



Effective Nursing Home Ministry (Lord, You Want Me to Go *Where?*)

Paul DeNeui

Paul DeNeui graduated from Rhema Bible Training College in 1995. Paul and his wife Ann have been married for 40 years and have four children and four grandchildren. He traveled with a gospel group for 7 years, and was an associate pastor/music minister at Church On The Word in Warner, OK for 12 years. Paul is now traveling fulltime as an itinerant minister ministering over 480 times a year in nursing and assisted care facilities. He also travels to churches, ministering and sharing his vision. Paul has written a book entitled the Nursing Home Chronicles, which can be purchased at Amazon.com. For more information about his ministry go to www.pauldeneui.org.

Toward the middle of October, 2009 I was sensing a call to minister in nursing homes. Several years ago, my wife and I had ministered in nursing homes. We had four nursing homes and went to each one once a month on Sunday afternoons. This time the call was different. It seemed like I was to do it full-time.



(I am a preacher's kid, grew up in the church. My dad pastored for 40 years. I had worked in the church all my life. Many ministers came to our home and spoke at the church, but in all those years I never heard of anyone in full-time nursing home ministry. I remember my dad going to nursing homes in our local community and I went with him a few times. I don't remember anyone else in the church getting involved.)

I didn't realize it at the time, but the Lord was answering a prayer I had prayed in early 2008. During a time of prayer, I had rededicated my life to the Lord and wanted to be used more than ever before. I said, "Lord, put me in situations and circumstances where I can be used the most." I felt that I should be doing more than I was. I said, "Lord, put me on the fast track. Connect me with people that will help get the job done. Let's build Your kingdom. Let's strengthen the saved and save the lost. Tell me what to do and I'll do it." I had forgotten about that prayer.

I believed that I was to provide something that nursing homes didn't normally get. I was to provide a service, just like when the residents used to go to church. There would be singing, special music, a message, and an altar call. This was going to be their church.

Those who were confined to a nursing home would have a church they could call their own.

The church that I was attending at the time was in Warner, OK. So, I thought I would go to the nursing home in Warner first. I asked them if I could come on a regular basis and minister to their people. (I have learned that the activities director is generally the person to talk to.) We set a meeting date for the next Sunday at 2pm. Now there were some other things to consider. I knew that I wanted music. My wife, Ann, had always played the piano for me wherever I'd gone to sing. This time that wouldn't work. She was already working full-time. Now what do I do? We decided we would record her playing the piano and use that. I felt very strong about the idea of using the old hymns. Those are the songs that most of the people in the nursing homes would know and to which they would relate. Then I needed some way to play the music. We began to look for a little sound system that I could take with me. I wanted it to be totally portable – something that I could set up anywhere, even if I didn't have any electricity. That meant it had to be battery powered. I also needed a microphone and it needed to be wireless. (I didn't want a cord around all those wheelchairs.) We found exactly what I needed online and ordered it. Within a few days, it was at our doorstep and I was ready. On Sunday, Nov. 1st, 2009, I ministered my first service in Warner. I only had one nursing home scheduled, but I knew it was just a matter of time and I would have 20.

I considered myself full-time. The Lord had given me a plan of 20 nursing homes in a 50-mile radius, going to each one twice a month. So I began to pray and ask God WHERE He wanted me to go next. I printed off a map of eastern Oklahoma and drew a 50-mile radius with our home in the center. Then I created a list of the towns in that circle and began to pray about each one. The Lord began to reveal to me, one at a time, where to go. He also said there would be many individuals, *Life Senders*, who would step up financially to help send the Word into the nursing homes.

Jesus said in John 10:10, *I am come that they might have life.* So, I am ministering life to "Strengthen The Saved and Save The Lost."

After that first service in November of 2009, I continued to add nursing homes from December into March of 2010. On March the 10th, I acquired my 20th facility. The nursing home mix has changed a little since the beginning, but I have maintained from 19 to 21 facilities.

I am now into my fifth year. I have traveled thousands of miles, seen many salvations, healings, performed funerals, communions, and have been requested to preside over two weddings. I have made many, many friends and the Lord has changed lives all over eastern Oklahoma.

That is what I do and why I do it, but there is so much more. The things that I have learned and seen have been amazing. Now I understand why James was so concerned about the church taking care of the widows and orphans.

James 1:27

Pure and lasting religion in the sight of God our Father means that we must care for orphans and widows in their troubles. . .(NLT)

The church has an amazing opportunity, something that I don't think we have ever seen or latched onto before. We're pretty good at foreign missions. And we're pretty good at ministry within the local church. But we could be better at home missions. Not many have caught the vision of nursing home ministry. Jesus said in Luke 15:4, *What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?* I am finding lost sheep in the nursing homes. I'm also finding sheep that are lonely, depressed, sick, without family, and needing love. Let me share two stories:

One day in Spiro, I saw an older gentleman in the service who I hadn't seen before. He was causing quite a commotion. There are not as many men in nursing homes as there are women, so when a man comes in it's a big deal. He was probably in his 80s and the women were making sure he was comfortable. After the service, one of the workers came to me and explained, "When he came into the facility he had nothing but a few clothes." They were trying to round up some furniture for him. I went over to him to say "hi" and introduce myself. Some had said he was not a Christian.

We talked a little bit and then I asked him if he had ever accepted Jesus as his Lord and Savior. He began to cry and said, "No, I've been rebellious for many years. Whatever my mom and dad said, I would do the opposite. They were Christians, so I told myself I would never do that." I explained to him it's not too late and it's something he needed to do. He sat quietly for a moment and then said, "If I accept Jesus, will I see my mommy and daddy again?" I lost it. We cried together for a moment and then I told him he would see his mom and dad again and they would be so proud of him. He accepted Christ that day and within the month went home to be with the Lord. We need to be there.

In Muskogee, I saw a young gal come into the service in a wheelchair. She looked very depressed, stayed for maybe 10 minutes and left. She looked very young and out of place. I wondered why she was there. What was her story? After the service I found her in the hall. I said "hi" and introduced myself. I discovered that 3 to 4 years earlier she was high on drugs and jumped off a 75-foot cliff, attempting to commit suicide. She fell to rocks below, breaking just about every bone in her body including her neck and back. Today she is paralyzed from her waist down. Her mother is in the penitentiary and her dad doesn't come around much.

That was several months ago. I began ministering to her and now she is on fire for God and in every service. She never graduated from high school, so she wants to get her GED. I am helping her with that. She wants to be a witness for the Lord. We are believing for a physical miracle. She is 19 years old.

I never expected to see young people in nursing homes. These facilities become long-term care, whatever their age might be. These stories, and many more like them, were eye-openers for me. We need to be there.

James 1:27

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How Do We Do This?

Gal 5:22-23

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. . .(KJV)

There are no cookie-cutter answers. Every circumstance is unique, every situation different. The more I have relied on my own abilities, the more frustrated I have become. But when I rely on the fruit of the Spirit, that's where I find the answers.

The church has a real opportunity here. There are lost and hurting sheep in the nursing homes. This is home missions. These people are our mothers and fathers, our grandmas and grandpas, our neighbors and our friends. They could even be our sons and daughters.

Not everyone will be called into full-time nursing home ministry. Not everyone will even preach. But if you go into the nursing homes with the fruit of the Spirit, there will be ministry and you will reach the heart of the people. Whether you go or whether you send. We need to be there.