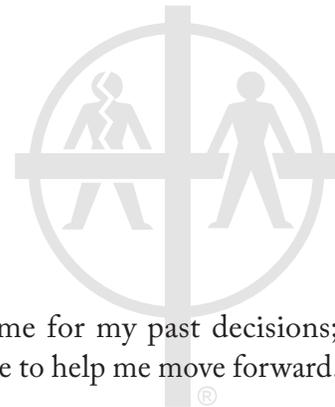


I'M SO GRATEFUL FOR STEPHEN MINISTRY!

By a man who received care from a Stephen Minister



Fourteen months ago, I was at a point where I needed someone to talk to about the struggles in my life. My pastor recommended I consider meeting with a Stephen Minister—another man, trained as a caregiver, who would walk with me during this difficult time. Trusting someone with personal information about my life was something I feared at first, but my pastor reassured me that everything was confidential, so I agreed to give it a try. I'm so glad I did!

Soon after meeting my Stephen Minister, I quickly sensed I could trust him. Part of that trust came from knowing he was trained to help people through their problems. He made me feel comfortable by not prying for information, but instead just letting me share what was on my mind. Any questions he did ask fit our conversation appropriately. Probably the best thing he did for me

was not judging me for my past decisions; rather, he was there to help me move forward.

I think another significant trust-building factor was being able to talk with someone who was not in my regular circle of friends. My friends certainly continued to have a very important place in my life, but I also needed someone who could see me objectively. That helped make it easier to share personal parts of my life. Also, knowing my Stephen Minister would be there for me “next week” (we usually met for an hour each week) gave me confidence. I see now how

WHAT IS STEPHEN MINISTRY?

Stephen Ministry is a way congregations can provide high-quality care and outreach to hurting people in the congregation and community.

Stephen Ministers are congregation members who have gone through 50 hours of training to provide one-to-one, Christ-centered care. Each Stephen Minister is matched with a hurting person—men are paired with men, women with women—and meets weekly with that person to listen, care, pray, and encourage.

Stephen Ministers care for those dealing with grief, divorce, job loss, hospitalization, financial struggles, loneliness, convalescence, terminal illness, and many other life difficulties.



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much I needed regular encouragement as I rode the roller coaster of emotions that came during this period of instability in my life.

I really appreciated our times together. Our weekly visits were more than just meeting to talk. They also helped keep me accountable between times, to carry through with the changes I said I wanted to make. My Stephen Minister often went out of his way to help me in my struggle.

My life experience during the 10 months I met with my Stephen Minister was not always one of progress. It took courage for me to honestly share when I had my failures and setbacks too. Even then my Stephen Minister was there for me. He encouraged me not to give up, but to pick up and keep going forward.

That genuine acceptance spoke to me the most; not to accept failure, but to confess, turn, and receive forgiveness. Having someone assure me

of that biblical truth was really encouraging and was exactly what I needed.

My Stephen Minister walked with me through a really dark part of my life, pointing me to the truth and love that is in Christ.

I thank the Lord for my Stephen Minister who did not try to solve all my problems but lovingly, as a Christian brother, walked along with me through this valley in my life.

If you are dealing with some type of crisis or difficulty in life, I encourage you to meet with a Stephen Minister. You won't regret it!



You can download this article, as well as several other stories about Stephen Ministry, at www.stephenministries.org/stories

STEPHEN MINISTRY
CHRIST CARING FOR PEOPLE THROUGH PEOPLE