

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

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

this issue

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FIRST STONE MINISTRIES

ABOUT WHAT WE OFFER NEWS RESOURCES EVENTS SUPPORT/GIVE

Freedom from Homosexuality

The following men are testifying that they have permanently left a life of homosexuality. All of these men want others to know that there is freedom from homosexuality and being gay-identified through a relationship with Jesus Christ as Lord.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |  |
| Stephen Black | Joe Dallas | Andrew Comiskey Part 2 | David Kyle Foster Part 2 |
|  |  |  |  |
| Jason Thompson | Dennis Jernigan | Dean Bailey | DL Foster |
|  |  |  |  |
| Jeff Buchanan | Kevin Holsbergen | Michael Newman | Jeff Johnston |

by C. Joseph Thiessen

Formative Years

I was born into a family of three older siblings; my mom was a homemaker and my dad a wheat and cattle farmer in Western Oklahoma. We were raised to be diligent in our work and to practice Christian values. I lived with the feeling that other people's feelings were more important than my own.

Before I was school age, my father expressed the word "stupid" in disgust over something that failed to work to his benefit. Although this word wasn't directed at me, seeing an opportunity, Satan caused it to pierce into my heart—I then took on an identity that was never meant to be. Any time my work with dad went poorly, I felt the sting of the words "**you're stupid!**" ringing about in my mind. I became angry. This anger with my father grew to boiling in my inner-world ... In fact, I hated him in my heart, and I became disrespectful of him.

⁵ So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! ⁶ And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell. - James 3 (ESV)

In those formative years, I had church friends who initiated playing doctor and "making love" which amounted to sneaking a peek and kisses on the lips. A cousin's neighbor had centerfolds of ladies hanging on the garage walls. An early ritual in my life was to peruse through JC Penney and Sears catalogs for gifts I wanted for Christmas. At some point, my searches included looking at the men's section and admiring what seemed to be their confidence, handsomeness and strength. Comparison hit hard as I wanted to be like these guys. Midway through grade school, I found a brother's pornography stash. Rather than tattling, I chose to keep his secret because I wanted access to it as well.

As with most pubescent boys, the exposure to adult pornography didn't help my confidence. I began to compare myself to other guys and all I could see in myself was weakness, failure and a body that I increasingly didn't like.

I perceived others to be more confident, to be stronger, to be more likeable and secure. As an introvert, these growing insecurities put me at odds with my identity and with the world around me. During school, I already had trouble finding my place among the boys. While I was spared being bullied by my peers, the differences I perceived between them and me kept me from leaning too far into their world. I avoided sports involving locker-room experiences because I was afraid of how I would react to teasing.

Then there was my brother's teasing for not being able to loosen or tighten bolts on farm machinery. I didn't know why I didn't have strength; I just knew I couldn't physically do some things other guys could.



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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. 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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Insecure in my masculine identity, I needed affirmation from guys; in fact, I longed for it. I also needed my dad to guide me through puberty, but unfortunately, this never occurred. Because of these deficiencies, I turned toward the regular use of pornography, ongoing masturbation and unholy fantasies of connecting with males.

Just as Paul writes early in Romans 1 concerning the degradation of humanity, *because of refusal to acknowledge God as God and be thankful for what He has given me (my family, body and mind)*, I was becoming more and more depraved in my thinking and in my deeds.

Patterns

Because of this perception of myself and my environment, I began to slip into secret sinning. From wilting the hours away looking at images of men to a brief stint of initiating sexual play with a teenaged neighbor, I became more and more ensnared. While I was active in youth group, I was careful how I talked, what I talked about and how I acted because I feared being exposed. I wanted to trust my church peers, but when some told gay or sexual jokes, I knew I wasn't safe in those relationships. Generally, I loved hanging out with church peers; it eased some of the loneliness I often felt.

At around the same time that I found the pornography that I had mentioned before, my family made a huge move from the Mennonite Church to the Pentecostal Holiness Church. This was a welcome change. While it was in the Mennonite church that God gave me a desire to serve; it was in the Pentecostal church where I grew in my personal relationship with Jesus as my Friend! Because of that transition, and during the darkest hours of my life, I cultivated a prayer life of talking to Jesus about everything. My fears, pain, dreams, and joys were all shared with Jesus!

I didn't comprehend what all was happening to me until just after high school. My struggles had culminated into our culture's one-word summary of my reality: "homosexual." I feared uttering that word as an identity to my inner turmoil.

The Promise

Almost a year after graduating high school, in February 1989, I first opened-up to my youth

pastor and senior pastor about my attraction to men. The disclosure was handled with love and prayer, but our short time together made little progress towards helping me understand how these struggles had developed. I wasn't ignored, but later I wondered why specific discipleship didn't occur.

Soon after, I became aware that I needed a change of heart. I wanted to be faithful to prayer and to reading the Bible, but my inconsistency led to more and more feelings of guilt, condemnation and deep self-hatred. Unknowingly, I was in agreement with demonic voices. My personal prayer concerns became labeled as self-centered and the little understanding of my value as being created in God's image was diminishing. Additionally, I knew what the scriptures had to say about my sinful behavior. I also knew continuing in them

meant I was unfit for the kingdom of God. I felt a curse upon my life and understood a growing need for Jesus to break in with His power to change me. Many sleepless nights filled with worry took a toll on my body causing me to develop pre-ulcers.

On February 21, 1990, I was browsing through a concordance looking for words that described my heart condition. God led me to Ezekiel 36:24-29. In this set of verses, I read how God promised the Israelites a change of heart from stone to one of flesh (malleability). As I understood it, this was a promise that God would do irrespective of any action on my part.

²⁴ *I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land.* ²⁵ *I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you.* ²⁶ *And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.* ²⁷ *And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.* ²⁸ *You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.* ²⁹ *And I will deliver you from all your uncleannesses. And I will summon*



Joseph at 6

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the grain and make it abundant and lay no famine upon you. Ezekiel 36:24-29 (ESV)

I was being offered grace and the promise that He would break the power of my sin, but I was having a hard time trusting in this truth. How can He cause one's obedience without their being His puppet? Over the years of struggling with my faith in God, He would assure me through promises in Isaiah 40:29 where it says that *"He gives power to the faint and to him who has no might he increases strength"* (ESV). However, I had trouble seeing this truth as applying to me.

During this season, I decided to go to college. I wanted a better life for myself and I felt it would be a great place to build my confidence. I enjoyed those years but struggled with certain types of classes in which I would consistently make Cs and Ds. I felt that I lacked the energy and skills to improve in these scenarios. I felt these were evidences that something was wrong with me and they strengthened the lie that I was stupid. However, I successfully graduated with a degree in Marketing/Management!

Personal computers were becoming available at that time and, although I didn't really need one, my desire for something new to play with and my lack of financial responsibility won out. Being a good addict, I lied to myself about the dangers of owning my own personal computer. The lie gave way to a hot pursuit of the newly-formed Internet. During that season, I even visited the local gay district and started spending money without restraint. All I really cared about was getting my next fix.

With the promise of God's deliverance also came the witness of scripture as a hedge of thorns around me. The more I participated in my sin, the more I agonized my spiritual state.

Personalizing Matt 5:27-28 with my strain of temptation it reads:

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman, (or in my case with a man) with lustful intent has already committed adultery (fornication) in his heart. (ESV)

Or Ephesians 5:5:

For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. (ESV)

My lack of vocational direction and poor self-esteem put me in another hopeless mindset where I believed that I would be destined to live my life on the farm. I had zero confidence to move my life forward from that point.

The Outpouring

In February of 1997, two amazing things happened: 1) I sought out help from First Stone Ministries and started attending their support group and receiving biblical discipleship and 2) God poured out His Spirit on our youth and college group. I have many stories of God's outpouring of love from that time in my life—too many to share with you right now—but a couple stories about what He did in me cannot be left out.

It was during this outpouring that He showed me *how* He turns a heart of stone into a heart of flesh. The first thing He taught me was how to unplug from the idea that I was only a servant, so that

I could learn to sit at His feet. It was a tough lesson. During that first night of the outpouring, I felt the need to prostrate myself before the Lord and after a while, I reasoned to myself that it was time to get up and start serving again. Quickly the Holy Spirit opposed that thought and urged me to stay in a position of receiving. At this point, I wasn't aware of the presence of the Lord. All I considered was that I had a servant role to fill and this urging made no sense to me. After a bit of back and forth, I allowed myself to stay in that posture the rest of the service.

Each week came the same urging and each time I willed myself into a posture of receiving. One evening the Holy Spirit reminded me of the song *The Joy of the Lord is my Strength*. The song was passing through my head and when I stopped to ponder why I heard His voice. He asked me, "How do you get joy?" My answer came out of years of church culture rather than out of biblical truth, "It comes as a result of praising You with all of my heart." Then, He asked me to sing the song. As I got through the lyrics "joy of the Lord" He asked me *whose joy?* As I reflected on the words, a wave of revelation washed over me. The lessons of sitting before the Lord and seeing God's joy became a foundational place on which the softening of my heart began to take place.

Still caught in addiction, I would go home from these times and look up porn. Rather than just brushing it aside in shame and condemnation, I used my newly-learned tool of revealing to Jesus exactly what I really wanted. I invited Him into my earthly desires and uttered my desire for Him to hold me. It was a bold and strange request—so bold that I thought it would be impossible for Him to fulfill.

Just a few days away and during a worship set in the youth group, two young guys felt called by the Lord to envelop each person in the room in a bear hug. They embraced me fully, one in front and one from behind. Aroused by their physical presence, I immediately felt shame. In desperation, I silently yet firmly cried out to God to make them stop. In an instant, I heard God say, *"You asked me for this."* I crumbled right there. He cared for me enough to specifically answer my request! Using my brothers Jesus affirmed me, and He continued the affirmation by enabling me to even feel his affection without anyone having to embrace me.

At the end of that outpouring, God protected me from falling into Biblical error by moving me away from that group and moving me more deeply into First Stone Ministries groups where I could base my life on sound theology of complete surrender. The leaders of that core group unfortunately had fallen into a weak theology in which they communicate by example that grace allows for continuing in sin without eternal consequence.

Growth and Learning

This weakened theology has its roots in many people today. I too have been careless about my sin, but God has been opening my eyes to this error in thinking. Short-circuiting transformation, I opted for a mere confession of sin. I would admit my wrongdoing but would have no willingness to repent. On this matter, Isaiah 30:15 says:

For thus the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, has said, "In repentance and rest you will be saved, In quietness and trust is your strength." But you were not willing, (NASB)

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In other words, God calls for the death of my participation in this activity of mind and deed. Half-heartedly, I would limit access to porn only to leave my heart open to the option.

In Genesis, the serpent tempted Adam and Eve, with the question; *“Hath God really said?”* I too have fallen prey to that question. I began realizing I had trouble believing certain elements of God’s Word. Being raised in a faith-church where positive faith was rewarded with praise and negative statements were disdained, I had trouble untangling this belief system from what true faith in God really means. I read a book that helped me see the Bible as being true and error-free. I saw how Jesus affirmed the entire Old Testament as being factual and I have been growing in my belief of the scriptures since. My repentance began to cultivate agreement with God’s Word. It is here that the Holy Spirit cast light on the hindrances in my life. He revealed my profound self-hatred, unforgiveness, and my agreement with lies.

I chose to forgive my father and as a result, through godly relationships, I have learned to press through lies of **“you’re stupid,”** **and toward the truth that I am capable of success.** In the midst of personal fear, I asked for help and at the same time started learning to embrace my worth in God. I was beginning to find freedom from old burdens and was emerging into a new identity.

Ravine Dweller

Having the witness of my own experiences and a growing belief in the truth of God’s word, I’ve learned that words carry a lot of weight. What we believe and speak about ourselves tells a lot about our direction in life. I once was a ravine dweller. Sometime after my brother was confronted about the pornography, he threw it away and by a demonic setup, I found it in nearby trash dump. Living out in the farm country of Western Oklahoma, I hid it in the nearby ravines for repeated use. Not only was I a ravine dweller but, without any evil intent on their part, my parents, family and friends all called me one. My given name was “Cory” and, as I later came to understand, Cory is an Irish place name meaning: “ravine dweller.” Prophetically I was stuck, but God had different plans...

Jehovah Increases

Building upon His promise in my life, God had people in His family prophesy over me that my life was like old-testament Joseph’s. This was randomly prophesied over my life over a period of about 9 years beginning in the early 90’s.

In yet another February, Jesus asked me to do something radical. In 2002, I had another of these prophecies in the presence of the original friend who was the first to witness this same word years ago. One night later, during the altar call in our support group, I laid down a false belief about myself and waited for Jesus to speak a Truth in its place. It was then I saw a vision of Him facing me and pulling the lapels of a coat more snugly around my neck and saying, *“I want you to wear the name I’ve given you.”* After a series of arguments to clarify His seriousness, I conceded.

That night, I testified of His request and invited those present to start agreeing with God about my life by calling out *Jehovah Increases* every time they addressed me by my new name, Joseph. By November of that year, I had made the new identity legal; I became C. Joseph Thiessen with the blessing of my parents. And

my journey from there on would be a testimony that God will accomplish His work in me, working with my weaknesses.

Intrinsic Weakness

In January of 2010, God introduced a new reality in my life. With a new health insurance plan and a new doctor, I decided that at 40 I should have a complete medical checkup. At that first appointment, my doctor, confident in his observations, asked me if I had ever heard of Klinefelter’s Syndrome. After a long month between appointments, he had enough certainty to warrant my having a genetic test.

Generally speaking, sex chromosomes tell us that XY is male and XX is female. My sex chromosomes tell me that I am XXY and I have an intersex condition. While my physical body clearly reveals that I am male, I am among 1 out of 500 men who also have this condition. Men with this condition commonly produce little, if any, testosterone. Depending on differing genetic mutations, men with Klinefelter’s Syndrome cannot father children and some are affected in their memory and cognitive abilities. In looking over my history now, it seems my difficulties with testing in school could be related to this condition, but it’s difficult to know for sure.

The low confidence and lack of physical strength are certainly tied to low testosterone. The teasing I’d received about my lack of strength now made sense. The self-hatred I had of my body was deeper than what I had learned in pornography and in comparison to other men.

Some men who have this condition experience confusion in who they are. While there is no doubt that I am a man, I have found that Satan uses this disorder as an arrow against my identity among men. Since I am genetically different, how am I supposed to view myself?

Knowing the struggle of folks like me, God makes a special promise in Isaiah 56:

And no eunuch should ever say, “I am all dried up, worthless and empty.”

For this is what the Eternal has to say: The eunuchs who keep My Sabbaths, make good choices, and follow the terms of My covenant will blossom with My blessing. I will give them, within My house, an enduring memorial and a name better than if they had sons and daughters—A name that will never be forgotten and will continue to inspire and encourage forever. (Voice)

What is true about me is that I am created male by God. I am also a conduit of God’s tender, powerful and affirming grace for myself and for others in the body of Christ. I need His grace to walk out my male gender according to His ways while building up my emotions and abilities according to God’s will for my life. I need His grace to deny false idols of masculinity, confidence and strength.

In an act of solidarity with the soundness of God’s Word, I am choosing to **delight in being fearfully and wonderfully made** in His Image. While I still find myself attracted to my same sex, **I am not a homosexual**; I am made in God’s image and I was created for pure relationships with men and with women.

Differing Views on Christianity, Identity and Homosexuality

There Is An Onslaught of "Gay Christianity" in the Church Today

by Jason Thompson

Executive Director, Portland Fellowship, Portland, OR

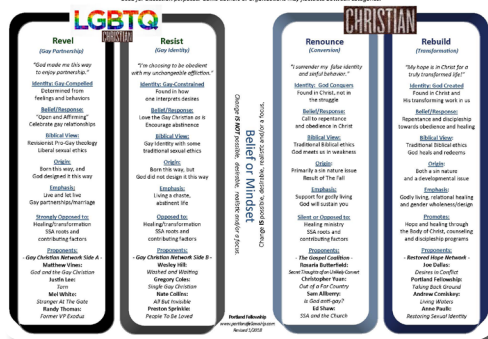
When I first began serving at Portland Fellowship, for a believer, the message regarding homosexuality and identity seemed a bit simpler. For the most part, the Christian message was that we were created male and female, that our identity is found in Christ alone, and that sexual expression outside of marriage (between a man and his wife) is a sin, because it violates God's perfect plan and ultimately leads to pain and destruction. As the years passed by, and culture, unsurprisingly, continued down a path of confusion and distortion, I have watched many in the church also fall into that confusion. Last month, to bring clarity to this confusing issue, we here at Portland Fellowship created a one-page handout, which we summarize below. On one side of this handout is the ideology we've categorized as "Gay Partnership". These professing Christians are gay-affirming and support and bless homosexual unions. Their general belief is that one is born gay/ lesbian/bisexual/ transgendered or one of the other fifty-four gender options available through Facebook. Their biblical view has been developed by a revision of Scripture in order to support a pro-gay theological understanding. To the right of this extreme is another camp which we've labeled "Gay Identity". These are professing Christians who primarily believe that a person is born gay, yet believe that same-sex partnerships are prohibited in the eyes of God. Their identity is found in what they feel and desire, and since their desire is for the same gender, they choose to identify as LGBTQ+. In contrast to these two categories, there are two other groups that embrace traditional biblical truth regarding sexual expression and identity. Yet, in these last two categories, there are some subtle differences in how each group proposes responding to the same-sex attracted person. We've labeled the first group of proponents for biblical truth and sexuality as simply "Conversion". This group does a great job at communicating that our identity is not found in our sexuality or desires, but in Jesus Christ our Lord.

This group highlights our sin nature as the primary

issue of sexual struggles, and calls everyone to walk in confession, repentance and trusting God as they seek to die to their fleshly desires. They primarily emphasize the importance of Christ's Body (the Church), while they don't necessarily emphasize additional support structures or healing resources (such as counseling or recovery programs). The final category agrees with most of what the "Conversion" position communicates. This final "Transformation" category also believes that our identity is found in Christ, and that we must repent of our sinful sexual behavior. However, the subtle difference between "Conversion" and "Transformation" is that proponents of "Transformation" recognize the need for an intentional discipleship process that leads us to deeper healing, relational wholeness and even newfound desires that are being restored to what God intended. This process includes support from others in the body of Christ, which can involve counseling, recovery groups, discipleship programs and personal mentoring. It includes a deeper awareness that in addition to being a spiritual and sexual issue, homosexuality is also a relational issue, and therefore has both past relational healing, and, more importantly, future relational healing. As I mentioned, homosexual identity and homosexual expression have become confused through various teachings and different opinions. I believe it is wise to follow what is written in 1 Thessalonians 5:21: "But test everything; hold fast what is good." Let us not settle for anything less than the redeeming work of Jesus Christ and the transforming work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. My hope is that each of us will be able to surrender our sexuality, our identity and our behavior before the Lord, and find our hope in Christ as He continues His transforming work in us! To view and print our one-page handout, please go to: <https://www.portlandfellowship.com/resources/differingviews.pdf>

Differing Views on Christian Doctrine, Identity and Homosexuality

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Please see the graphic on next page...



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Belief or Mindset

Change **IS NOT** possible, desirable, realistic and/or a focus.



Revel

(Gay Partnership)

*"God made me this way
to enjoy partnership."*

Identity: Gay-Compelled

Determined from
feelings and behaviors

Belief/Response:

"Open and Affirming"
Celebrate gay relationships

Biblical View:

Revisionist Pro-Gay theology
Liberal sexual ethics

Origin:

Born this way, and
God designed it this way

Emphasis:

Live and let live
Gay partnerships/marriage

Strongly Opposed to:

Healing/transformation
SSA roots and
contributing factors

Proponents:

- *Gay Christian Network Side A* -

Matthew Vines:

God and the Gay Christian

Justin Lee:

Torn

Mel White:

Stranger At The Gate

Randy Thomas:

Former VP Exodus

Resist

(Gay Identity)

*"I'm choosing to be obedient
with my unchangeable affliction."*

Identity: Gay-Constrained

Found in how
one interprets desires

Belief/Response:

Love the Gay Christian *as is*
Encourage abstinence

Biblical View:

Gay Identity with some
traditional sexual ethics

Origin:

Born this way, but
God did not design it this way

Emphasis:

Living a chaste,
abstinent life

Opposed to:

Healing/transformation
SSA roots and
contributing factors

Proponents:

- *Gay Christian Network Side B* -

Wesley Hill:

Washed and Waiting

Gregory Coles:

Single Gay Christian

Nate Collins:

All But Invisible

Preston Sprinkle:

People To Be Loved

Used for discussion purposes. Some authors or organizations may fluctuate between categories.

Belief or Mindset

Change **IS** possible, desirable, realistic and/or a focus.

CHRISTIAN

Renounce (Conversion)

"I surrender my false identity and sinful behavior."

Identity: God Conquers

Found in Christ, not in the struggle

Belief/Response:

Call to repentance and obedience in Christ

Biblical View:

Traditional Biblical ethics
God meets us in weakness

Origin:

Primarily a sin nature issue
Result of The Fall

Emphasis:

Support for godly living
God will sustain you

Silent or Opposed to:

Healing ministry
SSA roots and contributing factors

Proponents:

- **The Gospel Coalition** -

Rosaria Butterfield:

Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert

Christopher Yuan:

Out of a Far Country

Sam Allberry:

Is God anti-gay?

Ed Shaw:

SSA and the Church

Rebuild (Transformation)

"My hope is in Christ for a truly transformed life!"

Identity: God Created

Found in Christ and His transforming work in us

Belief/Response:

Repentance and discipleship towards obedience and healing

Biblical View:

Traditional Biblical ethics
God heals and redeems

Origin:

Both a sin nature and a developmental issue

Emphasis:

Godly living, relational healing and gender wholeness/design

Promotes:

Hope and healing through the Body of Christ, counseling and discipleship programs

Proponents:

- **Restored Hope Network** -

Joe Dallas:

Desires in Conflict

Portland Fellowship:

Taking Back Ground

Andrew Comiskey:

Living Waters

Anne Paulk:

Restoring Sexual Identity

Used for discussion purposes. Some authors or organizations may fluctuate between categories.

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Fences are Good

God calls us to put to death the deeds of the flesh. As my temptations ebb and flow, I have been learning how important it is to lay an axe to the root of unfettered accessibility to the Internet. Historically, I have had little self-power to say “no” to temptation. My go-to method has been to permanently close open doors of access. Using secure accountability technologies, I continue to block access to sites where I could find objects of lust. I’m way better off doing so.

The Highlands

I continue to learn how to sit with God in my unmet needs, my suffering, my confusion and my struggles. God has used our times to help form my identity in Him—something far more secure than I ever thought possible. The story of my life gets more hopeful and interesting with each passing season. There is so much more I have yet to grasp for myself. While I have not sworn off marriage, I wonder if it’s in my future. I don’t have to think about it much as I am fairly content with my life at this time. What matters now is

that I keep putting one foot in front of the other while holding onto God’s will for how I live my life. Jehovah increases! The ravines and valleys lie behind me for my heart’s in the highlands!

*If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. **Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.** For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.*

Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming. Colossians 3:1-6 (ESV)

Joseph Thiessen has been Office Administrator of First Stone Ministries since 1998. He enjoys bicycling and creating beauty.



Imagine With Me A Different Kind of Missionary: The Ex-Gay Minister

by Stephen Black

Most often, when ministers speak of a missionary going out from their church, they are communicating about a person or group which will be going to do a work of evangelism to spread the Gospel of Jesus. Usually, they are talking about a work of evangelism to another country. Sometimes the church supports many works of social justice like feeding hungry children or digging wells for people without water. Many in the Church will talk about missions with exotic descriptions of going off to a far-away place or going into a country that is dangerous. Then, as we talk about missions, there’s usually that pause and plea for great resources to meet the need and, of course, a call for covering in prayer! These are all beautiful and necessary works of the Church.

I have myself have gone to exotic places on mission trips. I’ve been to Venezuela, Mexico, Canada, and Israel on different types of missions to teach, to testify and to minister to the hurting in the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.



However, our missions are not expressed in the more traditional approach to gospel evangelism. The vision and mission of First Stone is to bring the true Gospel of Jesus conveying clearly the transformation of souls in need of the freedom that God’s grace gives to the sexually and relationally broken. Our ministry across our city, our state, our country and to the world has been in line with that vision and mission.

First Stone Ministries is a different kind of mission. Everyone on our staff is this “missionary of another kind.” Quite frankly, our mission is one the Church at large has had difficulty getting excited about. Our mission is to bring the Gospel

of Jesus Christ and the hope of sexual redemption and transformation to lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgenders, queers (as they call themselves now) and your everyday run-of-the-mill church pornographer. The First Stone staff of missionaries have, over the last 27 years, been in a culturally-challenging, front-line work in a mission field that is filled with demonic activity. Working for the sexual redemption

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of the Church has always been our purpose—teaching, exhorting, educating, ministering and working in the field of souls to see life and maturity and fruitfulness grow in human hearts.

For years people would avoid our table and booth at most Christian conference events; however, that has changed a lot in the last 10 years. Sincere Christians who love the Bible and people who have loved-ones trapped in all things LGBTQ+ really embrace First Stone now, more than ever. There is more interest because the message of all things LGBTQ+ is more prevalent than ever before. The “gay Christian” revisionist messaging is also more rampant in the Church than ever before perverting the full Gospel. Unfortunately, the Church at large is still doing a poor job of navigating these issues of ministry with clear understanding. It seems that the Church is as unbelieving as the culture and is falling away from a hopeful Gospel message of repentance and God’s ability to really transform even the most hardened soul. So many of the Church are becoming pushed to the far sides of the conversation, either to compromise and complete acceptance of sexual sin in the name of love and kindness OR, equally wrong, is the hard turn to legalistic unkindness, fear and refusal to carry the hope of redemption and transformation. Yet another, distorted part of the conversation is for the Church to embrace the perverted message of antinomianism with “gay Christianity.” The critical need today is for a consistent truth-filled compassion message of love without compromise to deliver the real hope of a power-filled Gospel of transformation

I wanted to give some insight to the “Different Kind of Missionary” found in those who give of their lives for Jesus in an “ex-gay” ministry. I want you to really think about what the ministers in “ex-gay” ministry are facing in this day as a very different kind of mission!

First Stone Ministries, along with 40 ministries like ours, and several counseling agencies within the Restored Hope Network, are laboring together in helping individuals, churches, families, and friends to process through all the cultural ambiguity, misunderstandings, and lies about the sexual revolution of all things LGBTQ+. It is overwhelming! It really takes some sound Biblical and relational education on this topic to help. First Stone staff and others in “ex-gay” ministries put their energy first and foremost in applying full and mature biblical counsel through the Gospel of Jesus Christ—applying biblical truth and a devoted relationship with Jesus Christ to fully address some of the most complicated issues of sexual behavior, emotions, feelings, belief systems, and traumatic histories. Many hours of pastoral care and energy go into helping every form of

abuse and sexual perversion you could imagine and then some! The level of spiritual preparedness that ministers in an “ex-gay” ministry need usually takes years of spiritual maturity and on-the-job training (the front-line mission field) to be effective. Most ministries like First Stone require that the ministers and staff get an education that fully trains and brings an understanding in several areas.

This different kind of missionary must take-on learning effective pastoral care for deep soul needs. There is a need for a good understanding regarding human sexuality and development, and sociology pointing to the Biblical divine intent of human sexuality which is only healthy in a committed male/female, man/woman marital relationship. It can take years of experience to help people find the deep inner-healing that is necessary. Sadly, many churches today are ill-equipped to do more than a superficial job of discipleship in pastoral care for the real

healing of souls who have been deeply wounded—like the folks coming to Christ from the LGBTQ+ community or from this sex-crazed culture breeding men, and now even women into porn-addicts. The need to address the idea of bringing hidden things and unresolved pain into the open is a very messy ministry that is generally not appreciated or done in the Church at large. Of course, there are good reasons for some to be skeptical given the new levels of people falling away and going back to broken sexual identities.

This is the very reason Exodus International closed under the failed leadership of Alan Chambers. The depth of real spiritual maturity, real sobriety, an understanding of the demonic warfare in the feelings, emotions, attractions and the stark unbelief in antinomianism without a clear Biblical Orthodox theology is what brought about the internal implosion and failure of Exodus’ mission. It truly takes skilled pastoral care professionals in “ex-gay” ministry to help people find lasting freedom. Our availability in this mission is to come beside the Church in accomplishing her goal to make real disciples of Jesus Christ as Lord. Many hours are given to help process pain in souls of those who have been sexually abused, as more than 50% of the people participating in “ex-gay” ministries have been terribly abused. Many root problem-areas of the soul must be thoroughly processed in pastoral care to identify painful abuse, shame, and to uncover bitter-roots so as to really forgive from the heart. Some of the most wounded, abused people I’ve ever met are lesbian women who have been brutalized by men! It really takes a different kind of missionary to press-in with these kinds of secrets and traumatic life problems! It takes a lot of patience and love to navigate the unpacking the secrets of men’s hearts so that they really come to freedom.



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MINISTRY STATISTICS



19 DAYS SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

States where we were invited to speak: CA, IL, MN, MO, OK, TN



28 DAYS ATTENDING EVENTS

States where we attended events: OR, CA, MO, TX, OK



13 DAYS OF SPECIAL ACTIVITIES

Special events include: Support group banquets, Staff & Volunteer retreat, Support Group Training, Open House and Christmas Party.



30+ MEDIA INTERVIEWS

To promote Stephen's book, *Freedom Realized*, he was interviewed by radio programs covering US and International markets. Networks include: Bott, AFR, Moody, etc.



63 SUPPORT GROUP MEETINGS

Living Waters 24; New Man 15; Parent's Group 24



442 DISCIPLESHIP SESSIONS

Combined sessions of 3 staff members.



40K TIMES FIRSTSTONE.ORG VISITED

In 2016 this was 35,218. The 14.45% increase is largely from media interviews about Stephen's book, *Freedom Realized*.



32K NEW VISITORS TO FIRSTSTONE.ORG

In 2016 this was 27,651. The 17.59% increase is largely from media interviews about Stephen's book, *Freedom Realized*.

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Most places in the Church at large do NOT allow for this level of transparency as it gets really messy. There might even be a demonic manifestation or perhaps, expressions of rage with transference issues coming from areas of great pain. Toxic shame, rejection, and addictions may hinder people who struggle with same-sex attractions and take several years to break these cycles. Remember, people are often recovering from tragic sexual abuse which requires rebuilding and restoring their innocence, their feelings of security, and solid holy identities. The mind, emotions, and will of the soul may take many years in renewal and recovery. After all, we share in Jesus' mission to "bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." (Luke 4:18b-19 NKJV) Even teaching how to be disciplined as a follower of Christ in spiritual warfare within the Church is very difficult. Now, multiply that by 10 times and you might be getting close to understanding the difficulties and challenges for those who have been in homosexuality and all things LGBTQ+ and the many underlying problems they need to work through. Most of this work is done in confidentiality and hidden from the Church at large and often goes unappreciated and unacknowledged. Ex-gay ministers and this "missionary of another kind" are often the most overworked and underpaid of any group of professional helpers of caregiving to needy souls.

Now, add to the work of caring for souls the further work of responding to the cultural and Church conversation regarding all things LGBTQ+. The ex-gay ministries must be well-prepared in some of the sciences. However, first and foremost a good Biblically Orthodox Theology is a must. Then, some sound understanding in biology and psychology is a required. It's necessary to have clear anthropological

and Biblical understanding of male and female is a must. A good understanding of all these things is required so that we can make a defense of the hope that is within us and within the Gospel to debate with a hell-bent culture that is aggressively seeking to close pastoral care ministries like First Stone and to defend the Church against forces that are demonically driven to deny that hope as well. Many are also called to give an answer of our hope to the media, which is another layer of pressure for this hard-working missionary of another kind.

I want to remind people that ex-gay ministers and these missionaries of another kind are serving in a hard, front-line battle every day now. It would be good to encourage a local Restored Hope Network Ministry leader or counselor, or pastoral caregiver in this type of mission. Remember, the people they serve were at one-time someone's precious little child. These are people who have been deeply wounded as children and now receive ministry to go on to follow Christ fully. Will you remember First Stone's staff today—Laura Leigh Stanlake, Director of Women's Ministries, Joseph Thiessen, Administrator, and our new intern, Jim Farrington, and myself? Will you remember the several hundred other ministers and volunteers across the United States in the Restored Hope Network of ministries? We need prayer covering! MORE today, than ever before! Thank you, Sincerely in Christ's Love and Service, Stephen Black, Executive Director and one of the seven Founders of the Restored Hope Network.

For further reading, see Dr. Michael Brown's article: "Which is the Smallest Most Rejected Minority in America? Ex-Gays!"

<https://stream.org/which-is-the-smallest-and-most-rejected-minority-in-america/>



Support Groups

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. **Summer Group** begins June 21 and ends September 6. We will be studying the topic of Discovering the Image of God "Imago Dei".

Application is required to attend all our groups.

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

Staff



L-R: Stephen Black, Laura Leigh Stanlake, Joseph Thiessen and Jim Farrington.

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Debora
Barr

Dr. Michael
Brown

Julie
Stern Roys

*May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as
you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope
by the power of the Holy Spirit. ~ ROMANS 15:13*

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Stone
Staff
In DC**

click the rotator at www.firststone.org to register