



CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION

A Visitation Outreach Program

CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION

Is an excellent tool to initiate a church visitation program and to train those workers in it. International Missionary Baptist Ministries is glad to be able to provide this eBook written by the late Dr. John Teague. Grammar corrections and formatting changes to make the text easier to read are all the changes that have been made.

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Christianity In Action

A Visitation Outreach Program



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Sermon and Teaching Outlines

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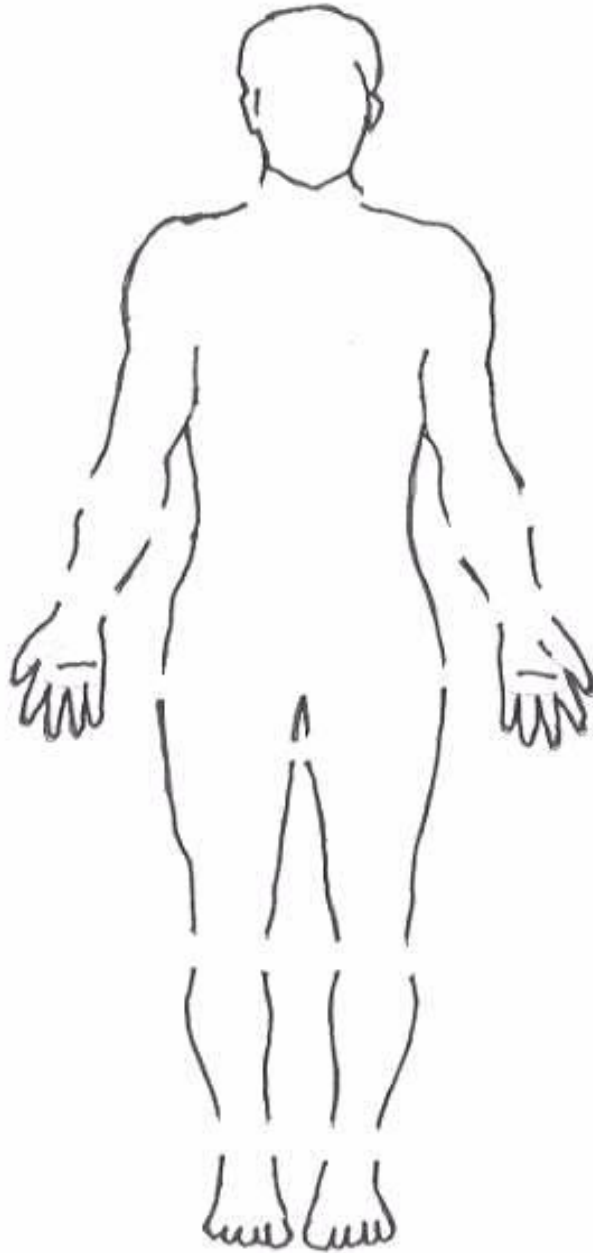
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Our Baptist Church Body

Ephesians 4:11-16



Eph 4:16 *From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.*

Christianity In Action

A Church Outreach Visitation Program

Introduction: Visitation: A Ministry of Love

I. A 1988 Gallup survey of 2,556 unchurched Americans revealed

the following:

- Forty-four percent of U.S. adults are unchurched. They don't belong to a church and have only visited one in the last 6 months for religious holidays, weddings, or funerals.
- The unchurched are becoming increasingly receptive to what churches have to offer. They stay away primarily because of inconvenience, not hostility.
- Sixty-three percent believe the Bible is God's Word.
- Seventy-seven percent pray to God.
- Seventy-two percent believe Jesus is the Son of God.
- Fifty-eight percent could see themselves becoming actively involved in a church today and are open to an invitation.

Gallup's conclusion: These people are ripe for harvest, but it will take creative strategies to reach them.

II. A Gallop Poll of more than 40,000 adults from 1992 to 1999 reveal some interesting facts.

- ❖ The general sociological finding that religious involvement and behavior increase in later stages of life.
- ❖ A fundamental question included in the analysis asks Americans to rate the importance of religion in their daily lives. Of the 18- to 29-year-olds polled, 45% report that religion is very important in their daily lives. This percentage increases

steadily with age, however, to 55% for those 30-49 years old, 70% for those 50 and older, and 77% among those 75 and older.

- ❖ In response to a different question, 70% of 18- to 29-year-olds say that religion is losing its influence in American life, compared to only 46% of those 75 and older who share this view.
- ❖ There are similar patterns for other measures of religious participation and involvement. Membership in a church or synagogue, attendance, and intensity of belief, as evidenced by the acknowledgment that one is "born again," all increase with age. Sixty-one percent of 18- to 29-year-olds surveyed say they are members of a church or synagogue, a figure that increases in all subsequent age brackets, with 66% of 30- to 49-year-olds reporting membership, 76% of those 50 and older, 79% of those 65 and older, and a high of 81% for those 75 and older.
- ❖ Weekly attendance at church or synagogue increases with age across the board, although these levels are much lower than church or synagogue membership. Only 23% of 18- to 29-year-olds polled attend at least once a week, a number that rises to 46% who attend at least once week among those 75 and older.
- ❖ The age trend is not as pronounced among those who describe themselves as "born again" or evangelical Christians. Over one-third of respondents in each age bracket polled declare themselves to be "born again," including 43% of those 50 and older, 38% of those in the 30-to-49 age bracket and 37% of those aged 18-29.

The results are based on an aggregated data set across Gallup Poll surveys conducted between 1992 and 1999, with a cumulative total of telephone interviews with 40,610 national adults. **{Editor's note: As you can see these figures are outdated. If the same survey was done today—and it might have been—I am sure that we would see that it is much worse now.}**

III. A visitation ministry to guests, prospects, and fringe members important to the growth of a church?

Research reveals that both growing and non-growing churches practice visitation. However, 76 percent of growing churches maintain a weekly visitation program compared to 51 percent of churches that have plateaued and 44 percent of declining churches (Hadaway, C. Kirk. *Church Growth Principles: Separating Fact from Fiction*. Nashville: Broadman, 1991, pp. 21-23).

Lyle Schaller said that visitation is "the second most effective single approach to evangelism today" (*Parish Planning*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971, p. 214). Kennon Callahan identifies visitation as one of the 12 keys to an effective church (*Twelve Keys to an Effective Church*. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1983, pp. 11-23).

While some churches can and do grow without a visitation strategy, the majority grow because they have an established visitation program.

Further research reveals that regular contact with prospects directly relates to the growth of a church. Keeping and working updated prospect files is a characteristic of growing churches. According to Hardaway, these churches have higher growth rates and higher conversion/baptism rates (21-23).

Churches that actively seek to identify and make appropriate contact with viable prospects are more likely to grow by true conversions.

Guests of worship services and Sunday school classes are impressed when they receive a visit within 48 hours of their attendance. The visit shows that the church cares.

Visitation is still an effective church growth method. Although cold call, unannounced visits to strangers may not work, visiting guests and fringe members is worthwhile.

Visitation must include personal contact with individuals wherever it is appropriate and productive. This may be in a home, over lunch, during a work break, riding on a bus, at a fitness center, or over a back-yard fence. We build relationships in order to love them into the kingdom of God.

By definition personal visitation is an **intentional** direct encounter by an individual with another person for the purpose of getting to know them, understanding and addressing their needs, providing encouragement and assistance in the name of Jesus, and expressing through word and/or deed the constant love and care of God.

IV. Guidelines to developing an effective visitation ministry.

1. Make a commitment to care for people.

Identify with the mission of Christ who came to "seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10) and to "minister and not be ministered unto" (Matthew 20:28).

A visitation ministry **demonstrates** the personal interest that Jesus modeled. In our fast-paced, high-tech, impersonal society, people still need a human touch. Visitation expresses sincere interest in people and affirms their worth.

The Church is responsible for initiating and developing relationships with the unchurched, the hurting, and the lost.

2. Evaluate your church visitation ministry.

A church is healthy if it contacts a number of people equal to 20 percent of its morning worship attendance. Ten percent of these contacts are usually with regular attenders. The other 10 percent are unchurched and new families. Based on the Church Growth Spiral, an effective visitation strategy makes weekly contact with 50 percent of the Sunday school enrollment. Of this number 80 percent should be those who are enrolled but who are absent or need ministry. Twenty percent should be prospects not yet enrolled. If the enrollment is 200, make 100 contacts per week. Of the 100 contacts, 80 should be those enrolled and 20 those not enrolled.

3. Organize for visitation.

Sunday school provides an excellent structure for visitation ministry. It is organized by age-level, and its weekly meetings make it easy to maintain accurate, current records on each person. Sunday school exists for people. Its goal is to reach, nurture, and disciple.

Consider dividing your Sunday school enrollment into care groups of five to eight people. Each care group is responsible to maintain contact with its group. Give care groups the names of two or three prospects. Some prospects will only attend worship services. Others will be fringe attenders, guests, or friends, relatives or neighbors of members.

The Church Growth Spiral suggests each class should have an outreach coordinator. This person oversees the care groups and coordinates visitation ministry in the class.

Another visitation strategy is the G.R.O.W. team idea. Divide your church or classes into four groups: Green, Red, Orange, and White. Each team visits for a week or a month. The rotation involves as many people as possible. Anyone who encounters other people, planned or spontaneous, and has the desire to learn about, understand, and assist those persons can be used in visitation ministry.

4. Plan weekly visitation.

Weekly visitation is what it implies. Visitation every week and not monthly. Monthly visitation is weak. Intentional, regular visitation ministry is the key. Members left to visit church guests at their convenience seldom do. Support and accountability are essential. Growing churches visit weekly.

Visitation builds relationships and meets needs in Christian love. Well-planned, organized, weekly visitation will bring life and excitement to a church and keep it from becoming self-serving and stagnant.

5. Leaders must be involved.

This includes pastors and lay leaders. Leadership must equip and mobilize others for ministry while setting the example by accepting personal visitation assignments. Leaders set the example, but they should not be responsible to do all the visitation.

6. Establish and maintain a prospect list.

Begin with the names of visitors. Ask regular attenders to write down names and addresses of three people they know who do not regularly attend Bible study or worship.

7. Incorporate variety in the visitation ministry.

Some people are excellent at personal visitation. Others are better at writing notes or letters. Still others relate only to certain types of people. A few are better at making phone calls. The more people you involve, the more effective your visitation ministry will be.

Some churches have used the Bakers of Men idea effectively. Skilled people bake cookies or breads, and those effective at personal evangelism deliver them.

8. Visitation is a care ministry and takes time.

Callahan suggests that it takes between **five and nine visits** with a viable prospect before he responds fully. He also said, "It is important to realize that the purpose of the visit with unchurched families is not to get them into the church. The focus is on bring the church to them where they are rather than merely seeking to get them to come to church on Sunday morning. This self-giving approach is the most responsible form of mission visitation."

Consider visitation ministry a process of extending God's love to people. It is planting, cultivating, and nurturing relationships with people so they will reach out for the Giver of abundant life, Jesus.

Be flexible in developing the strategy for visitation that works in your community. Visitation is a priority. Although it is not always easy, its rewards are eternal.

V. A church outreach visitation program must involve a two-prong approach.

1. First, some important questions.

Does the church or God have any voice in the decision whether a professed Christian and church member is faithful in church attendance?

Does the church or God have the right and authority to ask and require the membership of the church to give time involvement in the working of the church?

Does having one's name on the church roll fulfill one's obligation and responsibility to God and the church?

2. **Secondly, there must first be visitation of church membership who have fallen by the wayside.**
3. **Thirdly, there must be visitation of everyone within the community.**
4. **This guide to visitation has been prepared with the view to reaching both the backslidden membership of the church and the community.**
5. **This teaching aid will involve a practical demonstration of visitation.**

The pastor will select one man to visit with him. After that man is comfortable with visitation, he and the pastor will select one other man each to train. Through this building process the church will be able to initiate a visitation program which will be effective in reaching backslidden members as well as people within the church community.

6. **At some point in the future, the pastor will put together a soul-winning seminar for the benefit of the church.**

Practical demonstrations will be given during this seminar.

Part One

Visitation of negligent church members.

I. Reasons why some members have fallen by the wayside.

1. There are many and varied reasons why some members of the local church are not faithful in attendance.

Whatever reason is given, the bottom line is that they have not grown into spiritual maturity.

2.. They may not have had proper teaching or training.

They may not have been encouraged by others. They may not have felt a part of the whole. They may not have felt wanted or needed.

3. Every member must be made to feel they are a vital part of the body.

They are to be made aware they are important to the outreach of the church. Every member of the local church is as important as any other member within the church.

II. Key points to remember when visiting members who are unfaithful to the church.

1. Negatives to remember.

- A. Do not go with a super spiritual attitude.
- B. Do not go alone.
- C. Do not be diverted into speaking badly of the church, the pastor or any member of the church.
- D. Do not get into a discussion of what is wrong with the church.

- E. Do not argue.
- F. Do not condemn.
- G. Do not condone their negligence.

2. Positives to remember.

- A. Before visiting pray fervently for wisdom and the words to say.
- B. Always visit with one other person. **Never go alone!**
- C. Be prepared. Have specific scriptures in mind for discussion.
- D. Be loving, yet firm, in your appeal to the backslidden member.
- E. Lead the discussion. Learn the positives and benefits of faithful church attendance and be able to present them without wavering.
- F. Have the purpose for the visit well in mind before going on visitation.
- G. Be positive in your approach. Be straight forward and honest in your effort to reclaim the backslidden church member.
- H. Be courteous. You will be visiting in the members home and will be representing the LORD and the church.
- I. Be sympathetic for no doubt you too have been negligent yourself in the area of church attendance.
- J. Be prayerful. Pray before leaving to go on visitation. Pray upon arriving outside the home. Pray when you begin the visit inside the home. If there is something difficult the Lord leads you to say, pray again that you may have the wisdom to speak the Lord's words and that you may speak them in love. You **CAN NOT** pray too much or too often.
- K. Point out that the body (The Church) cannot function properly if all the members of the body are not carrying out

their respective functions within the body. A body without hands, feet, arms and legs would for all practical purposes be a body that merely exist and unable to function as a whole complete body.

- L. Always brag on the church, pastor and members.

Part Two

Benefits of regular and faithful church attendance.

I. Benefits missed by negligent church members.

1. Church attendance has the benefit of obedience to God's will and command.

Hebrews 10:25-27

Heb 10:25 *Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.*

Heb 10:26 *For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins,*

Heb 10:27 *But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.*

2. Church attendance has the benefit of giving glory to the Lord in the place of His choosing.

Ephesians 3:21-4:2

Eph 3:21 *Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.*

Eph 4:1 *I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,*

Eph 4:2 *With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;*

3. Church attendance has the benefit of giving the church member the opportunity to worship and give their tithe in the place of God's choosing.

Deuteronomy 12:11

Deu 12:11 *Then there shall be a place which the LORD your God shall choose to cause his name to dwell there; thither shall ye bring all that I command you; your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, your tithes, and the heave offering of your hand, and all your choice vows which ye vow unto the LORD:*

- 4. Church attendance has the benefit of receiving the right kind of food and fellowship.**

Deuteronomy 12:18

Deu 12:18 *But thou must eat them before the LORD thy God in the place which the LORD thy God shall choose, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite that is within thy gates: and thou shalt rejoice before the LORD thy God in all that thou puttest thine hands unto.*

- 5. Church attendance has the benefit of receiving rejoicing for the heart and soul.**

Deuteronomy 12:12

Deu 12:12 *And ye shall rejoice before the LORD your God, ye, and your sons, and your daughters, and your menservants, and your maidservants, and the Levite that is within your gates; forasmuch as he hath no part nor inheritance with you.*

- 6. Church attendance has the benefit of giving the believer the proper place to offer praise unto the LORD.**

Psalms 150:1-6

Psa 150:1 *Praise ye the LORD. Praise God in his sanctuary: praise him in the firmament of his power.*

Psa 150:2 *Praise him for his mighty acts: praise him according to his excellent greatness.*

Psa 150:3 *Praise him with the sound of the trumpet: praise him with the psaltery and harp.*

Psa 150:4 *Praise him with the timbrel and dance: praise him with stringed instruments and organs.*

Psa 150:5 *Praise him upon the loud cymbals: praise him upon the high sounding cymbals.*

Psa 150:6 *Let every thing that hath breath praise the LORD. Praise ye the LORD.*

An Observation can be drawn from Psalm 150. It can be observed that the Lord's house is the best place to engage in and express praise unto God.

- 7. Church attendance has the benefit of giving the membership opportunity to join in prayer with other believers.**

Isaiah 56:7

Isa 56:7 *Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people.*

Matthew 21:13

Mat 21:13 *And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.*

- 8. Church attendance has the benefit of being in the place where the proclamation of the Word of God is heard.**

Deuteronomy 31:11-12

Deu 31:11 *When all Israel is come to appear before the LORD thy God in the place which he shall choose, thou shalt read this law before all Israel in their hearing.*

Deu 31:12 *Gather the people together, men, and women, and children, and thy stranger that is within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the LORD your God, and observe to do all the words of this law:*

- 9. Church attendance has the benefit of giving respect unto the house of God.**

Leviticus 19:30

Lev 19:30 *Ye shall keep my sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary: I am the LORD.*

- 10. Church attendance has the benefit of being the place where all believers can be edified.**

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