

Preparation for the session

Look at your current list of members who have been missing from worship. Look at the *names*. Who have you been thinking and praying about specifically? If you use a system of “red–yellow–green,” who are those members whose spiritual lives concern you because their use of the means of grace is a yellow or red?

These are the people to have on your mind and heart as we discuss your visitation with missing members.



WATCH CHAPTER 7: OPENING DEVOTION

Someone responds with prayer, asking God’s blessing upon the meeting.



WATCH CHAPTER 7, PART 1: “GO!”

- Why is listening so important when visiting a missing member?
- Why are there no “rules” when it comes to visiting missing members?



WATCH CHAPTER 7, PART 2: “BEFORE YOU GET TO THE DOOR”

- Is it better to schedule an appointment with a missing member or just drop by unannounced?
- Where is the best place to meet with a missing member?
- When is the best time to meet?

- What are the pros and cons of bringing another person with you on the visit?



WATCH CHAPTER 7, PART 3: “AT THE DOOR”

- What are some things to keep in mind at the door of the member’s home?



WATCH CHAPTER 7, PART 4: “IN THE HOUSE”

- Why is preaching law likely not necessary on the first visit?

- What are some open-ended questions you might ask to initiate a spiritual conversation?



WATCH CHAPTER 7, PART 5: “THINGS YOU THOUGHT OF THAT WE DIDN’T”

- What practices have you have found helpful in elder visitation?

Visitation Practice

Construct a devotion you would use for each of the following situations (*choose an appropriate text, give the main points of your devotion, write a prayer*):

- Mrs. Jones had her third baby. Delivery was by cesarean section.
- Gregg, an every-other Sunday attender, has just found out he is going to be laid off from his job.
- Marjorie, Bill's wife of 48 years, has passed away. You are the first person he has called.
- Rick and Alice are at the hospital with their 12-year-old daughter who has been diagnosed with leukemia.
- Sarah (a member since childhood) has been served with divorce papers by her husband (a recent convert).
- Jack has been involved in a car accident in which he and others were injured.
- Grace's husband has been diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease.
- Grayson's girlfriend has accepted his proposal for marriage.

Develop a strategy with which you will approach the following situations:

- The Wilson family had been regular in attendance for many years, but you've noticed that they have been absent from worship for the last three weeks.
- Molly is a single mother with two children. She asks to meet with you because she has been struggling to make ends meet financially.
- Terry is upset at the direction the congregation has decided to go after the last Voter's assembly.
- Shawn and Sheila have been informed by Shawn's company that they will be relocating to Atlanta.
- Rasheeda is a member of the congregation, but her husband is not. She asks to meet with you concerning the upcoming Voter's assembly meeting.
- Todd is a single WELS 20-something member who has recently moved to your community. He attends about once a month and has not, yet, indicated a desire to transfer his membership.
- *Larry* sends you an e-mail with a list of grievances he has with the teaching of the congregation—women's roles, closed communion, and worship. You suspect Larry's wife is primarily behind the grievances.
- *Tammy* was confirmed in May and has worshiped once all summer. It is now August.

Other Ideas

For some congregations, the list of missing members is so large you don't know where to begin. You won't be able to visit them all at once! Start small, even with one, and commit to the love and care it will take to bring the Word to those who have been absent from worship.

- **Plan an evening when the elders can meet to make visits** or, at least, make phone calls to set up visits. Getting together provides an opportunity for mutual encouragement in this difficult but blessed service. Setting a regular time for visits or phone calls also provides some needed discipline for this often-neglected work.
- **Put an “elder training” session on the calendar** during which you can practice your visitations with each other. Since elder work is more than visiting missing members, you might include visitations of various kinds: when a member is in the hospital, when there is a death in the family, when someone is about to relocate or has recently moved in, etc. For ideas, consult the “Visitation Practice” section.



WATCH LESSON 7: CLOSING DEVOTION

- Someone closes with prayer.