

Sharing Christ's Love

Philippians 1:1 – 11

September 28, 2008

Greetings from Paul

¹ This letter is from Paul and Timothy, slaves of Christ Jesus. It is written to all of God's people in Philippi, who believe in Christ Jesus, and to the elders and deacons. ² May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace.

Paul's Thanksgiving and Prayer

³ Every time I think of you, I give thanks to my God. ⁴ I always pray for you, and I make my requests with a heart full of joy ⁵ because you have been my partners in spreading the Good News about Christ from the time you first heard it until now. ⁶ And I am sure that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on that day when Christ Jesus comes back again.

⁷ It is right that I should feel as I do about all of you, for you have a very special place in my heart. We have shared together the blessings of God, both when I was in prison and when I was out, defending the truth and telling others the Good News. ⁸ God knows how much I love you and long for you with the tender compassion of Christ Jesus. ⁹ I pray that your love for each other will overflow more and more, and that you will keep on growing in your knowledge and understanding. ¹⁰ For I want you to understand what really matters, so that you may live pure and blameless lives until Christ returns. ¹¹ May you always be filled with the fruit of your salvation—those good things that are produced in your life by Jesus Christ—for this will bring much glory and praise to God. (1)

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

We are all partners in Christ and are called to reach out to one another in His love. We are to be the hands, feet and voice of Christ to His people. We each have different gifts that we have received from God and can use them to His glory. A very important gift each of us has is the gift of listening and, at one time or another, we all need to have someone to talk to us and share what is in our heart, whether it is a joy or a concern. Taking everything to God in prayer is wonderful and what we need to do, but there are times when we need to have that one-on-one conversation with another person. As a human we aren't always able to hear God's answers to our questions.

As Stephen Ministers we are trained to be better listeners. We learn to listen more closely and to be able to reflect back to our Care Receivers what they are saying to us. By reflecting back what we have heard, we are making sure that we are hearing correctly what has been said to us. We then can try to help our Care Receiver understand better where they are in their situation and help them to be more open to God and His answers.

1*Holy Bible, New Living Translation*, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.) 1996.

I was first trained as a Stephen Minister in 1987 at St. Michael Lutheran Church in Canton. I enjoyed the training, especially how to be a better listener. I have always enjoyed talking and visiting with people, but needed help to be able to use my listening to be a better Caregiver. Going through the training has helped in all areas of my life, especially in coming closer to God and learning how to listen to Him for guidance.



This is the Stephen Ministry Caregiver's Compass.

At the center of the compass is the Chi Rho, which is a symbol for Christ. Chi Rho is the first two letters from the Greek word Christos meaning Christ. The Ch is the letter X in the center of the compass and the R is the letter P over the X at the center of the compass. Thus the Stephen Ministry is centered on Christ.

At the top of the compass we find the word Compassionate. This means as Caregivers we are “wounded healers” or someone who can feel or suffer along with another person. We are passionate about this ministry and are eager to bring the healing of Christ to others.

Next we find Full of Faith. We have a faith and a relationship with Jesus and we trust in Him to give us the courage and love to reach out to others through listening and prayer. We are hopeful in that we believe that God can bring healing and share that faith with others so that they too can believe.

Then we find the word Skilled. Through the Stephen Ministry training we are taught the essential caregiving skills of understanding, dealing with feelings and listening. We also learn of the challenges and feelings that others may have and become aware that we may not be able to always help those we are ministering to; we may need to refer them to someone who is trained as a pastor or a counselor.

The last word on our compass is Trustworthy. We are trained to be reliable Caregivers who stick with our Care Receivers through the long haul and are committed to helping in any way that we are able to help. The most important part of being trustworthy is confidentiality. Whatever is said in our training and in our meetings with our Care Receivers is confidential and will not be shared with others. Our Stephen Ministers do not even know who the other Stephen Ministers have as Care Receivers.

With Christ at the center of our lives as Stephen Ministers, we are focused on care through our individual prayers and the prayers of support from each other. We trust that Jesus, through our prayers, will bring wholeness and healing to our Care Receivers and help them to come into a stronger relationship with Him.

I have a Stephen Ministry balloon. I need your help to pass it along to one of our Stephen Ministers. Betty Nick, is a Stephen Minister and one of the Stephen Leaders trained to train the Stephen Ministers - will you stand - I'll hit a balloon in your direction, will those near her help get the balloon to her. Then, Betty, will you share what the Stephen Ministry means to you.

Now I need your help to get the next balloon to Marianne Simancek. Marianne, will you share with us what Stephen Ministry means to you.

Next we have our newest Stephen Leader, Lois Housman, please help me get a balloon to her.

Our last Stephen Minister to share her feelings today will be Amy Grieger. Again I need your help in getting a balloon to her.

Our other trained Stephen Ministers are Mary and Dave Gabler, Bob England, Kathy Slating, and Muriel King. We now have Lois Housman who was just trained this summer as a Stephen Leader to help Betty with overseeing the continuation of this ministry.

Now, if you helped get a balloon to one of the Stephen Ministers, you are in the next class for training Stephen Ministers. Seriously though, we will be asking some of you to consider being trained as a Stephen Minister in the future. If you are asked, please prayerfully consider this as a possible calling from God.

Please support this ministry in your prayers, and if you or someone you know is in need of a Stephen Minister, please contact Betty, Lois, Pastor Henderson, or me and we will do our best to find you the support you need.

Amen.