

NURSING HOME MINISTRY

by

TOM McCORMICK

Nursing Home Ministry

by Thomas W. McCormick

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Dedicated to the memory of John Skilton

PREFACE

You are reading the 2015 ‘update’ of the “Nursing Home Manual” originally produced in the mid-1970s and published in 1980. It is almost entirely the same. There have been some additions, enriching the original material. Only the material now somewhat dated has been omitted, the bibliographic references, for instance. Much of that original material is still timely, though there is now much more available, often for free on the Internet. A few other minor editorial adjustments have been made as well.

This manual for working with the institutionalized elderly (the “Nursing Home Manual” as we have always called it) had its beginning in the basement of Skilton House, a center for Christian ministry in Philadelphia, during the mid-1970s. John Skilton had long been visiting several nursing homes in the area. Tom moved into the House to help in the ministry, and gradually others joined John in his vision to have a Christian witness in every nursing home in Philadelphia. It soon became obvious that some kind of instruction was needed to help newcomers to the ministry and to encourage and enlarge the scope of activity of those already involved. Thus the manual was born—not a theoretical ideal, but a practical response to pleas for help.

The manual is intended, primarily, for use by Christians who wish to carry on a Christian ministry. We have not tried to hide the fact that our beliefs pervade every area of our lives. We maintain that everything we do should be firmly rooted and grounded in Scripture. Not that the manual is for use only by a spiritual elite. Clergy and laymen, new Christians and those more experienced should all benefit from this book.

The purpose in writing the manual is threefold. First, to help those who are seeking to start a ministry with the elderly, but don’t know where to begin. For them the manual offers some tried and tested suggestions for taking those first steps. Second, we aim to encourage those already involved and give insight as to how they could deepen their ministry through enriching their understanding of older people, involving others and so on. Third, the manual is written to challenge those who have forgotten or are not aware of the needs of the elderly. It presents a biblical mandate to which we all should respond with changed attitudes and actions.

The manual is designed to be used in varied ways. Some may wish to read it cover-to-cover. Others may choose to look up specific topics of interest or material on particular needs and questions that have arisen in their ministry. The manual can be used equally well for personal study or for small groups such as Sunday school or church home meetings. Some have found it helpful in sermon preparation, others have consulted it as a resource in conducting seminars on ministering to the elderly. From its inception the manual has been designed *to be used*. It is our prayer that it will not be an ornament on a shelf but will continue to encourage, stimulate and challenge its owners through its continual use.

To thank everyone who has been a part of the creation of the manual is impossible. There have been so many who have selflessly offered time and expertise in its various stages of production. A few, however, deserve special mention and thanks: John Skilton for his vision, prayers, thoughts and gracious example; Georgina Dietz, Greg Donovan, Wayne Mack and Judith Shelly for their help on the early stages, particularly with regard to biblical material; all those who attended the first brainstorming potlucks at Marlene Hammerschmidt’s (special thanks to Mar-

lene); Jim Petty and Church of the City (in Philadelphia) for their invaluable counsel and support over many years; Dr. George Fuller for providing the opportunity to share and refine this material at Westminster Theological Seminary; Sharon Fish for her insights and editing from the perspective of a nurse, writer and longtime laborer with older people and for her contributions to the bibliography; Tom Church for his encouragement, example and contributions to the bibliography; Betsy Allinson for her copy editing and advice; P.G. Vinden for participation and editorial assistance; Roberta Morton for her many hours typing the the original final manuscript; and Larry Wasserman of www.faithfulfriends.org for making the pictures available..

This 2014 edition owes special thanks to the typesetter, Stuart Robertson, and the editor, Jennifer Tong. A wonderful team and a better final result!

The astute reader will also notice portions included here taken from *Nursing Home Ministry: Where Hidden Treasures are Found*, co-authored with Bill Goodrich of God Cares Ministry. Bill has been a colleague, companion, inspiration, encouragement and friend for years. Might I encourage you to visit <http://godcaresministry.com/> . This book which Bill and I co-authored also contains material not included in this Manual, and his website even more resources. I am grateful to Bill and God Cares Ministry for making this material available to share with you here.

There are many who no doubt deserve mention whose names do not appear here. There are those who volunteered their resources—counsel, typing, writing, editing, words of encouragement, exhortations—in the first years of the manual’s history. Without those first working copies of the manual, this present edition would not be available today. So to each bearer of even a cup of cold water we say, you shall not lose your reward (see Matthew 10:42).

Above all we thank those older people who loved us, taught us, put up with our mistakes and encouraged us with their enthusiastic appreciation of whatever we had to offer.

We would like to hear from you. Please write to us if you are interested in receiving a newsletter on nursing home ministries. It will deal with special topics of interest, models for ministry and requests for prayer and will keep us in touch with what others are doing. We would also appreciate your insights and suggestions. Email me at vformation.mdg8@gmail.com.

We also want to thank Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, New Life Presbyterian Church in Jenkintown, Pa., and the Committee on Diaconal Ministry of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church for their financial support in the production of this manual.

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