



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

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

## The God Who Sees Me

### this issue

Testimony **P.1**

Coram Deo **P.4**

The Healing **P.6**

Staff Adventure **P.8**

Stephen's Book **P.14**

Stephen's Blog **P.14**

Saying Goodbye **P.15**

Support Groups **P.15**

Staff **P.15**

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is constantly  
updated. Scroll  
down for newly  
posted articles!



### Annette Morales

I have always felt invisible. I am the oldest of five children. I have a sister and brother from my mom and dad and a sister and brother from my dad and stepmom. My parents divorced when I was five. I didn't know what had happened to make my dad leave. We were led to believe that he no longer wanted to be in our lives. I had always felt like I was his favorite, so this devastated me. Mom remarried when I was about seven and it was good for quite a while. Then, when I was about 13, my stepdad began to molest me. This followed years of strong physical abuse. This sexual abuse continued for a couple of years. I tried to tell anyone who would listen about what was going on at home, **but no one believed me!** I felt unheard and unseen. Mom was also not able to help me. When I told her about the abuse, she said that we needed to keep quiet about it because if we told anyone, my stepdad would be put in jail and there would be no one to take care of her or us. Mom had come through some difficult things as she was growing up and felt unable to take care of herself. She really had a lot of fears that affected us all.



One day I went to school and told a counselor. She believed me. She called the authorities and they came to the school. I was put in the back of a police car and was taken to the station. Their questioning made me feel like I was to blame for the abuse I was receiving at home. I was taken from my family and put in a group home. I was asked several times if I just wanted to go back home. My answer was always "no" because I was afraid to go home. I was at the group home for over a year and felt safe and cared for. I had some great support during that time and received good structure and counseling.

One day I got a call from Dad. He wanted me to come live with him and his family in Iowa. I agreed to go and moved to live with my dad and stepmother. It felt like a perfect family at first, and it was totally different than living with Mom, but I guess they were having some troubles of their own. They divorced about a year later and my stepmother got custody of me. She would take me partying with her. I had lots of freedom to do whatever I wanted. As I approached graduation, my dad and stepmom had a meeting with me. They suggested I go into the Army because they were concerned that I could not take care of myself when I was out on my own. After I graduated high school, I headed off to the Army.

One day I got a call from Dad. He wanted me to come live with him and his family in Iowa. I agreed to go and moved to live with my dad and stepmother. It felt like a perfect family at first, and it was totally different than living with Mom, but I guess they were having some troubles of their own. They divorced about a year later and my stepmother got custody of me. She would take me partying with her. I had lots of freedom to do whatever I wanted. As I approached graduation, my dad and stepmom had a meeting with me. They suggested I go into the Army because they were concerned that I could not take care of myself when I was out on my own. After I graduated high school, I headed off to the Army.

*continued on page 2*

## 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. We are 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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*Continued from page 1*

This was very comfortable for me—not too different from living in the group home. The structure was good for work and stability, but I partied a lot and had lots of freedom in my time off. There were also some difficulties being a woman in the Army world. At one time, I was assaulted as I was walking between buildings. I screamed so loudly that people came out of the buildings to help me.

Because I wanted a good inspection, I once used an illegal method to wax the floors of the barracks. I was high from partying, and caused the wax can, that I lit on fire, to explode which set me on fire. Even though a brave soldier rescued me by putting out the fire, I was severely burned and hospitalized for almost two months. I am still badly scarred.

However, I served the remainder of my time and was honorably discharged. I went back to live with Mom in California. My aunt arranged for me to work at the hospital where she worked. While there, my aunt introduced me to my future husband, Rudy, while subbing on her hospital bowling team. I thought this guy was arrogant and cocky, but he pursued me. I wasn't all that interested, but he grew on me. He had a boyish mischief about him, but he was 15 years older than me. We went out for a while, and then I moved in with him.

We lived together for two years. I wanted more from our relationship and got tired of his unwillingness to commit, so I decided to move to Oklahoma to live with my stepmom. We had remained close even after her divorce from Dad. She was really my best friend. I was sleeping around and working as a waitress at a strip club. I had an abortion and too many relationships to keep track of. My stepmother was keeping Rudy informed about me. A year or so later, Rudy moved to Oklahoma, pursued me, and we were married. He also got a job at the club and worked as a bartender.

He loved me and was not going to leave. He could take care of me. I felt safe with him. He was like my knight in shining armor. He dealt with my family, so I didn't have to. I had a hard time dealing with family in a mature way. I felt that I could "hide" with him, and let him deal with the hard things of my life. I began to give him control of every aspect of my life to the point I made him my god. Looking back on it now, I realize that he didn't want that role, or maybe he did. I think he took on the role because he loved me and that was his way of showing his

love. The point is, in my brokenness, I wanted him to control my life so I gave him that power.

Rudy and I moved together to another club for a time, and our marriage was really struggling. Rudy moved to another job, but I stayed. I was really tempted by one guy at the club. His attention brought me close to having an affair. I threatened Rudy with divorce. Rudy got scared that he was going to lose me, and he started praying. I looked at the Bible to see if there was a justification for the divorce. I wanted one, but I found none, so I gave my notice at the club and left.

Rudy and I began to attend church together and sought marriage counseling. Rudy really led the way. We began to form relationships with good people. It was during this time, that I began to be introduced to the good stories from the Bible and about God. Rudy and I worked together in children's ministry and were really impacted by the simple stories. Through marriage counseling, we learned about communication and about trust. God really grew me. Although I had prayed to receive Christ when I was five through the ministry of a lovely neighborhood woman, I had never really had a relationship with God. I didn't *get* the purity thing. I didn't *get* the relationship thing. Normal was defined by my personal history.

My life changed forever on Valentine's Day of 2003. My husband, Rudy, was diagnosed with cancer. This reversed our roles. The treatments were so hard on him and so aggressive. It changed both of our lives. I had to do everything for him. To cope with the new pressures, I began to go online to chat rooms. In chat rooms, I felt that I had control that I did not have in my own life. I could escape reality at least for a little while with these online relationships, and I could pretend to be someone else.

About a year later we got a call from the doctor who asked to meet with us. We were told that we needed to consider calling in hospice. At that point, I saw the light go out in Rudy's eyes, he had given up. After that meeting, he wanted to go visit with my dad. In my mind, I felt like it was my job to get ready for hospice to come. We got into the biggest fight we ever had. I even made him cry. I was determined to take control of the situation. I was going to fight it, even if Rudy wasn't.

We spent the next week getting ready for hospice. When Sunday came, Rudy got up early and beat me in getting dressed and ready to go

*continued on page 3*

to church. We had dinner at my brother's house, and all seemed well. We had a great time. After we got home, he made a turn for the worse. He was up all night. Morning came, but I didn't realize how bad things were for him. I was only aware of how much effort it was taking for me. I felt that he had given up, but I wasn't ready to. I begged. I cried. I pleaded, but he was done with the fight. That evening hospice came, and so did a great support system, our church. God began to work out the details for me. I was so overwhelmed because I couldn't take care of us. People came and went through the week. We had good support.

On Saturday, almost two weeks after the doctor told us to call hospice, we had a quiet moment in the house when no one else was around. Everything seemed okay, so I went into the kitchen to get ready for our next wave of visitors. I heard this voice telling me to go to Rudy. I ignored it because I thought I was losing my mind. Again I heard it, only this time it was louder. I went to get my bible to find something to read over Rudy, but the voice told me to put it down. I went into the room with my husband and told him it was okay to go, and that we all loved him. It's going to be okay. It's okay to go. He struggled to breathe and then let out a gasp and was gone. I was instantly full of anguish and began to scream so loudly that my neighbor heard my cries. I was alone and unprepared. That was February 27, 2004.

Over the next months, I chose to deal with my pain and grief by leading a double life. I was going to church and acting like I was okay, but I was continuing to go to chat rooms forming new sexual friendships online. I needed my church friends, but I was more real with the chat friends.

In the Summer of 2004, I flew out of state to secretly meet with a man I met online. When I got back home, I began hinting around to my Sunday School class about needing prayer. I wanted them to know I was struggling with my thought life. One lady in my class caught-on to the real situation. She shared her story of Jesus' help with her sexual struggles, and she recommended First Stone Ministries. I called and talked to Laura Leigh Stanlake and began to attend a Living Waters group. It was there that I began to learn the value of honesty and my deep need for help.

By October of 2004, I asked for advice because I had decided to meet up with this man and his wife. Laura Leigh had warned

me of the dangers and challenged me not to go, but I decided to go anyway. He had nicknamed me Angel, and I was hooked. I was doing things I had never thought I would do because of this man's manipulation. I thought I needed him so much. I was looking to him to meet my needs, and I just couldn't resist. My soul was tied to him. God told me not to go in every way that He could through caring friends. I did not want to hear this because, at the time, deep down inside, I didn't trust God to take care of me and help me with my needs. I traveled once again to their state to hook-up.

Once I arrived, I realized how dark and dangerous the situation was with this group of online "friends." There were many distorted shadowy, illegal and sexual things happenings around the situation. I wasn't aware until I went back a second time. Children were involved and people were getting hurt. The wife showed me pictures and gave me details. She used her eyes to plead with me, "Are you going to do something about this?" His wife had felt so powerless over the horrible things going on around her. Now, she was making sure that I knew, too.

That night, I lay in bed hiding under the covers and thinking about the things that were happening around me. Memories and feelings from my childhood came flooding back. I remember God saying, "Is this what you want for your life?" I began to realize that *God does see me* even though I am hiding. He does care. God showed me His care like He showed his care to Hagar when she had been rejected by Sarah, "She gave this name to the Lord who spoke to her: 'You are the God who sees me,' for she said, 'I have now seen the One who sees me.'" (Gen 16:13 NIV)

When I got back home, I began to reach out for help. I knew the answer. This was not what I wanted for my life. I got serious about getting help. I shared what had happened with this online community and about my trip to see them. As I shared with my little sister about what had happened, she reminded me that if I did not turn him in, I was no better than my mom who did not report the abuses when she became aware of them. God gave me the courage to turn in this man and the others who were involved in this evil. Strangely, I learned that the authorities had already been aware and my call moved their process forward. The process of investigation over several months really made

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Continued from page 3...

me feel seen and heard. The man was arrested and jailed, but committed suicide before going to trial. Others involved were arrested and went through a trial and imprisoned. Later, I called this man's wife to tell her that I was sorry for her hurt, as I told her that I was the one who had turned him in. She said that she knew that I would act when she showed me the pictures. That's why she showed them to me. She needed help in her darkness.

I ended up having to go before a grand jury because I was a witness to their activities. The justice system acted to punish child pornographers, and help the abused children involved. The children are getting the help they need for all they have suffered. "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives." (Gen 50:20 NIV) This included the saving of my life. Unlike my childhood experience, I felt heard and believed. I now know that even though my choices in life have not been good choices, God uses all things for my good. "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." (Rom 8:28 NIV) My life and these situations were used by God to turn me toward Him.

I began to really grow now. I came clean about everything in my life. I broke away from these hidden lifestyles and began to develop healthier boundaries. I spiritually dealt with all the sexually broken relationships I had entered into. I began to deal

with the shame of my past. I repented of my sinful choices. I began to turn to God for His answers and to submit myself to Him. My life began to change. I found some good counselors who have helped me work through grief and sexual abuse. The abuse, the pain, the distortions, the soul ties, the manipulation, and the fears were finally being healed. I was hiding God's Word in my heart and mind. My relationship with God became the center of my life.

In the years since, other really hard challenges have come to my life such as a terrible battle with stage four breast cancer. The cruel abuse of cancer challenged my sense of femininity and sexuality. I chose a radical mastectomy to help save my life. It challenged my fears about my identity - who I am. A 10-year cancer survivor now, who has been involved with Living Waters and my church, I have learned to find my sexual and personal identity through a devoted relationship with Jesus Christ. Again, I found out that *God is the God who Sees* (Gen 16:13). He sees me even in my struggles. I know this because whenever I cry out to God, He shows me where He is, and I am comforted. He is after my whole heart and continues to heal me and to show me what it really means to be a woman. Being a woman isn't about my physical appearance or who I am in a man's eyes. My definition comes from knowing that I am loved and honored, and I am helped and protected by God. He sees me!



## Coram Deo

### *Experiencing Freedom in His Presence*

*Coram Deo – Experiencing Freedom in His Presence* is a sample of a small chapter from Stephen Black's new book, *Freedom Realized*. This particular chapter is an explanation about a foundation of freedom which Stephen experienced in breaking free from homosexuality and sexual addiction. True biblical freedom has a cultivation of the beginning of wisdom. Without the foundation of the beginning of wisdom, which is found in the fear of God, no one truly finds lasting freedom in breaking out of any addiction. See page 14 for more information on the release of *Freedom Realized*.

***“The LORD TAKES PLEASURE IN THOSE WHO FEAR HIM,  
IN THOSE WHO HOPE IN HIS MERCY.”— PSALM 147:11***

**Knowing and Understanding – Coram Deo**  
**Coram Deo** is Latin, translated as a phrase - "in the presence of God" from Christian Church theology which communicates the idea of Christians living in the presence, under the authority, and to the honor and glory of God at all times.

**Coram Deo** is living in a cognitive state of being before the face of God. It is to live in the presence of God is to understand that whatever we are doing and wherever we are doing it, we are before the gaze of Almighty God. God is omnipresent. Therefore, there is no place that we can escape His penetrating gaze. HE SEES! **Coram Deo** is to live with a conscience state of awareness of His sovereignty. We enjoy His terrible awesomeness and fear God when encountering this relationship like a fountain of life as we read in Proverbs 14:27. **Coram Deo** also means to

be overwhelmed by His love, in awe of God because He is so forgiving and merciful. Only those who are truly born of the Holy Spirit can understand this dual awesomeness! God is terrible, fearful, and full of awe!! God is NOT tame, He is NOT safe, but He is oh so very good, so holy, so merciful and so loving. Without understanding the duality of holy severity and the incredible kindness of God, we cannot grow into true Christian maturity, nor will we realize the depths of freedom available to us in His presence.

**Coram Deo** is wrapped-up in the *fear* of God, and the *fear* of God is not mere reverential trust. One merely need ask those who have actually received a glimpse of God; or peer into the Holy Scriptures and read about those who have encountered God in His glory (Revelation 1:12-17). They fall in awe, in terrible

*continued on page 5*

fear – TREMBLING before the Almighty!. God has transformed my life through **Coram Deo**. I pray that you embrace **Coram Deo** yourself to experience that great freedom He has for those who love Him! Living in the cognitive state of Coram Deo ensures a victorious life, free from sin bondage. You can see this in a study of the promises found in Scriptures in footnote 1 of this chapter.

Holy prophets are rarely embraced or accepted during their office in this life. Real prophets live in **Coram Deo**. It is why they communicate their words very stark, specific, and distinctly loud pronouncements against sin as they warn of the soul's destruction. Today, most of the Church would not welcome such holy prophets of old, believing themselves smarter and more refined; and indeed, they are more refined - so refined most of the time as to passively

empower sin to remain in the hearts of people. It is one reason why I believe so many continue to struggle with same-sex attraction. The Church and even many in the ranks of "ex-gay" ministry feel they must have a messaging that is kinder and more compassionate than those in the Bible. It is true that most people today cannot stomach hearing bold loud preaching, and rarely is there a message on the torments of hell.<sup>(1)</sup> Truly, we have embraced a more effeminate, breathy gospel message. This is a result of years of brow-beating the Church by the LGBTQ+ community, saying that the Church is hateful. No doubt, the Church in many places has been unkind and yes, even hateful. One example of true hate is the wickedness of the Westboro Baptist gang. But we mustn't allow false accusations of hate to keep us from loving the world enough to declare and teach the unaltered, unedited, powerful truth of God's Word.

We need to be empowered by the Holy Spirit for revival. In Church history, true heaven-breathed revival has always come as a result of much prayer - even years of prayer, along with constant and bold preaching of repentance. For freedom to really permeate same-sex attracted souls and anyone held in bondage to any sin, the revelation of **Coram Deo**, knowing the fear of God, must be restored. This is an important part of my own foundation for freedom. True spiritual formation for real freedom must have, "the beginning of wisdom."<sup>(2)</sup> There are far too many people who pervert the teaching of the fear of God to instead minimize His holiness and make a "god" in their own image. Unfortunately, they leave many in bondage to same-sex lust and many forms of sin as they proclaim a cheap-grace message and mere reverential trust.

*"It is good that you take hold of one thing (righteousness/compassion/kindness) and also not let go of the other*

*(wisdom/the fear of God/severity); for the one who fears and worships God [with awe-filled reverence] will come forth with both of them."* Ecc. 7:18. AMP (Parenthetical added.)

**CORAM DEO** — God sees you, all the time. He knows everything you do, and one day you will give account to HIM. "For The Word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow,

and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And no creature is hidden from His sight (God sees all), but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account." (Jesus Christ – The Word of God – will be our judge). Heb. 4:12 & 13 AMP

*"For we know him who said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." And again, "The Lord*

*will judge His people." It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."* Heb. 10:30 & 31 AMP

*"Let us therefore, receiving a kingdom that is firm and stable and cannot be shaken, offer to God pleasing service and acceptable worship, with modesty and pious care and godly fear and in trembling awe; for our God [is indeed] a consuming fire."* Heb. 12:28 & 29 AMP

## **MAY WE GROW IN CORAM DEO FOR JESUS' SAKE AND FOR GOD'S GLORY!**

### **Footnotes:**

- (1) Read the "Terrors of Hell" by William C. Nichols (<http://www.firststone.org/articles/post/the-terrors-of-hell>)
- (2) When the Bible teaches us something more than once it is very important, when it communicates many times, it is extremely important to God, when a subject is communicated over and over, it is truly a matter of life and death. Over 50 verses noted here that are promises for you in the Bible concerning the Fear of God: Deut. 6:1-9, Ps. 19:9, 33:18, 34:7-11, 66:16, 85:9, 103:11-17, 111:10, 145:19, 147:11, Prov. 1:7, 1:29, 2:5, 8:13, 9:10, 10:27, 14:26-27, 15:16, 15:33, 16:6, 19:23, 22:4, 23:17, Ecc. 12:13, Isa. 11:1-3, Matt. 10:28, Luke 1:50, Luke 12:5, Luke 23:40, Acts 9:31, 10:35, 13:16&26, Col. 3:22, 1 Peter 2:17, Rev. 14:7, Rev. 19:5



# The Healing Framable Art Print

Available in our online marketplace, The Healing - Art Print was painted by local artist Kevin Thomas. On this page and the next, you'll see what the front and back of the print look like as well as learn the artist's thought behind his painting.

*This would make a beautiful gift to a loved one or church staff member.*

To purchase a copy, visit [www.fsm-marketplace.myshopify.com](http://www.fsm-marketplace.myshopify.com).



# The Healing

Several years ago, I was preparing to have a garage sale by cleaning out the garage. One of the furniture items that I was placing in the sale was a large chest of drawers with a large mirror attached to it. In a sad attempt to move the mirror, I broke it. The mirror shattered into many pieces. One large piece fell and cut open my leg below my kneecap. Unfortunately, all of the proceeds from my garage sale went to the emergency room visit that day.

During the time of garage sale, I was also preparing to have an art show. Through my art, I was developing a new style expression that was truly inspired by my own spiritual healing journey, while I was working through Living Waters at First Stone Ministries. This Christ inspired imagery was a personal pathway that enabled me to listen closely to the words of the Father and his desire for my life. Through each painting, I grew in greater understanding of myself, and the Father's love for me.

The imagery of the cross represents *the healing* that one experiences through the meditation of Christ's death on the Cross. *Isaiah 53:5 "But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on Him, and by His wounds, we are healed."* Rather than ugly, I found the scar on my leg quite beautiful because it showed the evidence of healing in my life. To me, the scar reflected the inward healing that I had experienced through Christ on the cross. Because of Christ, I am able to be in full relationship with our loving Heavenly Father.

Years later, I do not think about the scars anymore. Instead, my life is filled with the joy that comes through Christ. I am thankful that through Christ I am made new. Only through Christ, I have been able to truly experience freedom. *2 Corinthians 5:17 "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!"*

Praises!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kevin Thomas', with a large, stylized initial 'K'.

Kevin Thomas

# FSM Staff Adventure to the RHN Conference - HOPE 2017

## An Update from Stephen Black

### Leaving Oklahoma City – Sunday, June 11

Laura Leigh Stanlake, Joseph Thiessen and I head to San Diego, CA thanks to a supporter who supplied us with a rented new SUV. We left Oklahoma City at 7 AM on Sunday, June 11th. Each morning we would begin with the reading and hearing of Scripture. Laura Leigh was a reader, and it was wonderful to hear and discuss God's word together as we drove to San Diego and back to Oklahoma City.

To keep our trip enjoyable the staff and I were able to get out of the car for a few scenic stops. Our first stop was for a quick look at the huge cross and life-sized sculptures of The Passion in Groom, TX. If you have never stopped there, it is truly worth the extra time to visit. The chapel and book store there are also terrific visits.

An Abortion memorial along the way – also viewed at [www.crossministries.net](http://www.crossministries.net).



Our next stop was Santa Fe, NM. We had a quick walk around the old city area, which is around the main park. As we made our way around, I had an encounter with a street musician. He cried out to me to help him financially; most-likely because he saw that I had my cross around my neck. It turned into an opportunity for me to sit down on the sidewalk with him and witness to him about the straight and narrow way as he declared himself to be a follower of Christ. His glazed-over eyes, burnt and dirty skin, and dirty clothes with the noticeable odor of alcohol made it obvious, he really needed a closer walk with Jesus, to say the least. It was a wonderful moment in time. I talked with him about the lovingkindness of our Lord, and His mercy to grant us repentance. I prayed with him. As I left, he was in tears.



I returned to Joseph and Laura who had stopped in front of the Galerie Zuger shop. We saw amazing art there. This shop housed some Gib Singleton sculptures. I was in awe of this man's sculptures depicting beautiful biblical pieces of worship and meditation. When I saw this piece of the crucifixion, I immediately thought of my dear friend Andrew Comiskey who is the author of the Living Waters program we run for First Stone's healing support group. Andrew forever preaches the crucified Christ, and Jesus' amazing sacrifice daily frees us from our temptations and sins. You can find out more about the artist here: [www.gibsingleton.com](http://www.gibsingleton.com).

After a nice dinner in Santa Fe, we got back on the road for a night's stay outside Gallup, NM.

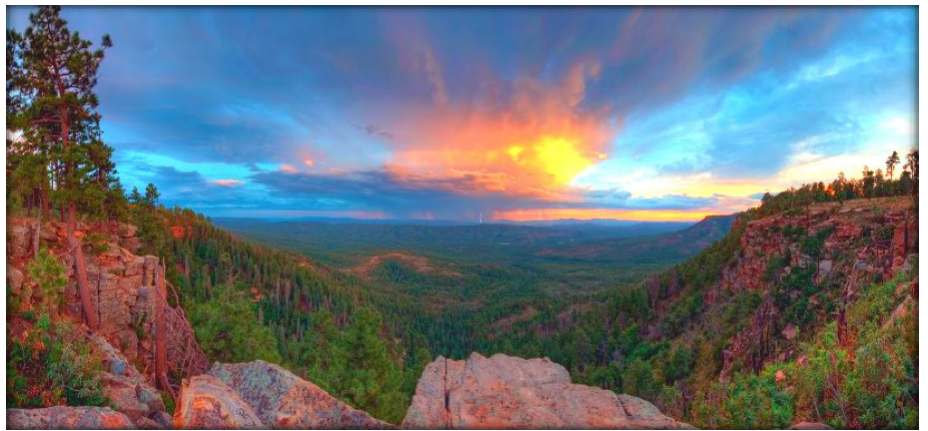


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## Day 2 – National Parks and Onward to Phoenix – Monday, June 12

We were overwhelmed with the beauty of the United States on our daily journey. Each of us commented, giving thanks to God. Stops for this day included The Painted Desert and The Petrified Forest National Parks. Both parks are along one route with one entrance fee. I don't think any of us are huge desert fans, however, the scenery we encountered was a beauty all its own. It causes your soul to stop and pause at the majesty of God's handiwork. There is so much beauty to enjoy! Like Joseph said, *"it requires taking in the full-picture of how colors and textures play against each other—I would definitely stop and see it again!"*



We drove through the parks and made our way to a Taco Bell. I was really was not up for this; however, while there, I had another incredible experience with the Holy Spirit. He had given me a dream the night before, and the woman in my dream was in that very restaurant. The Lord gave me a specific word and prayer for her. It was a test for me as I did not want to follow through. I did, and it ended up being a miracle moment. The Lord was certainly with us on this trip.



We journeyed on to Phoenix. Somewhere between Holbrook and Phoenix, *"we encountered a glorious surprise,"* as Joseph remembers. *"We crossed from high desert into forests we didn't know existed. It's like we started at the top of some peak and descended further and further into unknown and beautiful valleys."* Truly a beautiful experience for me as I love driving through mountains and valleys, like the story of my life. This geographic area is called the Mogollon Rim. As we were looking for a stop, an elderly woman almost pulled out in front of me. We pulled into the gas station, and a few minutes later



*Continued from page 9...*

I look up to see Laura Leigh ministering to the elderly lady who pulled in for gas, too. Laura was ministering the love of God to this elderly lady by washing her bug and grime encrusted windshield. No wonder she almost pulled out in front of me, she was almost blind from her filthy windshield! What a great way to bless a stranger and minister Jesus to them. Laura is a precious woman of God, always ministering in secret. Well, this was one secret, I wanted to share to give a little insight. The Lord gave us an opportunity to minister in every stop along our journey.

We arrived in Phoenix, AZ at around 5pm and met a ministry friend for dinner. Laura Leigh's cousins hosted us for the night and we enjoyed fellowship and was blessed by an amazing breakfast the next morning.

### **Day 3 – On Our Way to San Diego, CA – Tuesday, June 13**

The next day we headed for San Diego. Leaving Phoenix on Highway 347, we ventured across I-8. This path was mostly desert, a unique beauty in His creation. We stopped to get a picture with a huge cactus; they were everywhere. We had lunch in famous Yuma, AZ. Crossing into California, we encountered a large area of sand dunes in Imperial County. Truly it seemed as though we'd driven into the Middle East.



We had never seen sand dunes this large.

We drove into San Diego with a few issues facing us. A rock hit our windshield hard cracking it. Later that day, we discovered that my ministry credit card number had been stolen and hijacked for a shopping spree in Lawton, OK. The bank was wonderful and had a new card sent FedEx to the hotel the next day. This was some minor warfare to try and steal my peace.



### **Day 4 – RHN Board Meetings for Stephen and Beach Time for Joseph and Laura – Wednesday, June 14**

I was in an all-day RHN board and planning meeting. This gave Joseph an opportunity to get the windshield repaired. Joseph and Laura were then able to take in some time at the beach near the US/Mexico border. Serving on the RHN board has been very rewarding for me. Andrew Comiskey has been the chairman since 2012. He brought clear direction and formation to the RHN board, the Member Ministries and Anne Paulk. It has been wonderful to be on the RHN board as one of the founders and seeing all that the Father has done in our midst over the last 6 years. I've personally benefited and learned so much from serving under Andrew Comiskey who is a tremendous leader and man of God. We concluded our board meetings with blessings, prayer, and a wonderful dinner together and a walk on the beach.

### **Day 5 – RHN Leadership and Member's Day – Thursday, June 15**

Anne Paulk, Executive Director of the Restored Hope Network of Ministries did an excellent job leading our day. The membership voted on the new position paper on counseling and on branch ministries. We also received advice and legal counsel from Brad Dacus, the President of the Pacific Justice Institute. Garry Ingraham gave a very encouraging fundraising presentation. Andrew Comiskey finished his final year, due to term limits on the board, and Ron Citlau resigned early. Therefore, we voted on two new board members. Debora Barr who is the President of DBarr Ministries & the director All Things New in Landover MD, and Carl Conli who is a pastor and director of HIS Ministry in Fair Oaks, CA. I look forward to serving my last year with this new board. My term will be up next year; however, I want to finish well as the new Chair. Please pray for the new board!

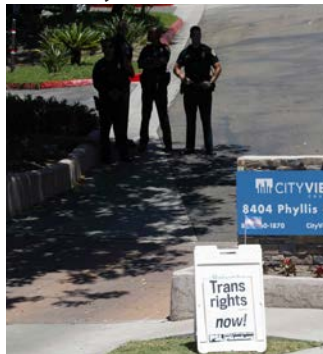


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## **Days 6 & 7 – The RHN Annual HOPE Conference – Friday & Saturday, June 16 & 17**

I had the pleasure of speaking in San Diego in October at the TruthXChange Ministries Conference. During that time, our conference coordinator and I communicated our desire to have the RHN conference in Southern California, preferably San Diego. Unfortunately, there was a participant that was not happy with Dr. Brown's and my presentation. He was actually angry with me for testifying so boldly. Some interesting people rallied together and cried out for a protest. They organized an online sign up for a protest that was covered by the media several times. The protestor's Facebook page communicated that 750-1200 were going to attend the protest. As it were, only about 150 showed up at the Hilton, and maybe 100 at the church property. They were a very loud bunch, screaming, chanting with a megaphone and large drums beating! I will post video and more pictures on my new blog launching the first week of August. At one point, it was a little disconcerting when the paid BLM protestors showed up and tried to break the police barrier. These people were carrying signs, stating that "Rebellion" is their right. More later about that story and a ministry opportunity I had with two police officers as I will report more on my blog. The protestors were more bark than bite. Thank God! Their rantings were very loud, annoying, and sadly misplaced. Their aim was at RHN, but the real issue was a distorted belief in the work of God through this ministry. Truly tragic to see this very immature demonstration with heavy sin-laden souls believing demonic lies. The "Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence" had a showing as well. Their slogans are, "Perpetual Joy Through Perpetual Lust" and "Go Forth and Sin Some More." They are nothing more than perverted perpetual mockers of God. Truly bizarre! Yet, there was great good news at the conference!



The actual conference was amazing! We had the most attendees in the 6 RHN conferences - well over 400! Numerous testimonies and workshops with top-quality plenary sessions were packed into this 2-day event. My favorite delivery this year was hearing from Janet Mefferd, National Radio Talk Show Host who has several shows. (See [janetmefferd.com](http://janetmefferd.com) for more information). Beautiful testimonies of God's transformative grace were given from people from all over the United States. Look for video and audio files soon at [www.restoredhopenetwork.org](http://www.restoredhopenetwork.org).

Joseph Thiessen helped serve during the Member's Day, and he served the conference on several levels, especially in managing the bookstore. Joseph has terrific administration skills. Laura Leigh Stanlake served during Member's Day. During the conference, Laura taught a breakout on healthy friendship. I had the honor of teaching a session on the statistics from the Freedom Realized project, and concluded with some biblical reasons on the "whys" people succeed and the "whys" of those who return to darkness. I also had the amazing honor in closing the conference with communion. I love communion services, especially the services I have the opportunity to teach and lead. It was a beautiful time of shared testimonies of people who had never heard a communion service presented as a means of grace empowerment. I was sincerely humbled and blessed!

*continued on page 12*

### **More Testimonies – At RHN Conference**

It was wonderful to see the Lord draw many hearts. We met at least 3 attendees who, although unfriendly to the mission of RHN, were respectful in their behavior. A couple of friends happened to sit at our lunch table. One young man, Matthew – 29, sat next to me. His friend, Madeline sat next to our ministry leader friend from Arkansas, Anita Eggman. Matthew said he was raised in a non-religious Jewish home. He said he was a gay-identified Jew. At one point in his journey that he had been involved in JONAH, the Jewish Torah-based offering for helping people overcome homosexuality. At first, he didn't disclose his current status as a gay activist. I enjoyed taking him through the Old Testament and revealing Jesus Christ as the Messiah to him through the Scriptures that reveal Jesus as the Son of God. He listened carefully, and he seemed honestly interested. He was very interested in my personal journey out of homosexuality and had many questions. Some were almost too personal, but I tried to be vulnerable in order to present the gospel.

Matthew's friend Madeline shared a personal story with Anita. Anita ministered pastoral care as Madeline broke down in tears. Matthew was genuinely surprised by his friend's outburst of emotion. She was weeping in Anita's arms communicating difficulties she had endured in her family life. Both Madeline, who was a member of the Human Rights Campion and Matthew, a gay activist were touched by God. We have Lily the protest organizer to thank. God used this protest organizer to bring people who ended up being touched by God.

It's hard to know our real effect upon them. However, it was relayed to me that Madeline went out to visit with the protesters who were present outside the church. She was met with hateful vitriol and was treated poorly by them. She came back in and told our group that politically she was on their side, but her heart leaned toward our loving kindness and was very confused. Truly the protestors were so obnoxious at the Hilton that the citizens of San Diego were not amused, which hurt their LGBTQ agenda. The activists' mantra that RHN is hateful and torturing children was screamed loudly. Ironically, the truth is clear scientifically and practically. What has been demonstrated by the LGBTQ lifestyle and in their protests, is that they torture children with hormone blockers and introduce them to perverse sex acts. Their protests are filled with hate and rage against the Truth.

At the end of the conference, I spoke with Matthew again. I told him I had heard that he was a gay activist. He confirmed it. I asked him why he was really at the conference, and he said to find out if there was hope. I asked him if he was going to take our conversation, my vulnerable story and the biblical truths and mock it all, and mock my journey. I asked him if he was going to write about me and my friends with scoffing ridicule. I asked him if I would find out later that he was actually my enemy? He knew exactly why I was asking, and with some shame and a forgiving assurance he said, "I am so sorry that's happened, and please know that I am not like that, and I will not become your enemy." He communicated that he might like to look me up to talk more. Please join us in praying for this couple, Matthew and Madeline; it seems God's hand is on them.



We also heard that one of the protestors came into the conference from the protest line. She rededicated her life to Christ, communicating that the power of the Holy Spirit drew her away from the hateful protest and into the loving presence of the worship going on inside during the RHN Conference.

During the last session, two men in their late 20s showed up. They entered the main foyer and began pickup literature off the tables. Laura Leigh spotted them and asked them what they were doing. They indicated to her that they wanted to register for the conference. Laura communicated she believed that registration was closed and would find someone to help them. Laura asked these young, arrogant and buff, attractive men, with their cool California summer outfits, dark sunglasses, and their typical millennially-tatted up arms, to step outside of the building with security. They swaggered out not pleased at all. Laura found me. I went to talk to them with two security officers standing a few feet away watching everything. Their names were Russ and Zak. I asked them how I could help them. They wanted to come in, but I told them that registration was closed and the conference was ending. They started immediately throwing all kinds of questions at me. I asked them to pause and let me answer. I told them who I was and why I was there. I shared the one-minute version of my testimony and then Russ turned on me and became completely vulgar. He began speaking to me in the most perverse way, graphically telling me how I long for certain sex acts. It was an x-rated communication inappropriate for anyone. I told him to stop, that he didn't know me nor did he know what I wanted sexually. I rebuked him and asked him what kind of a person talks like this to a perfect stranger? He quieted down, and Zak asked me all kinds

*continued on page 13*

*Continued from page 12...*

of causality questions, and questions about God and several “whys?” about God. I was able to answer clearly and concisely. The Holy Spirit was with me. He was dumbfounded. Truly, he couldn’t hardly talk after I answered him. He said, okay, enough, were leaving. This is when I said, wait, what are your names. He could barely speak their names. Zak literally staggered away, and had a hard time walking down the stairs. It was amazing to watch. The security guard walked up to me and said, “man, I don’t know how you did that! Truly that was amazing, and your answers were so powerful. I just don’t know how you put up with that one guy. I wanted to punch his mouth out he was so disgusting.” He said, “Brother, you really showed them the love of God, WELL DONE!” I was blessed. However, at the time I was not so sure. I did like seeing Zak stagger away. I saw the Holy Spirit working. But honestly, my heart was heavy, and I wasn’t sure I answered as well as I wanted to.

We loved having fellowship with other leaders, many have their own stories of what took place at the conference. Our dear brother Andrew Comiskey wrote a short synopsis on the conference called, *Take the Hit*.

You can read it here: <http://andrewcomiskey.com/take-the-hit>

### **Days 8 & 9 – Chino, CA and The Grand Canyon – Sunday, Father’s Day, June 18 and Monday, June 19**

On Father’s Day we left the hotel to go to the beach. It was an hour of walking down Ocean Beach, a lunch there and we started towards Chino, CA to stay with friends and to celebrate. Our celebration was a 2-hour prayer meeting. It was beautiful. So grateful to David and Lucretia Smithers, the Habashi’s, and the Castro’s for their love, prayer covering and hospitality. The next day we traveled to the Grand Canyon to spend time looking at His beautiful creation, and worship God there as we enjoyed watching a beautiful Grand Canyon sunset! We enjoyed a wonderful dinner together and traveled to our last hotel.



### **Day 10 – Tuesday, June 20 – Back Home, Oklahoma City, OK!**

We drove I-40 all the way back to Oklahoma City witnessing beautiful clouds and scenery. We have a magnificently beautiful country! There were storm clouds and huge thunder storms all around us. However, we were able to bypass most of it and arrived safely home. We are rested and are now back to work.



### **Prayer for Us as We Continue in the Spiritual Battle**

The ministry credit card, Laura Leigh’s and my personal credit cards all experienced fraud before or during the trip. Joseph had an unexplained fever just before leaving for our trip. We all experienced warfare. When we arrived at the conference, we heard of many random stories of other ministry leaders or family members who are facing serious medical events and warfare at the starting of the conference. However, even in the midst of great adversity, God continues to take our lives and use them for His glory. Since we have arrived back home, we continue to see the goodness of God in saving souls. Several young people have surrendered their lives to Christ and we continue to hear good reports from the fruit of the conference in San Diego! We are so grateful! **Please add the staff of FSM and ministry leaders in the RHN network to your prayer list. (Search #HOPE2017SD for more posted online.)**

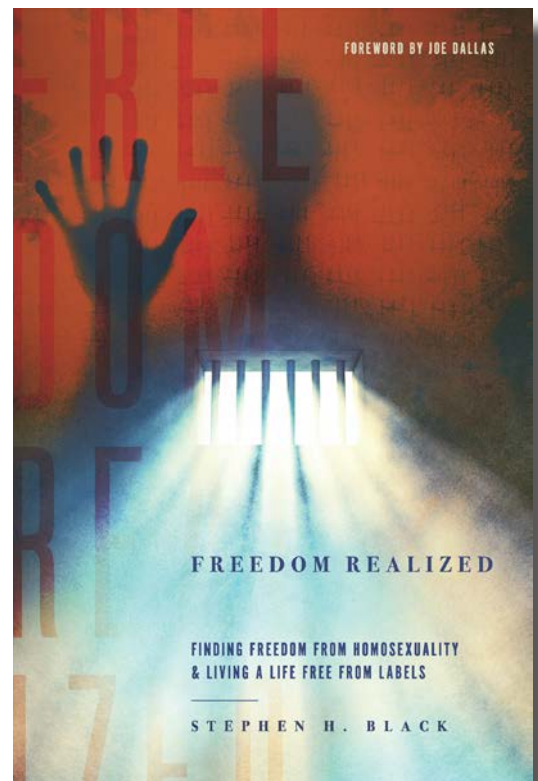


# Stephen's Book

**T**here are a couple of unique and significant differences about Freedom Realized from other books dealing with overcoming homosexuality. First, Freedom Realized will report data from a survey of 1200+ people who have come through First Stone Ministries over the last 25 years. It reveals that people, in fact, do find lasting freedom. The conclusion reveals statistics from 185 confirmed respondents. The data clearly reveals that people who spent at least one year, in pastoral care, in support group ministry and sought the Lord Jesus Christ fully found lasting freedom. The second part of Freedom Realized addresses problems in 'ex-gay' ministry, what works and what doesn't work. I will address some of the deceptive messaging from the mixture of antinomianism and psychology that lowers the bar of holiness and freedom the Gospel of Jesus imparts. The third empowering and hopeful part of the book will communicate how freedom is realized. The fourth part of the book is one that is very exciting! It contains insights from seasoned leaders with over 20 years of experience. They will convey their messages on how FREEDOM is REALIZED!

**Save 25% on pre-orders!**

To pre-order, please visit [www.freedomrealized.org](http://www.freedomrealized.org).



# Stephen's Blog

Stephen's new blog launches August 1st!

[www.stephenblack.org](http://www.stephenblack.org)





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# Saying Goodbye



We are saddened that these women had to leave us but God has called them on to new adventures. Marci is embarking on new ministry connections and Verla-Marie has moved to Texas to be with family.

Both women brought us much appreciated gifts, talents and services to enhance our efficiency in the office as well as in the running of our groups. Specifically, Verla-Marie headed up our weekly staff prayer time and Marci was discipling women.

We are so grateful for for their work in furthering the good news that God frees us from sexual and relational brokenness!



You are missed already!

# Support Groups

Our **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 apply for admission to this group.



**Living Waters** is an in-depth, Christ-centered program for people seeking healing in areas of sexual and relational brokenness. A healing, teaching and discipleship study that addresses the reality—we are all broken in our ability to love others well. The goal of First Stone Ministries’ support groups are to lay a foundation for relational and sexual wholeness in our lives. Living Waters meets on Thursday evenings from 7-10pm. Living Waters 2017-2018 begins October 12th and runs through May 2018. Application is required.

For information and application on any of our groups, please visit <http://www.firststone.org/support-groups>

# Staff



Clockwise: Stephen Black, Laura Leigh Stanlake, Joseph Thiessen and Jim Farrington.

- Stephen Black** .....stephen@firststone.org  
*Executive Director*
- Joseph Thiessen** .....joseph@firststone.org  
*Office Administrator*
- Laura Leigh Stanlake** ..... laura@firststone.org  
*Director of Women’s Ministries*
- Jim Farrington** .....jim@firststone.org  
*Intern*



**40<sup>+</sup> YEARS!**  
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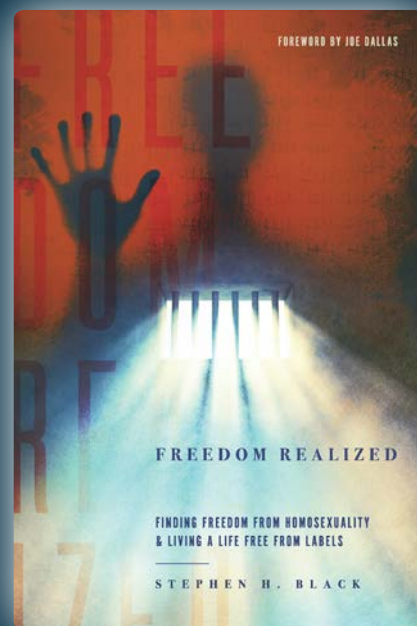
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