



# The Stephen Series: Caregiving for the Church of the Future

Pastors and church leaders sometimes face the challenge of helping congregation members move past the mistaken notion that only ordained clergy are called and gifted for ministry. When this notion dominates, ministry struggles. Trying to minister today under such restricted circumstances is like trying to drive on an expressway to the future with your eyes fixed on the rearview mirror.

When people act on the belief that God has uniquely gifted them for ministry, the church becomes the living body of Christ—members serve one another and reach out to the world with Christ's love. With this visionary focus, faith becomes active, people are empowered,

ministry is multiplied, and the church moves safely and confidently toward the promise of the future.

The Stephen Series can help congregations shift their thinking from the past to the future, from a pastor-dependent mindset to an understanding that all God's people need to be equipped for the work of ministry (Ephesians 4:11–12).

Here are some ways that the Stephen Series can help congregations move away from the mindset of the church of the past and toward a vision for becoming the church of the future.

The Church of the Past	The Church of the Future
The congregation's caregiving ministry begins and ends with the pastoral staff.	1 Trained lay people expand the amount of quality caregiving pastors and congregations can provide.
Lay persons are only asked to do tasks such as financial management, facility maintenance, serving dinners, etc.	2 Trained lay persons are entrusted with significant relational ministry to those who need care.
Certain spiritual gifts are reserved for clergy and other professional church staff.	3 Members realize that the Holy Spirit lavishes spiritual gifts upon all believers as God chooses, without regard to a believer's position in the church.
The pastor ministers; lay people receive ministry. The pastor is the only or the main "player." Lay people watch from the sidelines.	4 The pastor is a "player-coach," both ministering to and equipping lay people for ministry. Lay people aren't sitting on the sidelines—they're actively involved in ministry.
Involving others in ministry means more work for pastors. It's easier for pastors to just do all the work themselves.	5 Equipping lay people multiplies ministry and gives pastors more time to focus on those ministries that only pastors can do.
Church work is drudgery, and lay persons do it out of a sense of obligation.	6 Lay persons who are equipped for ministry find it energizing and are highly motivated to serve.

## The Church of the Past

## The Church of the Future

If somebody volunteers, the job is his or hers. Never say no to a volunteer.

7

Members appreciate guidance in finding ministries that match their gifts.

It is difficult to find volunteers. Pastors and lay leaders resort to arm-twisting and guilt trips in order to motivate members to serve.

8

The Holy Spirit moves people to respond eagerly and willingly when they are offered meaningful opportunities to use their spiritual gifts to serve God.

In order to recruit enough lay persons to do church work, the work must be easy and little must be expected of them.

9

Lay persons who answer God's call to serve will aim high and give it their all.

Lay people tend to view church work as unpleasant tasks that must be done, but that are frequently found to be unsatisfying.

10

Lay people who answer God's call to serve experience great satisfaction and spiritual, emotional, and intellectual growth.

Lay people will never accept the ministry of a fellow lay person. They expect the pastor to provide all the caring ministry that happens in the congregation.

11

Lay people come to value the ministry of other lay people when the pastor and other trusted leaders clearly explain the biblical basis for ministry and publicly support the ministry of lay people.

Pastors who equip lay people to do caring ministry are just trying to avoid doing caring ministry themselves.

12

Pastors who equip lay people for ministry care deeply and honor God's design for the church. By equipping others, they can reach even more people with Christ's care.

Lay persons see themselves as second-class citizens in the church; they believe their caring will always be inadequate and second rate.

13

Gifted lay people, when trained and organized, can team with pastors as partners in providing high-quality, distinctively Christian care.

Congregation members who are facing a difficult time often tough it out alone because asking for help is a sign of weakness.

14

Congregation members bear one another's burdens and willingly give and receive care—which is just as God intended the church to be.

Quality ministries revolve around an extremely dynamic leader. When the leader leaves, the ministry dies.

15

Effective training of lay leaders allows ministry to continue and even thrive through leadership transitions.

There is scant biblical evidence for lay persons being involved in the church's ministry.

16

The Bible casts a vision in which all believers employ their gifts in significant ministry for God's kingdom.