

## LESSON EIGHT

# PASTORAL VISITATION

### A. PASTORAL VISITATION IS SCRIPTURAL.

Jesus through His own example and ministry showed the great importance of personal work. He preached to the five thousand but He also spent much of His time with individuals. Some of the Lord's greatest messages recorded were spoken to individuals, e.g. Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman. Personal work will never be more fruitful than that which is done in the homes.

The pastor should be fully persuaded that he has a strong Scriptural support for visitation. He should realize that some of his most effective ministry will be accomplished in the homes. If Jesus Christ set the example and the apostles spent much time ministering in the homes, then certainly every pastor should spend time visiting and ministering to the people in their own homes.

The example of the apostles in a house-to-house ministry may be found in the following Scriptures:

*"And daily in the temple, and in every house they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ." (Acts 5:42).*

*"Publicly, and from house to house." (Acts 20:20).*

Further Scriptural proof of the importance of pastoral visitation may be seen in the following Scriptures:

*"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." (James 1:27).*

*"The sick visitor must be cheerful." (Romans 12:8, Moffat).*

*"I was sick and ye visited me: I was in prison and ye came unto me." (Matthew 25:36).*

### B. THROUGH VISITATION THE PASTOR LEARNS THE NEEDS OF HIS PEOPLE.

To preach effectively from the pulpit on Sunday with the largest possible results, the pastor must know his people. He must know their spiritual and material needs, their domestic problems, their cultural and social background. The preacher must not only know his flock, but he must love them. Not only must he love them, but also they in turn must have great confidence, respect, love and esteem for him. All preaching will be in a measure cold and mechanical without this mutual heart warmth on the part of both minister and people. This simply cannot be developed and nourished properly in church services alone. A warm handshake at the door is essential but it is never a substitute for the pastoral visit with prayer at the Christian's own hearth.

It is in the home that the pastor can best accomplish his duties to his people as their pastor. It is here that people will open their hearts and confide in their spiritual advisor their problems, burdens and needs. It is here in their homes that he can do best personal work.

While in their homes the wise pastor will be able to learn the actual needs of his people and will be guided accordingly when ministering to them. He also will be in a better position to judge the effect his preaching is having upon the people. In mingling among his people and in personal dealings with them, he can keep his finger on their spiritual pulse, taking, at the same time, their spiritual temperature. He can be conscious of any trouble brewing, root of bitterness, or dissension in the flock that might hurt the flock. He can put his hand quickly upon any injurious teaching that may have crept in. At the same time while he is helping and protecting the assembly through visitation he is helping himself to keep human and to live on the same plane with the people.

### **C. THE PASTOR MUST VISIT ALL WITHOUT PARTIALITY.**

The pastor must be careful that he has no favorites; all classes, rich and poor, must be visited equally. In fact, every member of the assembly has the same right to spiritual help and the same demand upon his time and attention. This, of course, applies to those of normal health and spiritual condition. There are those who should and must come first. Visiting the sick will take up a considerable portion of the pastor's time. If there is any priority at all to be given, the different groups in the church might be listed as follows in the order that they should receive the pastor's time and attention: (1) The sick; (2) Those having spiritual problems, domestic trouble, etc.; (3) Young converts; (4) The aged; (5) The poor; and (6) The regular members having no immediate problems.

Pastoral visitation must be regular and systematic. No set rule can be laid down here, for assemblies vary in size and conditions. However, in a normal assembly under ordinary conditions and of ordinary size, it can be recommended that a pastor visit every home at least two times each year. In large assemblies once each year may be all that the pastor will be able to do. He should use the same afternoons and evenings each week. The middle of the week is better than the end of the week. Monday should be the pastor's day of rest and relaxation while on Saturday his mind and heart is occupied with the next day's work. Also in most homes Mondays and Saturdays are busy days. As a rule it is necessary to do some visiting in the evenings for it is only then that he will find the men folk and the working members of the family at home. Sometimes the most good can be done when the entire family is present as a group. In order that he may be systematic, it will be necessary for him to keep a record or diary of his daily calls.

### **D. PASTORAL VISITING IS NOT SOCIAL VISITING.**

Pastoral visiting is not social visiting. The object of each visit should be a religious one. Much time can be wasted with little or no good accomplished through social visiting. The wastage of time is sin and, of all people, the pastor has no time to waste. There is too much to do for the Master. One of Wesley's rules for preachers was: "Spend no more time in any one place than is strictly necessary. Some teaching on the matter at church can acquaint the people with the pastor's desire on the matter. At any rate it is the pastor's business to see that he is in the home on the King's business and not just to enjoy himself.

He must discourage any gossip and refuse to listen to stories about other saints. Most definitely he himself must never be heard saying a word of criticism of one of the saints or repeating some rumor that he has heard. A good rule to follow is to get the members of the

home to talk about themselves, their needs, their problems, their work, the children, etc. The pastor should be a good listener and take a keen interest in the activities in the home. One farmer was won for the Lord just because the preacher walked across the field with him to see a machine with which he was harvesting peas. By visiting with the farmer in the field or stable, the workman in his shop, the merchant in his store, the minister can get near his people and have them open their hearts to him.

It is generally expected that the pastor should pray although again the pastor must be guided by circumstances. A lengthy prayer that is spoken in a loud voice can cause embarrassment and resentment. A brief but earnest prayer is as a rule sufficient. As soon as the pastor feels that he has accomplished all the good that he can do, he should not linger but bring his visit to an end.

The pastor should be very careful in visiting young women in the absence of their husbands. For all such visits his own wife should accompany him. If he should be a single man, it will be necessary for him to leave some of the visiting to sisters in the assembly appointed for that work. It is necessary for the pastor to call, let him make sure that the husband or other members of the family are present or let him take one of the elders of the church with him.

**E. THE PASTOR MAY BE CALLED TO THE HOME BY THE MEMBERS OF THE ASSEMBLY.**

Members of the assembly should feel free to obey the Scripture and call for the pastor to pray for the sick at any hour of the day. Calling on, and praying for the sick will take a great deal of the pastor's time, but he must be patient and sacrificial. In dealing with the sick, his words should be few, calm, tender, and every syllable point towards Jesus. He must be cheerful and attempt to build up the patient's faith.

**F. THE PASTOR ENTERS THE HOME AS A FRIEND.**

The pastor enters the home not only as a spiritual advisor but also as a friend. Such a spirit of confidence and affection should exist between the pastor and the people that he should be welcome in every home at all times. Never should the busy housewife feel embarrassed if the pastor should call while she is in the middle of washing and the house and children are not as tidy as could be desired. He should be able to enter as free from embarrassment as one of the family. He should avoid calling at meal times but if he should be there while the family is eating, they should feel free to invite him to join them at the table as one of the family. At the same time there must not be a sense of familiarity for this destroys the respect that is needed to maintain his influence over them. Happy is the minister who is able to maintain a wholesome attitude of fellowship and goodwill with his people without familiarity. Such a man will prove himself to be a true shepherd and the sheep will gladly follow him and feed out of his hand.

LESSON EIGHT

SELF HELP TEST

A. Write a paragraph beginning with the following sentence: *"Pastoral visiting is not social visiting."*

B. State the purpose of the pastoral visitation.

C. Name the different groups in the church in the order that they should receive the pastor's attention:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

6. \_\_\_\_\_