

Introduction

Each year, come autumn, congregational life swings into full gear. The study societies and catechism classes get under way and so does another year of home visits.

Why do we go through this exercise year after year? Does it really benefit the life of the congregation or is it merely a custom we follow? Is there enough direction for those who bring such visits and for those who receive them so that the practice is not robbed of its meaning? How do we keep it from degenerating into a mere routine?

Office-bearers often feel inadequate and not very well equipped for the awesome task they have pledged to do. It is amazing how many elders and ministers do their work with a cloud of guilt hanging over their heads because they are overwhelmed with the enormity of the task. It is my prayer that through this publication you may be encouraged and motivated to keep busy working in the Lord's vineyard and among his sheep.

Even though the work may be stressful at times, the Lord wants us to do our work joyfully and cheerfully. Indeed, going on home visits is glorious work because it serves the edification of Christ's church. Therefore, we must throw off feelings of inferiority and inadequacy and set out to do the work we are assigned according to the talents and gifts the Lord has entrusted to us.

A home visit is an extension of the preaching with regard to personal application. The general care of the congregation in the preaching is individualized in a home visit. It brings "home" the message of the pulpit. It seeks to understand how members of the congregation put into practice the message preached. Here is where the office-bearers can gauge whether the preaching is bearing fruit and the congregational members are given opportunity to feel their own spiritual pulse.

Home visits undergird the purpose of our life: to glorify the Lord by loving him with all our heart, soul, mind and strength and our neighbour as ourselves (Deut 6:4,5; Matt 22:37-40). Through these

visits congregational members are encouraged and admonished to live pure, blameless and pious lives before the Lord and to build each other up in faith, love and holiness. To avoid spiritual loneliness, both office bearers and congregation must learn to speak of their love for the Lord. Home visits give us the opportunity to develop good Christian communication.