

# Helpful Hints When Visiting the Sick

## The Right Motivation (Matthew 25:36, 39-40)

If you are going to visit someone who is sick as a matter of duty or to make a social call, it may be best to not go at all. You may do more harm than good. The very word “visit” means to go for the purpose of giving comfort and/or assistance. We should visit the sick out of love and concern for them, for what our visits will do for them, not to be “do gooders”. You should seek God’s leadership in visiting and prepare yourself each time prior to going.

1. Make your visit short (5 to 15 minutes, unless asked to stay longer by the patient).
2. Visit at an opportune time, observe visiting hours.
3. Be sensitive, sitting next to the patient’s bed or near him. This conveys concern, standing conveys lack of time, so if the situation allows, sit down. Five minutes sitting has more effect than ten minutes standing.
4. Allow the patient to talk and avoid comparing or complaining about your own illness. Do not monopolize the conversation. Be a good listener. Your silent presence may be all that is needed. Your short response such as, “Oh?” “I see,” “Is that right?” etc. may sometimes be the major part of your end of the conversation.
5. Speak softly, avoid loud laughing and talking. Listen intently and talk, especially in a crisis. They will not remember what you said only that you were there.
6. Smile and be cheerful, for a gloomy disposition makes one gloomy. A cheerful disposition makes another cheerful. Guard your facial expressions. Leave your feelings in the last room you visited before seeing another patient.
7. Do not suggest a “sure cure” or a change in doctors or medication.
8. Never ask the nature of the illness of an individual you do not know well, especially ladies.
9. Do not express a lack of confidence in the patient’s doctor, treatment or diagnosis.
10. Avoid a “funeral-like” atmosphere.
11. Leave with a cheery “Hurry and get well!”
12. When a person is in pain or very ill, do not expect him to converse. Simply step in, smile, wish him well, and say that you will return. If the patient is very ill, or near unconsciousness, stand with the family in silence, or engage in quiet and limited conversation.
13. In the presence of one apparently unconscious, never say what you DO NOT want the patient to hear. Make a practice of talking in the hall. Do not whisper to others in the room.
14. Assure the patient of your continued prayers, interest and the interest and prayers of the church.
15. Do not walk into a patient’s room when the door is closed without knocking first. A “No Visitor” sign means you too.
16. Do not awaken a person when sleeping.
17. Make a practice of leaving a calling card from the congregation on the patient’s table which indicates that someone from the church had been there.

18. Talk with the patient about pleasant things only (children, parents, friends, the church, the weather, flowers, hobbies, how soon he hopes to be dismissed, etc).
19. Be a good listener if the patient wants to discuss his illness.
20. Do not engage in long conversation with visitors.
21. If the patient is in a ward or semi-private room, remember the other patients when talking and when you pray.
22. Make your visit personal and not professional.
23. Talk about the Bible. Have passages in mind that you can quote or paraphrase.
24. If the patient has family members present, introduce yourself and state the purpose of your visit.
25. The hospital visitation list should be a part of your daily prayer list.
26. Never visit when you are sick (cold, flu, etc).
27. Do not jar the bed or the equipment around it.
28. If the room has a "Quarantine" sign on it and you are asked to wear protective garments, please do it. This is for the patient's and YOUR protection.
29. Do not ask about the cost, insurance, job security, etc. They already have enough to worry about.
30. Do not ask to see their scar or incision if they just had surgery.
31. Do not be the bearer of bad news. "I just heard your dog died," or "I talked to your spouse, did you know your car broke down?"
32. Don't try to pry the door of spiritual need open on behalf of the patient. Let the patient voluntarily share his needs or problems, if he desires. After he accepts your offer of friendship and realizes that you care, God will open the door for you to share the Gospel.
33. If you are visiting a patient prior to surgery, please do not take food, drinks, etc. into the pre-surgery area. Remember the patient has had no food or drink in the past 12 hours.
34. If the doctor enters the room, you should exit the room quietly and return after he is gone or come back at a more convenient time.
35. If the patient is in a semi-private room and has a roommate and you have prayer for the person you are visiting, be sure to ask the roommate if they have anything that you can pray for them.
36. Remember HIPPA law.
37. Remember Proverbs 17-22, A joyful heart is good medicine.