

Nursing Home Ministry

By Richard C. Hobbs



**Laborers in the Harvest Series
Church Ministry**

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Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Arthur Blessitt, the man who carried the cross around the world and to every nation, for spending so many hours of his time to share his heart with me. The burden that Arthur has for this world and the love he has for all the people has touched my heart in such a way that I will never be the same. Arthur has taken time to be a friend and a motivating force in my life.

Most of all, the Holy Spirit has quickened my heart and has given me love for all people. I love people and enjoy the opportunity to share the gospel. Also, the Holy Spirit has opened the doors for our ministry to train laborers in the harvest all over the world. For the love, favor, and mercy the Lord has given me, I give Him my life to train laborers in the harvest and share the gospel to the lost.

I am thankful for the many intercessors that pray for our ministry daily. They have spent many long hours and many tears praying for us in the streets and for the lost. Only God knows what their cries and prayers have accomplished.

Lastly, I am thankful for my wife Kay and my daughters Sally and Sarah. Also, I thank Casey Coble for assisting our ministry. They have helped

me with the many tasks that needed to be completed. My family has shared the call the Lord has on my life and has been part of this ministry since its beginning.

Introduction

Every time I walk the halls of a nursing home I see so much need that I feel overwhelmed. Next, I begin to wonder what can be done to bring hope to those that are there. The longer I am away from the nursing home I begin to forget the need that is contained in the walls of these facilities. We must not forget and must remind ourselves of those who cannot rescue themselves from their own fears or loneliness.

The Body of Christ is alive on this earth through those who follow Christ and know Him as their Lord. We have been commissioned to assume the responsibility of caring for the elderly, disabled, and those in need.

God has shone into the hearts of those that know His Son as their Lord and called all to serve Him. His Word proclaims His call for us to visit the widows and fatherless. The Scriptures record in James 1:27 the words of the half brother of Jesus, challenging all of us when he said, *“Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.”*

It is as if God is seeking to clarify to us what is important to Him. That is to go and visit those who

are often neglected. He seeks hearts that would not only serve but ones that would be filled only with the things of Him. The halls and rooms of many nursing homes are filled with people who are soon to step into eternity. Some have no assurance of a relationship with Christ. How tragic it would be to miss the opportunity to share the Words of Christ with them and bring them salvation and an eternity in heaven.

Until you have heard the screams at night in a nursing home or spent many hours with those who are there, you will never know the loneliness and fear others experience. I have seen that words spoken to a lonely heart will find comfort. The words you speak and the love you share will be used by the Holy Spirit to enter a heart and touch the very soul of the person. Take time to visit those who are in nursing homes and show them your heart while listening to them and showing them value. Some of the most valued times in your life will be found in the halls and rooms of these homes as you visit the elderly and fulfill yet another chapter in the Great Commission that God has for your life.

Chapter One

The Journey Home

Psalms 48:14 *For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death.*

Many people will wait until later in life to consider the reality of their own mortality. Few people have a Living Will with advance directives prepared or even funeral arrangements prepared. Some wait until it is too late to consider the destiny of their own soul.

I have led many people in their 90's to Christ, and I often wondered if someone else would have helped them find Christ or if they would have never found their way home to God. I was in an airport and met a lady who was traveling home to see her mother for Mother's Day. When the plane boarded I found myself sitting beside the same lady. I asked her what she wanted for her Mother's Day and she said, "All I want is my mother saved." I asked her where her mother lived and she said that she was in a nursing home in Ft. Smith, Arkansas. I told her that I am an evangelist and would go and visit her. She said her mother is elderly and becomes angry when she talks about Christ. I said that I did not believe this was a coincidence and we would leave it to God

to make a way for her to find Christ before the end of her journey. She gave me her email address and asked me to let her know what happened.

My wife Kay and I went by the nursing home and the following is a transcript of the email we sent the daughter that I had flown with on the plane:

“We will see Dolly in heaven someday. My wife and I went to the rehab center and met Dolly. She is so sweet and was able to communicate and understand the message of the Gospel. I shared the salvation Scriptures with her and offered her the opportunity to receive Christ into her heart and she did. She took my hand and prayed clearly and understood what she did. I asked if she got to heaven before me would she save me a place and she said she would. I said if I go to heaven before you, then she said, “You will save me a place.” She smiled. I went back over the question of salvation and she was assured she was saved and Christ was in her heart. My wife and I feel that God brought clarity to her mind to understand what she was doing. About five minutes later she was not as alert and more difficult to understand. Several times Dolly kept reaching for my hand and we stayed with her awhile. She knew we cared and appreciated us coming. I prayed for her and asked God to place His angels to protect her and then such wonderful peace of God seemed to sweep in. Dolly acknowledged that she felt His presence. We gave Dolly a large book of

John and a book that I wrote on healing. She is so sweet and will make heaven a better place someday. Thank you for the opportunity to meet her.

We stopped at the next bed and met Dolly's room mate named Virginia and she was unclear of her salvation. We showed her the Scriptures and she prayed for Christ to come into her heart. While Virginia had more understanding of salvation she still wanted to be sure. She asked us to return again and we will and we will see Dolly also.

I do not think it was an accident that we met in the airport and on the plane. I think God arranged it all for Dolly and the desire of her daughter. God gave you your Mother's Day present. Share your faith with others. There are many who will never know him unless you share Him. Ricky and Kay Hobbs “

Dolly and Virginia are now ready for their journey home to heaven. My wife and I wondered that day just how many lived in this rehabilitation center or nursing home who did not have assurance of their salvation. We also talked about what had just happened as we saw Dolly come into a wonderful state of mind to hear the Scriptures and make a decision with clarity of mind. We knew we had just seen a powerful act of grace that day and a special touch from God. Since that day my wife and I have had an even greater burden to teach others to do the same and help people find the way Home.

My father-in-law waited until later in life to accept Christ as His Lord. Within a year after I led him to Christ, he was diagnosed with Alzheimer's. We had prayed for him and for his soul for over 20 years, and my wife and daughters nearly fainted when Ray acknowledged that He had accepted Christ that day. He had nearly waited too late and somehow God, as a sovereign act of grace, had arranged an opportunity for Ray to find Christ before his mind would be overwhelmed with the effects of the disease. Ray's journey is certain as His Lord came into His life to carry Him home at the end of the journey. God had not left him in old age to perish without an opportunity to accept His Son as Lord.

Psalms 71

18 Now also when I am old and grayheaded, O God, forsake me not; until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come.

Take time to help those in the nursing home to have comfort, friendship, and assurance of salvation in Christ. It is my prayer that many will respond to the call for nursing home ministry and let God use them to help the elderly find their way home at the end of life's journey.

Chapter Two

The Challenge

Some seniors find themselves with a greater dependency upon others and need for specialized care through rehabilitation centers or nursing homes. In time, some seniors can no longer maintain their home, drive a car, or perform basic tasks to maintain their comfort. The aging process for some will begin to shrink the world around them while their body begins to experience the effects of immobility, loss of sight, hearing or even memory.

1 Kings 1

1 When King David was old and well advanced in years, he could not keep warm even when they put covers over him.

NIV

Some will require assistance and specialized care in a nursing home, a place where they may never leave. Without friends, family, and spiritual support, their own fears and loneliness could overwhelm their lives. Many of the same stresses are upon the family as they often assume the role of a caregiver. In time, those providing care to their family member will become weary and stressed. They will over time withdraw from giving care to

the one in the nursing home. The resident will find themselves alone in a world that continues to close in around them.

Psalms 71

9 *Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength faileth.*

10 *For mine enemies speak against me; and they that lay wait for my soul take counsel together,*

11 *Saying, God hath forsaken him: persecute and take him; for there is none to deliver him.*

12 *O God, be not far from me: O my God, make haste for my help.*

In Psalms 71, we can see the struggle over the soul and the feeling of loneliness. Without God, we are at our weakest times. David was looking for assurance that God was with Him in his later years. The elderly and those stricken in years will need to be reminded of the promises of God and His assurance that He will not forsake them. God's own Word says in Deuteronomy 31 that He will not forsake us.

Deuteronomy 31

6 *Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the LORD thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.*

Let God reach into your heart and share the love He has for all people including the elderly. While you

honor them, you are honoring Him. Every time I visit a nursing home, I see the need and see the difference that a simple visit makes in the life of one that will soon find the end of their journey. Help them find their way Home to their Father in Heaven and to have comfort as they await this long journey Home.

Chapter Three

Ministering to the Elderly

Churches can organize and recruit volunteers from their congregations to minister in the nursing homes of their community. The greatest hope on this earth is the Church ministering through the Holy Spirit. The Church must reach outside its walls and extend its heart to others. There are many other ministries that may be more sought after, but ministering to the elderly is close to the heart of our Lord.

Volunteer to be a team leader at your church and prepare yourself and others to minister in nursing homes. Begin by visiting members of your congregation who have become homebound or been placed in a nursing home. As you become comfortable visiting the elderly you will soon find yourself inviting others to assist you. Somehow God has created all of us in a way that when we help others in need our own heart responds with joy and well being. Hearts that give and hearts that receive both experience the same emotion of wholeness.

You can establish a ministry of visiting residents or a congregational-based service in a meeting room at the nursing home. Many in your church have musical abilities and can be instrumental in ministering to the residents. You will need to gain

permission from the nursing home to use a meeting room and to establish a service. Announce your service in advance through brochures and through the nursing home staff. They will assist you in gathering residents into the meeting room used for the service.

Seek to have services that are not geared toward a specific denomination so that residents of any denomination will feel welcome. The scheduled service will place the nursing home in expectation of your ministry. Take time after the service to visit others in their rooms who were unable to attend. You may also establish a ministry that will simply take you from room to room visiting residents who may have no one to visit with them. Take time and make friends with the staff as they will work with you to find those who need ministering. Remember that one of the most powerful gifts we all have is listening. Also, read to them from the Book of Psalms and the New Testament while using discretion. The Word of God will bring them comfort and understanding.

Others in your church can participate in this ministry by making quilts, sweaters, blankets, and other items to bring the residents comfort. The elderly residents like stuffed animals and other special gifts like socks that would also bring comfort and joy. You can collect Christian books and magazines that can be used by residents. I

remember one resident who was blind and had read all the Braille books he had many years prior. I was able to take him Braille Christian materials given to me by another person who was blind. He was so excited to have this new material. This simple act meant so much to him and in a later service he gave his heart to Christ. He said that he thought he was saved when he was one year-old but when he heard the message we delivered at the nursing home, he discovered that he must be saved as the Holy Spirit ministered to His heart. You will soon discover that giving something in the Name of the Lord will prepare a heart to receive from Him.

Chapter Four

Speaking to the Heart

After ministering in the streets to people in all situations for many years, I have noticed that if you can speak to the heart of someone you will be successful ministering to the person. When I began ministering in nursing homes, the same principle would produce results. Someone's heart will begin to respond when you speak first from your heart to theirs. Let the words you speak be uplifting and encouraging to their soul.

One night in a convenience store, a man expressed hate toward my wife and me, and then tried to reach and get her billfold out of her purse while she was at the check out. He was a very angry person and buying more alcohol for himself and a friend. When he walked out of the store, I placed my arm behind his shoulder and said, "I love you as Jesus Christ does." He fell to his knees and shoved his alcohol away from him and said, "What has happened to my life?" A few words that day, spoken to his heart, somehow instantly changed his life. It was as the conversion of the Apostle Paul. We have seen lives changed and hearts open when words filled with compassion and love are expressed to someone.

One night I found myself able to speak to several patients on the Alzheimer's wing that could not otherwise communicate. When I spoke to their heart with faith filled words of compassion, they would respond. A medication nurse saw me doing this one day and was amazed when the patient was communicating with me. She saw the principle and the Holy Spirit at work in the life of someone. The next night that I was on the floor, the man spoke to me and thanked me. It seems that while aging or disease can rob a mind of their ability to communicate, they still can respond when it is from their heart through faith and trust in God.

We must use the Words of God to truly speak to a heart and see an eternal effect upon a life. The Word of God contains the very essence of life. Minister Words into a life that you want God to touch. Speak His Words from your heart with His Love.

Hosea 10

12 Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the LORD, till he come and rain righteousness upon you.

Expect God to touch hearts as the Holy Spirit uses you to minister to lives.

Chapter Five

Scriptures of Comfort and Hope

My daughter Sarah has prepared a list of scriptures that may be useful when sharing with nursing home residents. We pray that through your efforts and the Scriptures that you will bring much comfort and hope to others.

2 Corinthians 4

16 *Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.*

17 *For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.*

18 *So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.*

NIV

Philippians 3

12 *Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.*

13 *Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting*

those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,

14 *I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.*

John 3

4 *Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?*

5 *Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*

6 *That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.*

7 *Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.*

8 *The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.*

Isaiah 46

4 *Even to your old age, I am He, And even to gray hairs I will carry you! I have made, and I will bear; Even I will carry, and will deliver you.*

NKJV

John 14

1 *Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.*

2 *In my Father's house are many mansions: if it*

were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

3 *And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.*

4 *And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.*

Romans 14

8 *For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.*

Romans 8

38 *For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,*

39 *Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

1 Peter 1

3 *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,*

4 *To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,*

5 *Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*

2 Timothy 4

6 *For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.*

7 *I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:*

8 *Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.*

Matthew 11

28 *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*

29 *Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.*

30 *For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*

John 16

22 *And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.*

John 16

33 *These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.*

Psalms 23

4 *Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with*

me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

5 *Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.*

6 *Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.*

It is my prayer that God will use you to bring salvation, comfort, peace, and healing to those that are ill and in the nursing home. You are not alone when you minister as the Holy Spirit will be with you as promised in God's written Word. May God bless you in all that you do for Him.

Richard C. Hobbs M.Div., is founder of Mercy Street Ministries, a ministry devoted to training laborers in the harvest and church ministry. He has spent thousands of hours training churches to share Christ in all situations. He hopes that this book will help others to bring comfort and assurance to those in need.

**Accept the challenge
to minister to others!**



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