Preparing for the session

- This training series stresses that every context and circumstance must be taken on its own merits. As people concerned about the spiritual life of your fellow members, you may already be aware of the reasons for which people have absented themselves from worship. Before you examine some of the more "common" excuses, talk about your local circumstance in relationship to the reasons people offer for being away from Word and sacrament.
- Whether formally or informally, you may already have visited with some of the missing members
 of your congregation. Without breaking confidentiality, talk about the efforts that have already
 been put into place in dealing with missing members. Rejoice if those efforts have proven
 successful in building up their faith or returning missing members to worship. Plan and pray for
 those circumstances which need your continued efforts.

WATCH CHAPTER 8: OPENING DEVOTION

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

▶ ■ WATCH CHAPTER 8: "DEALING WITH EXCUSES"

• Why would it be less than valuable to provide a well thought out rebuttal to every excuse offered by missing members?

Practice

The list below is twenty excuses that missing members give for their absence from worship. Consider a response to the excuses given. Include a way of addressing missing members with a heart of compassion together with a Scripture passage to address their concerns.

- 1. "We are too busy to attend worship."
- 2. "I don't have the time now to come to worship ... but maybe later in life."

3.	"I nave no money to give to support the church."
4.	"Why does the church worry about me? Why don't they leave me alone, so I can go my own way? I don't care what happens to me!"
5.	"I am good enough. I don't need to be at worship. I feel I can get along well enough without going regularly to worship."
6.	"We work so hard during the week that I am simply too tired when Sunday comes around."
7.	"I have been treated unfairly by people in the church; I have been insulted and deeply hurt."
8.	"Worship is a personal choice I don't want to be told what to do."
9.	"My husband/wife/family doesn't attend regularly, and I don't want to attend alone."
10.	"The church is always talking about money. My monetary blessings are all mine, and no one has a right to tell me what to do with them."
11.	"I prefer to attend now and again. I prefer not to commit to anything."
12.	"The church demands too much of me; its teachings are too strict."

ظــــه	Company along with many
	WATCH LESSON 8: CLOSING DEVOTION
	Are there others you have heard? Share with the group.
	20. "You don't have to 'go to church' to be a Christian."
	19. "I come when I feel like it—and you can't make it a law that I need to come every Sunday."
	18. "The weekends are the only time I have to enjoy the other interests I have."
	17. "What's the use; I can't remember the sermon on Monday anyway."
	16. "The church doesn't offer enough of the things I'm interested in."
	15. "I don't like the music."
	14. "I don't like the order of service—it's too wooden/loose."
	13. "I don't seem to get anything out of the sermon."

• Someone closes with prayer.