



Sharing your faith with those who don't leave the house

By Ian Knox

Giving time

An early decision needs to be made here: if you're going to build a relationship with those who don't leave the house, can you commit to this in the long term? A one-off visit will always be appreciated, but anything meaningful will mean an ongoing relationship. Is this a commitment you can undertake? Your faith-sharing will have a major practical element here. There is shopping to be done. You may be able to arrange transport for outings, trips to church, the countryside, the shops, the pub or wherever. In so doing, make sure you don't usurp what the person's family members feel is their domain. Nor should you try to upstage the social services and health services or put yourself in a compromising situation. However, your loving, caring attitude will enable your faith to shine through. Make the chores seem fun and, where possible, do things with the housebound rather than for them.

Chatting

There will be very many opportunities for talking about a host of subjects. Chat naturally about anything and everything. Reminiscing will be a regular feature. Talk about you and your story. Share about your personal relationship with Jesus quite naturally as the opportunity arises. What has happened in your personal life does matter and is interesting, even if you don't think so.

Equally, listen to their story. Knowing your Christian connections, they may well speak of spiritual influences and events in their life. Don't be afraid to ask kind questions: a conversational style is much better than a series of monologues. It shows you are listening and have a keen interest. Let the Holy Spirit help your moving forward here.

As long and ongoing conversations progress, you could volunteer to read to your housebound friend. Would they like to hear from the Bible? You could say how you enjoy a daily time with God, and see if that leads to sharing that time with them. Suggest sensitively that you would be happy to pray with them and for them, perhaps as you are about to leave.

The housebound often have periods of being on their own. An offer of an easy-going Christian book or music might go down well. This is certainly one of those situations where you can be gently proactive. If there is a genuinely sympathetic reaction, move forward with them. Who knows? You may be the one to help them find their one faith.

Other help

What is your church's policy regarding the housebound? Does it have one? Are there visitors appointed by the church? Does your church take Holy Communion to people in their homes? Is there a transport coordinator? When you have answers to these questions you can offer extra help that may be needed. Similarly, would your housebound friend appreciate being taken to your church's service or mid-week meeting? Does your church hold events for those who don't leave the home, or give them access to digital services? Would you be willing to help with this? The potential for faith-sharing here is very great indeed. It is worth all the time and effort. The old prayer says that 'it is in giving that we receive'. You Can give and receive a blessing in your faith-sharing with those who don't leave the home.

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