

Stephen Ministry: Love Grow, Serve
“Growing Through Doing” — Part 2
Ruth 1--2:3 & other various scripture

**** (The comic strip goes right before point #1.)**

1. Stephen Ministry can grow us at Grace.

From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.
Ephesians 4:16

There is an old African proverb: I hear,
I forget; I see, I remember;
I do, I understand.

Question: What comes to mind when you hear the disciple Stephen mentioned?

Stephen Ministry gets its name for another reason. Stephen was the first layman mentioned of seven to be chosen by the early church to care/serve other lay people.

This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit... Acts 6:5

2. Stephen Ministry will equip you to effectively and consistently minister to those hurting around you. Our key verse is:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. 2 Corinthians 1:3-4

Stephen Ministry is a way of comforting others as God has comforted us.

The Bible supplies us with many caregiver and receiver pairs:

Abraham's care for Lot.
Moses' care for Joshua.
Ruth's care for Naomi.
Jonathan's care for David.

Mordecai's care for Esther.
Barnabas' care for Saul.
Jesus' care for us.

3. Ruth's care ministry for Naomi. (Ruth summarized.)

The first thing we see about Ruth is that she had a history of caring for others.

Then Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go back, each of you, to your mother's home. May the Lord show kindness to you, as you have shown to your dead and to me."
Ruth 1:8

Question: In chapter 1, who seems in need of a caregiver? Why?

Naomi

"Don't call me Naomi," she told them. "Call me Mara, because the Almighty has made my life very bitter. I went away full, but the Lord has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi? The Lord has afflicted me; the Almighty has brought misfortune upon me."

Ruth 1:20-21

Ruth's love compels her to care for Naomi.

A. She clung to Naomi.

At this they wept again. Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law good-by, but Ruth clung to her.
Ruth 1:14

B. She committed herself to Naomi and to her God.

But Ruth replied, "Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God."
Ruth 1:16

C. Ruth makes it apparent that she is in it long term.

Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely, if anything but death separates you and me.
Ruth 1:17

D. She willingly goes to work for their welfare.

***As God would have it, the very first field
He directs her to belongs to Boaz,*

one of Naomi's kinsman-redeemers.

E. She was a good listener.

Naomi said to Ruth her daughter-in-law, "It will be good for you, my daughter, to go with his girls, because in someone else's field you might be harmed." So Ruth stayed close to the servant girls of Boaz.... Ruth 2:22-23

One day Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, "My daughter, should I not try to find a home for you, where you will be well provided for? Is not Boaz, with whose servant girls you have been, a kinsman of ours?"

Ruth 3:1

Stephen Ministers learn the art of active and reflective listening.

F. Ruth would have agreed with Solomon in Ecclesiastes 3:7 that there's a time to speak and a time to keep silent.

G. She kept Naomi's confidence.

Conclusion: Isn't it just like our God to use one of the most maligned inter-personal relationships—daughters-in-law and mothers-in-law—as the context to portray how we should love and care for each other?

"Growing Through Doing" is second in a series titled, "Stephen Ministry: Love, Grow, Serve." March 2, 2014/Ron Dean, Elder

All verses are from the New International version unless noted.