

# "Let him who is without sin cast the First Stone"

And Jesus also said, "Go and sin no more." John 8

## Feature Article

### this issue

Feature Article **P.1**

My Heavenly Friend **P.4**

Upcoming Events **P.5**

Testimony **P.6**

FAQ **P.6**

Support Groups & Staff **P.7**



## A Grace-filled and Truthful Response Regarding "Gay Christianity"

Laura Leigh Stanlake

A local pastor I know courageously decided to respond to the Supreme Court's decision on same-sex marriages. He lovingly and biblically called the church to an uncompromised surrender to Jesus' lordship over sexuality. **Here is part of what he said:**

"Whether you're gay or whether you're straight, to follow Jesus will demand a taking up of your cross. When we start to throw out clear teachings of scripture about the lordship of Jesus over sexuality and what marriage is and what celibacy is and what singleness is--and we begin to change those to fit into culture thinking that we're gonna make the church relevant to the masses--what you actually do is make the church offensive to Jesus, the head of the church.

Gay or straight, you can't do anything to earn your salvation. It's done. Jesus did it.

*Gay or straight, to follow Jesus means he will relentlessly pursue every bit of your soul because he loves you too much to let you have lesser gods.*

*This obedience that we're talking about to Jesus, (here's the big idea), this obedience is actually not burdensome. It's actually a light yoke because He loves you. He said, 'My yoke is easy; my burden is light.' What does that mean? It means that Jesus doesn't heap rule upon rule to try to crush your soul. In fact, sin against Jesus is joy suicide...(short story omitted) because of the created stuff in this world, all of it, that God made for your good and His glory, all of it, falls short of getting to the very deepest longings of your soul that only the God that made you can satisfy."*

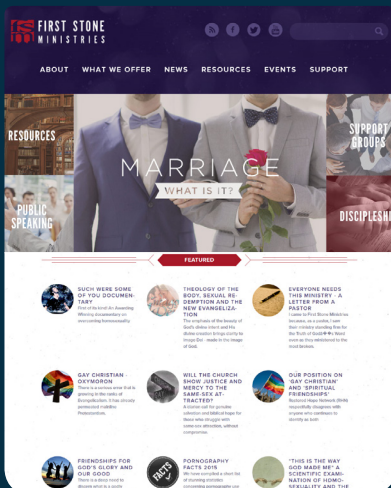
**So, here are some of my thoughts.**

He said so much more.

This was a good message overall. I do appreciate this pastor's hard work to honor

*continued on page 2*

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## THIS PUBLICATION

This publication is produced by First Stone Ministries (FSM). Since its founding in 1976, FSM has been an independent nondenominational, Christ-centered, para-church organization. Prior to 1991 First Stone was only a part-time ministry; however, we are now a full-time ministry with ordained ministers and discipleship staff and are governed by a Board of Directors to ensure financial and ethical accountability.

We are a Restored Hope Network member ministry.



Our primary purpose is to lead the sexually and relationally broken into a liberating relationship with Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Discipleship and restoration in every area of one's life is stressed; however, there is detailed emphasis on overcoming all forms of sexual brokenness including homosexuality, sexual abuse and addiction to pornography.

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the journeys of men and women who are Christians, but who feel that 'gay' is intrinsic to their souls. He is careful and kind and truthful.

For me, it is a difficult message (as was another message last year that addressed homosexuality) because it also puts in front of this church the concept that *gay* and *Christian* are identities that can live together in harmony. While this pastor chooses to take the position that, for a Christian, a gay person must be celibate, it falls short by allowing **that** to stand as a single identity--the gay Christian. I'm not sure the Church fully realizes the undermining power of this idea--that, the Christian, who is gay, is gay in such a way that will not change. This pastor read an excerpt from a blog by Wesley Hill at the end of his message. (He also referenced Wesley Hill last year as well as an authority.) Hill wrote a book called *Washed and Waiting: Reflections on Christian Faithfulness and Homosexuality*. I can personally say that there are many good things in Hill's book and that Hill is eloquent and persuasive. This local pastor read from Hill's blog regarding the Supreme Court's ruling. The blog post from Hill moved this pastor to tears in the end. I want you to read the excerpt that he read to the congregation:

*"In his memoir, Denial: My Twenty-Five Years Without a Soul, the gay journalist Jonathan Rauch says that there once existed a frightened young man tortured with the certainty that there was no place in the world for the love he experienced. That man was Rauch, and there was no home for him--none, that is, until he and his fellow Americans decided he had the right to marry. 'They and he have found, at last, a name for his soul. It is not monster or eunuch. Nor indeed homosexual. It is: husband.'*

*When I read Rauch's book, that last sentence left a lump in my throat. That receiving the word husband felt to Rauch like the relief of a negative biopsy--'You're not sick or twisted or crazy; you're just hindered from giving and receiving love, and now the hindrance is removed'--goes a long way toward explaining the jubilation so many gay and lesbian people feel in the wake of the Obergefell v. Hodges SCOTUS ruling. Finally, their loves may be dignified not with the anemic moniker friend or partner or*

*the clinical epithet disordered or the disdainful slur pervert but rather with the venerable, ordinary, immediately recognizable words husband or wife."*

### And the pastor went on to read Hill:

*"[...] I fault us Christians, the churches themselves, for our complicity in promoting erroneous views of marriage ('we,' not just 'them,' share the blame!) [...]"*

*I'm gay myself, of course, albeit celibate, and as I watched all the excitement of my gay friends yesterday, I couldn't help but sympathize with the jubilation. Like Jonathan Rauch, I have known shame and loneliness, and I am drawn to the promise of home that same-sex marriage holds out.*

*Yet I'm also a Christian, and according to historic Christian orthodoxy, marriage isn't the only, or even the primary, place to find love. In the New Testament, as J. Louis Martyn once wrote, 'the answer to loneliness is not marriage, but rather the new-creational community that God is calling into being in Christ, the church marked by mutual love, as it is led by the Spirit of Christ.' Marriage in Christian theology is, you might say, demythologized. With the coming of Christ, its necessity is taken away: gone is the notion that without it we are doomed to lovelessness.*

*For that reason, even if my faith permitted me to embrace Justice Kennedy's understanding of "marriage equality"--which it doesn't--I would still resist his conclusion about where to find the end of loneliness. Christianity teaches that marriage is transitory (Matthew 22:30), that celibacy is an honorable good drawing us into relationship with others (1 Corinthians 7:38), and that sacrificial love is open to anyone, regardless of marital status (Galatians 3:28).*

*Unlike Jonathan Rauch and Justice Kennedy, I don't believe husband or wife is the right name for same-sex partners. But according to the promise of Scripture, baptized is a name offered freely to every last one of us, gay*

*continued on page 3*

*or straight or anywhere in between—and it's a name that means beloved. That is the good news the church is given to proclaim, now more than ever."*<sup>1</sup>

The ringing and potent last words of this local pastor's message were of a man (Wesley Hill) who stands for some Christian integrity by embracing abstinence from sexual joining, but embraces and asserts himself as a gay man. In his abstinence he embraces a gay identity as intrinsic to his soul. He argues for truth, but he equates temptation with identity. It is from that position that I struggle most with the joining of a gay identity to a Christian identity.

Lately, I have been thinking that part of the problem is that we are not using a biblical perspective when we talk about this word *gay*. For our culture the word *gay* is an identity. So, in an attempt to be compassionate, our pastors and leaders are also using the word *gay* to describe the identity of the same-sex attracted struggler. The Bible, however, includes homosexuality among the lists of the common things with which we can all be *tempted or can act upon as sin*. Why does that matter? Well, it matters because there are answers to temptations that are thoroughly biblical and teach of a power to conquer, not simply refrain from sin.

I don't think I was getting the full picture myself until I tried to explain my discomfort to a same-sex attracted friend. My friend had expressed an important question: "What does one do with the "identity" when the struggle hasn't gone away? What if the transformation is slow and seemingly imperceptible at times? Does one reconsider their status with Christ at that point?" The short answer is a definite "no," but it is the subject that we need to discuss here. I considered her question and the concerns I am digging at in this article and felt it important to reveal myself to illustrate a point. I would rather talk about how Jesus has significantly freed me from same-sex attraction and the constant pull of lesbian lusts. However, I feel this illustration is much more appropriate.

I replied to my friend with this:

I think that this internal battle is exactly why people do talk about "gay" and "Christian" together. I guess I look at the many other sins that scripture targets by name (often in the same lists as homosexuality) and wonder if we would tend to put those against the identity of Christian? For example, I am fat. Over the course of my life I have tried to master this problem with various programs of self-control only to relapse and lose ground I gained. I've been aware of the struggle since I was a teenager.

*...I struggle most with the joining of a gay identity to a Christian identity.*

Should I embrace the concept of Fat-Christian as an identity? Because I have always been fat and have had little, long-term success in sobriety with food, should I just accept my identity as a Gluttonous-Christian and call it good? The Christian is called to self-control and I have a lot of it...but not as much with my weight. Should I just call that good and unchangeable or should I continue to move toward greater self-control? (As a maturing Christian, I must press on to be more self-controlled.) Would we put thieving-Christian or parent-dishonoring-Christian together as an identity? How about envious-Christian or lustful-Christian? While I can understand that we all have particular struggles and temptations, it is only in this particular area of sexual identity that we are changing the game to reflect a distorted identity.

I mentioned that, if we were going to have a biblical discussion, then there might also be answers for the seeking heart.

First, we must repent of our unbelief. I'll summarize the story for this point. God delivered his people out of bondage

in Egypt. He promised to give them a land flowing with good things (currently occupied by other troublesome people). The plan was to leave Egypt, pass through the wilderness and enter into the Promised Land. It was to be a fairly short trip (not without peril). They did not believe God and did not take the new land. The result was wandering and sin and discontent and death. (Hebrews 3:7-4:11; Exodus 3:17; Exodus 12:33-15:21; Numbers 13-14) In the context of sexual sin, believe God for the much more that He has for us. Truthfully, every fleshly thing that God requires us to relinquish has a much better answer in God. Let's believe Him for that. Let's believe Him for the better thing.

Second, let's use Bible words. Let's adopt *temptation* to describe the allure, draw or enticement toward anything destructive or sinful. Let's adopt the word *lust* to describe a passionate or dominating desire for food, sex or possessions, for example. (James 1:2-15; 1 Cor 10:12-13; 1 John 2:15-17)

Third, let's choose the counsel of God's word for dealing with sin and temptation. For example, let's run when faced with temptations. (2 Timothy 2: 19-22) Let's repent when we fall. (Acts 3:19-20) Let's avoid companionship that can lead us to ungodliness. (1 Corinthians 15:33) Don't blame God for the temptation, but seek God for His grace to help and to be transformed. (James 1:13; 2 Corinthians 12:8-10; Hebrews 4:14-16) Follow Jesus' example and pray that you will not enter into temptation. (Luke 22:40; Matthew 6:13) Ask for help from the One who was tempted Himself but did not sin. (Hebrews 2:18) Walk in the Spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

*continued on page 5*



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# My Heavenly Friend

**George Muller**

The precious Lord Jesus Christ is our friend. Oh, let us seek to realize this! It is not merely a religious phrase or statement, but truly He is our friend. He is the Brother "born for adversity," the one who "sticks closer than a brother." Who will never leave and never forsake us.

How precious even on earth to have a heavenly friend, for this brings the joys of heaven in a little degree into our hearts now. This is just what our heavenly Father desires regarding His children, that they might be as happy as they are capable of being while here in the body. Have we entered into this, that the One who is "altogether lovely" is ready hour by hour, to be our Friend?

When we cannot sleep at night, say to Christ, "My precious heavenly Friend, wilt Thou give me a little sleep?" When in pain, say, "My precious heavenly Friend, if it may please Thee, wilt Thou take away this pain? But if not, if Thou sees better that it should continue, sustain, help, and strengthen me, my precious heavenly friend!" When we feel lonely and tired, turn to the precious Lord Jesus; He is willing to be our friend in our loneliness. For sixty-two years and five months I had a beloved wife, and now in my ninety-second year I am left alone. But I turn to my precious Lord Jesus as I walk up and down in my room, and say, "My precious Lord Jesus, I am alone, and yet not alone, Thou art with me; Thou art my friend; now Lord, comfort me and strengthen me, give to Thy poor servant everything Thou sees he needs."

Oh, this is a reality, not a fable, that the Lord Jesus Christ is our friend. We should not be satisfied till we are brought to this, that we know the Lord Jesus Christ experientially to be our friend and habitually to be our friend. Just ponder this. Habitually, never leaving, never forsaking us, at all times and under all circumstances ready to prove Himself to be our friend.

He is willing not merely to grant this for a few months, or a year or two, but to the very end of our earthly pilgrimage. David, in Psalm 23 says: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me." Oh, how precious this is. For this "Lovely One" is coming again, and soon. Soon He will come again; and then He will take us home and there we shall be forever with Him. Oh, how precious is that bright and glorious prospect. Here again the practical point is to appropriate this to ourselves. "He is coming to take me—poor, guilty, worthless, hell-deserving me—He is coming to take me to Himself." And to the degree in which we enter into these glorious things, the joys of heaven have already commenced!

Reference: Extract from an address given at the Clifton Conference, 1896.

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## Upcoming Events

### NEW MAN Group begins!

Jan 25

### SPEAKING:

Gainesville, FL

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Melbourne, FL

Feb 15-17

Men's Rewired  
Falls Creek, OK

Apr 29, 30

Event Calendar  
[firststone.org/events](http://firststone.org/events)

(Galatians 5:16) Ask for the new heart promised. (Ezekiel 36:22-29)

I do have a strong opinion here. I believe that in every matter of life (even the one I have confessed above as an illustration) God does have significantly more for us than to settle and resign ourselves to the belief that the fight itself is a waste of time. The fight, itself, has value and produces good fruit. (1 Timothy 6:11-13; Hebrews 10:35-37; James 1:4; 1 Peter 4:12-14) I do believe that God has promised (yes, promised) so much more. It is given to all of us who live in flesh and blood bodies that we will be tempted and, likely, fail. However, God has made promises that we can get from Him what we need to live. "His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us to His own glory and excellence, by which He has granted to us His precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire." (2 Peter 1:3-4) Lastly, I believe that God wants us to lay our hopes on His person for more. I once used to seek God only for the obliteration of my sexual lusts. What I have found and continue to find is that when I have encountered all I can endure, God still has a better thing for me. That little lesson is something I am working with now. I want to be free in every area of my life. How about you?

I feel that this local pastor's kind desire to gently speak to Christians who are struggling with same-sex desires is a powerful and beautiful thing. It's brave by any example in our culture, but I also feel that he is applying a label in error.

Wesley Hill's blog post in response to the Nation's Court and Jonathan Rauch was powerful, but it reveals also that Hill's embrace of a gay identity has hobbled his progress for the more in God (greater sanctification). I read his [spiritualfriendship.org](http://spiritualfriendship.org) blog weekly and see a strong temptation to find an answer for the aloneness he talked about in the above quote. Currently, he is looking for that answer outside of scriptures and outside of a devoted life with God as he entertains the idea that God might bless a "vowed friendship" between two men and two women. Essentially what he proposes is a "marriage" of sorts without sexual joining. It is a slippery path to be sure. I'm certain this is happening because he has allowed the two identities of "gay" and "Christian" to intermingle unchecked. It is a carnal (fleshly) perspective that is contrary to the Word of God. Doesn't

love from God believe the best, and always seek more of Him?

I conclude here my response with two passages regarding our true identity:

*Philippians 2:12-16 "Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure."*

*"Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain."*

*1 Cor 6:12-20 "All things are lawful for me," but not all things are helpful. "All things are lawful for me," but I will not be dominated by anything. "Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food"—and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, "The two will become one flesh." But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body."*

(Endnotes)

1 <http://spiritualfriendship.org/2015/06/27/an-initial-response-to-scotus-where-do-we-look-for-the-end-of-loneliness/>





# God Met Me

## Sherry Stanphill

I spent 26 years in bondage to the idea that I was born a lesbian; that somehow God had made a mistake with me. At the time, I had already been through a lifetime of abuse and when I was 17, I made the choice to act on my impulses.

As an infant and into my childhood my mother would abandon me. My mother was also verbally abusive with me. Things I would hear were "Why were you even born?", "You are so selfish and self-centered!", "God is going to get you for that!" I heard this often enough that it became part of my belief system. Talking about how I felt about things seemed to get me in trouble and I would hear these words. I began to learn how to stuff and hide my feelings. I came to believe my feelings didn't matter. As a result of my mother's abuse, I defensively detached from her and attached strongly to my father.

My dad was a Navy SeaBee until November 1973. During that time we were in church and Sunday school. I was baptized in August 1971. In the summer of 1972 I was raped. I was ten. I didn't say a word about it because I believed God was punishing me for something I did wrong. When my dad retired, we stopped going to church. He began to drink heavily and to sexually abuse me. My innocence with my dad was lost. Our relationship was forever changed. I was no longer his special little girl.

My parents divorced, and my mother remarried in March 1975. My step-father began sexually abusing me not long after they were married. I was returned to the custody of my dad when I was 14 where the abuse continued. I found myself raped by a stranger who offered me a ride home from a carnival. When I was 16, I was arrested and this resulted in my being sent to live with a couple that my dad knew. I was terrified to realize that the sexual abuse would be in this home too. I was encouraged by a fellow victim to speak up about it to his wife, but when I did, I was told by my mother and my foster mother that I was lying. My mother told me if it did happen it was my fault anyway. After that, I rarely talked to my mother. I was placed in a mission-based shelter where I was told I was going to hell because the scripture says a father shall not lie with his daughter or daughter with her father. Initially, I coped with my abuse and anger by excelling in track and field, but I inevitably began to use drugs and alcohol.

When it was first suggested to me that I might be gay, I denied it. I knew what I was doing was wrong, but I tried to find a way to justify my actions. I went to a Metropolitan Community Church (a gay church) a few times, and they tried to show me biblically that being a lesbian was okay. There was biblical evidence to show otherwise, but I put my Bible on the shelf and gave in. I

was in deep emotional, mental, and spiritual conflict. I figured that I was going to hell anyway, and my family doesn't care, so what the heck? I was very angry with my mother and I hated men.

In desperation for my life to be better, I quit drugs and alcohol when I was 24 and went to AA meetings. Celebrate Recovery has helped me maintain my sobriety as well as helped me in my recovery from codependency.

I can't think of a time when I was truly happy in all those years. I was leaning into others for my identity instead of God. When I was living as a lesbian, I sought women who would take care of me, and meet my emotional needs. When a counselor once suggested to me that I was looking for my mother in my relationships, I denied it, but I now know that I was looking to fill that void.

When I started going back to church Easter 2005, I was in a lesbian relationship. I had an attitude of "This is who I am and you have to accept it!" However, I was loved despite myself. When one of the women in my class suggested to me that in order to change I just needed to pray and believe, I was offended. What she said stuck with me, and as I got more involved in Bible study and church, I prayed more about it. After hearing the answer enough times, I asked God for courage and broke up with my lover. God met me.

Before coming to First Stone, I had already been abstaining from sexual encounters for a few years. However, I was still using masturbation as a tool of comfort. I struggled with it until about a year ago with one relapse. I am still tempted, but I pray and lean into Jesus. First Stone has taught me to lean into Jesus instead of others, self and stuff. I am not perfect. I fail a lot; but, with an action plan and other tools and, most importantly the cross, I can move forward into God's plan and love. First Stone has offered me a safe place to grow and to heal from the wounds of my past. It is always showing me first the cross and Christ. It is by His grace that I am new.

*2 Cor. 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.*



## How to Respond to a Loved One Who Claims to Be a "Gay Christian."

First, remember your attitude and tone is important. Be very prayerful as you enter into a further discussion about this topic. Be positive, grace-filled, patient and focus on the fact that your loved one is, at least, embracing a **Christian** identity.

Focus on the real Gospel of Jesus Christ as your first line of conversation. This means you will need to be equipped in "knowing how" to present the Gospel of Jesus Christ. There are many methods that can be found online. First Stone generally focuses on what Jesus Christ accomplished on the Cross for the sincere believer and a lifestyle of turning to God every day. The Gospel literally means "good news"; therefore,



Jesus' message is one that gives hope and transformation from a life of sin to a new life of godliness. The good news is that God's grace changes the heart of man and conforms true converts to godly living. The Gospel of Jesus Christ appeared to all of mankind giving grace (Holy Spirit empowerment) to call us all to repentance (a changed direction of thinking and way of living life). (Titus 2:11) The first step is to receive the gospel with faith. It is impossible for us to actually please God without faith. "We are saved by grace through faith." (Eph. 2:8-9). Therefore, believing the Gospel is a new way of living the rest of one's life by allowing Jesus' words to change our sinful behaviors.

There must be a call to repentance from all sin. Your focus does not need to be on your loved one's homosexuality. The teaching of repentance should include all sexual sins and the many other sins listed in the New Testament as revealing those who are true believers receiving eternal life. (1 Cor. 6:9-11, Eph. 5:5 & 6, Gal. 5:19-24, Rev. 21:7-8, Rev. 22:14-15). We are all saved by calling upon the name of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord and, with this faith, the heart believes unto a righteous new lifestyle.

It is very important to remain faithful to your own conviction of believing God's word. We are not loving nor doing anyone a favor by changing the Gospel message into merely praying a prayer for salvation. Salvation is a relationship. The Gospel is about turning from ourselves to Jesus Christ as our Lord. To sincerely love others, we must obey the Gospel ourselves. Living an obedient and godly life before our loved ones gives each of us authority in the Spirit to speak the truth in love without compromise. There is so much more to equip you to answer this question, therefore, we highly recommend reading all the articles on our website under the search of "theology." In conclusion, we respond to a loved one who claims to be a "gay Christian" with a call to live out a life of love and faithfulness to Jesus Christ as Lord. (*Foundational verses for this answer: 2 Tim. 2:24-26, 1 Cor. 1:18, 1 Tim. 1:5-17, 1 Tim. 6:3-5, Titus 2:11-14, Rom. 10:9-11, Heb. 11:1-6, The Sermon on the Mount located in Matthew's Gospel, Chapters 4 through 6.*)



## Support Groups



**F**irst Stone's men's group helps those struggling with sexual addiction find lasting freedom. We will offer our **New Man** group beginning January 25, 2016 and running through

May. The group will cost \$50, which includes the curriculum, Falling Forward: The Pursuit of Sexual Purity by Craig Lockwood.

For information visit <http://www.firststone.org/new-man-group> or contact Stephen Black.



## Parents, Family & Friends

group. If interested, email [groups@firststone.org](mailto:groups@firststone.org) or call 405-236-4673.

**O**ur **Parents, Family & Friends** group meets each month on the 1st and 3rd Friday from 7-9:30pm, except for holidays and any conflicting FSM events. If you have someone in your family or friendship circle and need support from other biblically-grounded people, we encourage you to request an interview for possible admission to this

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From the First Stone Ministries' Staff



Merry Christmas!

Laura-Leigh

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