer in a positive way, move them to the next step by saying, "We are planning several beautiful baptisms in the future and I hope you -will plan to be in one of them. Please don't feel that you need to walk to the front in order for you to be baptized. We can arrange for it right here in your home." Go as far as you can until you bump up against resistance. Many times you can secure a decision at this time. However, don't bum the interest with heavy pressure. This may cause him to quit attending the meetings and if that happens you have lost everything.

**F. Additional Visits as Needed - THOSE WHO RESPOND TO ADDITIONAL ALTAR CALLS AS WELL AS THOSE WHO ARE CLOSE BUT MORE APT TO MAKE DECISIONS IN THEIR HOMES.**

The most important aspect of gaining decisions for Jesus is the absolute power of the Holy Spirit. Without asking God in prayer to move the heart toward conversion, all of our attention and urging will come to nothing. There is no substitute for prayer. Prayer looses the arm of God and changes take place in lives! As you visit, take genuine love with you. See your people, not as possible numbers on the baptismal report, but as friends you love and long to be with throughout eternity.

# PASTORAL VISITATION

- I. Visitation is one of the most important phases of the minister's work. Visitation accomplishes:
  - A. Getting to know personally your church members.
  - B. Listening to their needs - then minister their needs.
  - C. Determining members who are weak in the faith.
  - D. Helping the members to grow spiritually.
  - E. Discovering prospective interests for Bible study.
- II. Your first pastoral visit has two goals:
  1. Get acquainted and determine their gifts and abilities for future church work
  2. Establish yourself as a spiritual shepherd
  - A. Getting Acquainted
    1. Meet all the members of the family - jot down names making note of the ones who are not SDA.
    2. Ask about where they work, hobbies, talents, family background.
    3. Listen as they talk for heartaches, troubles, deep sorrow. Speak words of encouragement and hope. Be sympathetic.
  - B. Spiritual visit
    1. See that they have a Bible and lesson material. Ask them how they are enjoying church and how the worship could be better. "What Action Unit are you in?"
    2. Begin to develop their spiritual life - ""Would you like to lean to pray better?" "Would you like to know God more personally?" Share with them pointers from your own devotional life and how to make it real.
    3. Gather the family around for a scriptural text and prayer. Use a promise that ministers to the particular needs of the family. Pray, mentioning every person's name in prayer and then especially mention the specific family need in prayer.

## UNDERSHEPHERD (ELDERS) VISITATION

Objectives of Unit Leaders:

1. Become personally acquainted with each family under your charge.
2. Visit them at least once every three months - if ill or elderly more often.
3. Report to the pastor any who are spiritually weak, missing church, or critically ill.
4. Encourage attendance at church, personal devotions and prayer.
5. Notify the pastor of shut-in's who would like communion in the home.
6. In case of a death in the family, arrange for meals to be provided for the family on the day of the funeral.
7. Take notice of prospective interests in the church.

# VISITATION OF BACKSLIDERS

I. There are several things to keep in mind when visiting backsliders.

1. Be persistent in locating
2. Be friendly and open
3. Never defend the church
4. Always reassure them that God loves them
5. LISTEN - every backslider has a story to tell of why he left the church.
  - a. Habits
  - b. Family
  - c. Job promotion - works on Sabbath, etc.
  - d. Discouraged with the church or members

II. My typical visit of a backslider involves a series of questions. These questions bring out the important points you need to understand about the individual, and answering these questions helps stir up a responsive attitude in the person.

1. What do you do? Do you enjoy your work?
2. Have you lived here long?
3. How many children do you have?
4. You used to be a member of our church?
5. Where?
6. How long ago was that?
7. Do you still believe the Adventist truth?
8. Have you given any thought of coming back to the Lord?
9. Is there anything hindering you from returning. What is the main thing that stands in your way?
10. Jesus is coming very soon. There is danger in waiting to long, isn't there?  
(If there are children in the home) You have beautiful children. What a responsibility! The longer you wait the less chance you have of helping them to find Jesus.
11. May I help you in returning to Jesus and His church?

50 - 75 of backsliders will move through the questions favorably. If you come to the end and they answer positively to the last question, I give them a Gospel Presentation and then begin to work with them on what ever might be standing in the way.

III. A few "do's" and "don'ts" in working with backsliders.

## A. COME TO THE POINT QUICKLY

1. They know why you have come. The quicker you get to the point, the less tension will be in the room. Put yourself in the backsliders place. Imagine how you would feel if you go to the doctor and he holds a big injection needle in his hand. Do you just enjoy chatting with him looking at that big needle? Get the point?

## B. LET THE BITTERNESS COME OUT

1. Just listen as he is venting. Healing comes after the poison comes out.
2. By neither voice or expression on your face disagree with him.
3. If the visit takes a mean and vengeful turn on you personally, say something like this: "How can you dislike me so. We've never met before, so why do you dislike me so much? I know you are frustrated and hurt and if it had happened to me I would feel the same. But remember, Jesus loves you and understands your hurt. You can still find peace and happiness no matter what others may have said or done to you."

## C. DON'T DEFEND ANYONE

1. Unless you are willing to observe this rule, don't try working with backsliders. The moment you defend anyone, in the mind of the backslider, you now have identified yourself as his enemy and have sided with the cause of his original trouble.
2. Keep reassuring him of your love and your desire for him to come back. This will help reduce friction even frustrating him that you are not getting angry. It will make a lasting impression that in his hostility, you only showed love.

## D. DON'T BETRAY THE BACKSLIDER

1. Never tell publicly or privately what he has told you.
2. If it ever gets back to him some of the things he told you, his confidence in you is over and it will never return.

## E. DON'T STAY LONG

1. 30 minutes most of the time is long enough for the story to come out and for you to assure him of Jesus love.
2. It is always better to provide several shorter visits if necessary to assure a growing relationship with the backslider and move them along to recommitment.

## F. ALWAYS CLOSE WITH PRAYER

1. Don't ask if you can pray but close like this: "Well, I must be going. (This puts them at ease) But before I go, let's just bow our heads for prayer."
2. In the prayer mention:
  - a. Any family problems that has come up in the conversation. Remember children's names in your prayer.
  - b. "Help my dear brother(or sister) not to keep Jesus waiting too long. Help him to come home real soon."
  - c. "Forgive us for the hurt we in the church have caused him and may he know there's a warm welcome awaiting him when he comes back."
  - d. "I pray he will be able to be in church THIS SABBATH."

**G. GIVE A BRIEF INVITATION TO COME TO CHURCH (OR MEETINGS) NEXT SABBATH**

1. Don't try to squeeze out a promise that he will attend. There should be no force at all in the visit.
2. The entire visit is relaxed and casual. Show him that you really love him and are concerned about his eternal destiny and returning to the church family.

**H. LEAVE IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING PRAYER**

1. Chit chatting after prayer many times reduces the atmosphere of the Holy Spirit working on their heart.

**IV. Just a few special "don'ts".**

**A. DONT TRY TO ARRANGE A SERIES OF BIBLE STUDIES**

1. Most of the time this is an affront to the backslider because they think you think they are ignorant of the Bible. Eventually, they might need some help in review of the doctrines, but for now, what the backslider needs is love and reassurance, prayer and kindness.

**B. NEVER ACCEPT MONEY OR GIFTS FROM BACKSLIDERS**

1. Never give the impression that you are after back tithe or offerings. Let them know you are only interested in them, not their money. However, if there is a re-conversion and they wish to return back tithe, encourage them to bring it to church with them next Sabbath.
2. Also, many times if they try to give you personal gifts or money, many times subconsciously they are buying you off so their conscience is appeased.

**C. DONT GIVE UP ON A BACKSLIDER BECAUSE HE IS TOO FAR AWAY**

**D. DONT ARGUE ABOUT CHURCH STANDARDS WITH A BACKSLIDER**

1. If this is a big issue, I say something like this, "Make this a matter of prayer, asking God to help you make clear what HIS will is. I know you and I want to do God's will."
2. Prayer changes hearts in a way that no theological argument ever can.