



"How To" #4: Hospital Visitation

- 1. Pray before you go, and if possible, take someone along with you.** You don't know what you will find. (James 1:5)
- 2. Be informed.** Try to get information on what is wrong with the person before you go. (I will be happy to share any information I have with you, provided I have permission from the family to do so).
- 3. You can get patient room numbers from the information or "help" desk in the hospital foyer.** Just be sure you have the patient's full name, or at the very least, their first name. Hospital patient roll's do not recognize nicknames, or for that matter, middle names.
- 4. Make your visit brief, but not hurried.** Staying too long may harm rather than help the patient. Unless you are invited and urged to stay, remain standing. Sometimes I've heard others, when asked to sit down, respond by saying, "No thank you, it feels good to stand up," which is the truth after you have been sitting for a half an hour or more just to get to the hospital.
- 5. If you find restrictions about entering the room posted on the door, go to the nurse's station and ask permission to enter the room.** Then get permission to enter from the person you are visiting.
- 6. Be uplifting. Be an encourager. Never be negative.** Avoid criticism and second guessing. Playing amateur doctor is not just poor taste, it is inexcusable. Seek to lift their spirits. Be a good listener. (Romans 15:2)
- 7. Offer Scripture and prayer.**

- **SCRIPTURE:** Carry a pocket New Testament that includes the Book of Psalms. Again, be brief! Scripture passages that are appropriate include, but are not limited to the following:

Psalm 23
Ps. 27:1, 14
Ps. 37:4-8, 15, 17-19
Ps. 43
Ps. 46:1
Ps. 56:3-4

Ps. 62:5-8
Ps. 63:6-8
Ps. 91:1-2, 14-15
Ps. 100
Ps. 119:49-50
Ps. 121

Ps. 139:14-18
Ps. 147:1-6a
Philippians 4:6-7
Hebrews 13:5b-6
1 Peter 5:6-7

- **PRAYER:** Ask if you may pray, and if given permission, pray with the information the patient has given you, asking God for strength, for rest, for awareness of God's presence, for peace of mind and heart, for health. Above all, confirm their faith in the "God of hope" (Romans 15:13).

- 8. Stand where it is comfortable for the patient to see you.**
- 9. Be prepared to give a witness for Christ, to share your faith, or to lead someone to Christ.** You may even read from the Scripture passages that assure them of their salvation.

- 10. Hold the person's hand when you pray (if they give permission).** Jesus touched people, and there really is power in the personal touch of those who care. Make sure to involve other family members who may be in the room as well. You can say, "Let's join hands and pray." Family members are often the unsung heroes of that individual. Take the time to inquire as to how they are doing. Include them in your prayer.
- 11. If they are asleep, the rule of thumb is not to wake them.** I know you may have made a trip all the way to the hospital just to see them only to find them asleep in the middle of the day. Leave a card with your name on it and the time and date of your visit. Then stand at the head of the bed, and pray silently for them. If you have more than one visit in the same hospital, go to the next patient, then return to see if they are awake yet.
- 12. Familiarize yourself with visiting times for patients in the I.C.U.** Each hospital handles these things a little differently.
- 13. Let each visit bear the imprint of Christ.** Your visit should show that you care. As the old saying goes, "People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care." You are battle-tested in life's arenas. You have walked with Christ through the valleys and drawn on His sufficient grace. You know the power of Christ to bring comfort through the presence of another person. Share how you have found hope and meaning through the difficult days of your own life.
- 14. As you prepare to depart, remind the patient of God's continual presence.** Helpful Scriptures that you might want to put to memory are: Psalm 23:4; John 14:6; Romans 8:38, 39)
- 15. Do follow-up, either by writing a note, making a phone call, or through another visit.** This is especially important after the patient returns home for an extended period of recovery. It would be helpful to schedule visits ahead of time in your daily calendar to ensure that weeks and months do not pass by without contact. You will usually do what you plan ahead to accomplish.

Remember the helpful questions – you may only use one or two at your visit, or you may come up with some of your own, but these are helpful to consider:

- 1) Would you like to talk now? (I ask "Is this a good time?")
- 2) Why are you here? (I ask "How is everything going?")
- 3) Have you ever been in the hospital before? What's it like for you now? (I've never asked this question)
- 4) What does having this problem mean for you? What does being in the hospital mean for you now? (This is kind of a personal question – only use this if things are very comfortable)
- 5) What concerns you right now?
- 6) What kinds of resources do you have for dealing with this situation?
- 7) Is there anything you would like for me to do? (The comfortable way of saying this is: "Is there anything I can pray with you about?" and then followed up with "If there's anything that you feel I can help with, just let me know.")
- 8) I always mention when people have been asking about them, and I like saying, "Your church family loves you."**