

first
stone

newsletter

"Let him who is without sin cast the First Stone" And Jesus also said, "Go and sin no more." – John 8

MINISTRIES



Stephen Black,
Executive
Director

Foreword to The Crucible of Criticism Brings Others to Christ

by Stephen Black

"An Appeal to Common Sense"

Just south of Oklahoma City in Arlington, Texas, we have ministry friends at Living Hope Ministries. Their ministry received some significant focus in the recent documentary, "Pray Away". This ministry and, namely, their director, Ricky Chelette, have endured direct hateful persecution while being faithful to the gospel of Jesus Christ concerning HIS love to change people's lives and souls.

We have never witnessed such an assault on common sense and science as we have today regarding human sexuality and gender. There are many liars in the land and those who are distorting the truth by bowing down to the culture and to the LGBTQ+ cult chaos mindset. We must get back to common sense regarding gender—God created us as either male or female in HIS image. It is important for those looking at our ministries with hateful criticism to know this truth. We are offering sincere, loving pastoral care for those who want to come out of the chaos of all things LGBTQ+. We are not forcing anyone to embrace this common sense. We are very busy appealing to the church and to this culture to embrace common sense, medical facts, biology, and solid concrete science. There are those who have attacked ministries like First Stone and Living Hope by attempting to rebrand our work and mission as "conversion therapy ministries." This term "Conversion Therapy" and association to our ministries is a ruse term of fear. Those behind this intentionally planned this fear mongering to promote LGBTQ+ ways of living to youth. They are in fact after your children to introduce them to this "alternate life-style". Tragically, as Ricky mentions, this opposition is coming from former colleagues and souls we have tried to serve in the past. However, the hopeful flip side of persecution is the reality that many continue to seek and find help and, as Ricky noted, there are more wanting help as a result of the lying propaganda. Truth-seekers

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are coming for advice, seeking help, and surrendering to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.



...there are those in the LGBTQ+ community and their supporters who have communicated that those ministering hope for change should be fed to the lions.

I thought it would be helpful in this appeal to common sense for you to read Ricky Chelette's own words as a response to the direct attack through the "Pray Away" documentary. I am calling it the hellish "preying away to sway away souls." Why do I call it this hellish definition? Because it does not take much discernment to understand what the end goal is for those who participated and created this documentary. You can plainly read the goal in Romans 1:28-32 AMP.

"And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God or consider Him worth knowing as their Creator and Lord, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do things which are improper and repulsive, until they were filled (permeated and saturated) with every kind of unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice and mean-spiritedness. They are gossips [spreading rumors and lies], slanderers, haters of God (by their evil behavior), insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors [of new forms] of evil (sexual uncleanness and sexual sin), disobedient and disrespectful to parents, without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful [without pity]. Although they know God's righteous decree and His judgment, that those who do such things deserve death, **yet they not only do them, but they even [enthusiastically] approve, and promote others who practice them.**"

I have attached a picture of first century Christians being martyred in the Roman Colosseum as a reminder of the real possibilities revealed Jesus' words. We are not victims, and we are certainly not being hurt like this picture. However, persecution is here now and there are those in the LGBTQ+ community and their supporters who have communicated that those ministering hope for change should be fed to the lions. Are we edging closer than ever before in our history to

an all-out persecution of those who actually uphold a sincere Biblical-orthodox worldview without the compromise we are seeing in main-line evangelical camps? Ironically, will this next wave of persecution come from those who are compromising as Jesus warned? Pay attention to Jesus's words in Matthew 10:32-39 AMP:

"Therefore, the one who confesses and acknowledges Me before men as LORD and Savior, [affirming a state of oneness with Me], **that one** I will also confess and acknowledge before My Father who is in heaven. But the one who denies my holiness and rejects Me before men, that one I will also deny and reject before My Father who is in heaven. Do not think that I have come to bring peace on the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword [of division between believers (obedient) and unbelievers (disobedient)]. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's enemies will be the members of his own household, when one believes and one is in unbelief, and does not believe resulting in righteousness. He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me and he who does not take his cross [expressing a willingness to endure whatever may come] and follow Me [believing in Me, conforming to my example in living and, if need be, suffering or perhaps dying because of faith in Me] is not worthy of Me. Whoever finds his life [in this world] will [eventually] lose it [through death], and whoever loses his life [in this world] for My sake, living surrender to Me, will find real life [that is, life with Me for all eternity].

Please keep Living Hope, First Stone Ministries and the many other ministries like ours and also those the in The Restored Hope Network in prayer.



Ricky Chelette,
Executive Director,
Living Hope Ministries,
Arlington, TX

The Crucible of Criticism Brings Others to Christ

Over the last several weeks, there have been scores of articles, blogs, and various media talking about Living Hope Ministries and the work we do. Honestly, most of those who write about us know nothing of what we do, and only one reporter has ever contacted me to check any facts. The articles have not been flattering.

As a result, I have received dozens of emails from people I don't know nor have ever met,

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sharing the vilest, most perverted, and hate-filled prose I've ever read. Join me in praying for these precious and misguided people.

I've had several people who were once a part of this ministry, asked for our help, received our support for free, applauded and praised the ministry, now vilify the ministry and me as damaging and harmful, even dangerous. Their recollections of events either never happened or are so skewed, they bear no resemblance to reality.

Even worse, these individuals are people who I care about deeply. They were, I thought, my friends.

I have always believed criticism is an opportunity for evaluation and change, and I take it seriously. I've prayed, searched my memory, reviewed my practices, and carefully examined every word or turn of phrase. I have sought the counsel of my critics' contemporaries to see if I am missing something. I know I am not a perfect leader and certainly have discovered ways to improve, and for that, I am grateful.

But I am certain of one thing: I have earnestly sought to point people to the truth revealed in God's Word. The teachings we share from God's Word are dangerous, but only in breaking down the world's strongholds, which often ensnares our hearts and lives. We believe that the gospel message transforms every aspect of a person's life. That is a radical belief, but hardly a personally harmful one. Suppose you embrace the things we teach at Living Hope. In that case, you will seek to glorify God in all you do; know that you are created intentionally as a male (man) or a female (woman); love and value others as much if not more than you do yourself; share lavishly of your time, talents, and resources; look at others as unique creations of God, each person bearing the image of the Father; act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God; believe that every life has dignity and value; and know that every person is created for a unique purpose that will bring joy to their lives, build the kingdom, and bring glory to God.

Living Hope Ministries doesn't do some things: We don't encourage anyone to use off-label, life-altering drugs as a solution to our problems. We don't encourage people to remove perfectly healthy body parts altering their appearance to convince others and themselves that they are something other than what they are created to be. We don't believe that change is impossible because change is a constant part of the human story. We don't encourage

experimenting with various types of sexual expression but believe God has spoken clearly about the best expression for human sexuality. We don't encourage people to embrace a victim mentality but instead embrace the power of God to make all things new and forgive those who have wronged us. We don't believe people are limited to stereotypic expressions of masculinity or femininity but are free to express the giftings and talents God has given to them. We don't believe sex is assigned at birth by any earthly person but revealed at birth, affirming God's design and intent. We don't believe our mission is to be against anyone but for God, the truth of His Word, and His kingdom.

I genuinely love the individuals who are speaking out against LHM. But, I grieve for their stated pain and pray earnestly for their healing and peace. I also lament that they have chosen to interpret their lives through the lens of self and the world, thereby rewriting history to support their narrative.

I'm not that shocked we are under such attack. For thirty-two years, Living Hope Ministries has proclaimed God's truth as we journey with those seeking sexual and relational wholeness through a more intimate relationship with Jesus Christ. People become whole and healthy when they know Christ, embrace His purpose for their life and follow Him as Lord. Of course, the world and the devil will not applaud our mission, but our audience is not the world. We never sought to be an international ministry, be in a "documentary" seen around the world, or have articles written about us that span the globe. But obviously, God knows others who need to know the Truth that sets men and women free. I am honored to be numbered with Christ, rejected by some, but embraced by the Father. Over fifty people have contacted us to join our groups or find support in this past month alone. God is at work to bring hope and wholeness to those who have ears to hear.



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FSM

Ministry Travels



Laura Leigh Stanlake,
Director of
Women's
Ministry

Our staff has been astonished at the number of invitations that have come our way this year! We have been unusually busy throughout the lockdown and, as the country opened up, we got much busier. While Stephen Black and Laura Beth Perry have already kept strong travel schedules, in this season the entire staff has traveled and spoken more as well.

One new contributor to the increase has been because of the American Family Association and their subsidiary department, American Family Studios' film, In His Image. The advisement, access, testimonies, and time that First Stone Ministries contributed to their making of the film has brought a swell of visibility to our resourceful ministry. This is a wonderful tool to offer the church and First Stone Ministries has been offering it as an element of an equipping weekend.

Jim Farrington, Joseph Thiessen, and Aaron Girod have been speaking more than usual and it has been a joy having them add their gifts and voices to our travel engagements. Though the following list of activities is vast, it is only one portion of the work we do. Our staff maintains office hours, sees people for pastoral care discipleship, conducts pastoral care support groups, and ministry by phone and video interviews. Our ministry, primarily Stephen and Laura Beth have also been asked to give many interviews in the media. Additionally, we receive several phone and email requests for help each week. Maintaining the literature for all the outspeaking, packing and mailing orders, and writing are normal parts of most weeks. Stephen continues his webcast, Freedom Realized Live on Fridays at 10:00 a.m. CT.

In our offerings of "In His Image – Weekends of Freedom" conferences, we screen the movie and, present a Q&A time following. For the groups having us out repeatedly or for successive meetings, we offer instruction in the understanding of same-sex attractions and teaching(s) on the root cause of homosexuality so that the church is less intimidated, more informed and equipped for ministry. We also offer some discussion about how Jesus restores broken lives, the truth about how we can



Busted window after being broken in by thieves. However, the Lord protected us! Traveling to Ohio



Stephen presenting staff, Cornerstone AG, Sidney, OH



Staff & Volunteer Leadership Retreat, Caney, OK
Team and Character Building with Dr. Gerald Coury



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be more effective in our response to people coming out to us with clarity regarding biblical truth. We also expose the erosion of so-called "LGBTQ+ Christianity" and "sexual minorities" as normative which we are encountering at an alarming rate in the evangelical church in America.

Laura Beth Perry is asked for her testimony most of all. It is a timely testimony of the transformation of a former transgender. The "trans" conversation is impacting our culture heavily and her testimony is one of the few offering amazing hope at this time.

Pray for our staff. Much has been planned for 2022. We are planning the God's Voice Conference, more scheduled travel, more writing, and the creation of audiobooks from Laura Beth and Stephen's books.

We will have a break as we enter the holidays. We have less intensity of travel in the next two months, as several projects need our attention. Lastly, please pray for Laura Beth and Stephen as they travel again to Grand Rapids, MI as they will be sharing in several places, much like Laura Leigh and Stephen shared last month. The need for help is greater now than ever before with so much confusion.

For the list below: IHI WOF = In His Image Weekend of Freedom, FSM = Entire First Stone Ministries staff, SHB = Stephen Black, LLS = Laura Leigh Stanlake, CJT = Joseph Thiessen, LBP = Laura Beth Perry, JCF = Jim Farrington and DAG = Aaron Girod.

- **Sidney, OH** (Apr 7-14) IHI WOF at Cornerstone Assembly of God – FSM
- **Caney, OK** (Apr 30-May 2) Living Free Team Retreat, and Church Speaking, – FSM and Volunteer Leaders
- **Appleton, WI** (May 15-17) – LBP Church
- **Chesapeake, VA** (June 5-6) – LBP Church
- **Ft Worth, TX** (June 21-24) NRB – FSM Display, Literature table, and Interviews for LBP and SHB
- **Tupelo, MS** (June 25-29) AFA Marriage and Family Life Conference – SHB, JCF, and LBP
- **Riverside, CA** (May 21-31) Jesus Gathering Weekend – SHB, JCF, and LBP
- **Galena, KS** (June 5-7) – LBP Testimony
- **Shawnee, OK** (June 8-9, 15-16) Super Summer at OBU – FSM
- **Joplin, MO** (July 17-19) LBP, JCF, and CJT at Christpoint Church
- **Tulsa, OK** (Aug 8, 15, 22, 29) Asbury UMC August Teaching Series on Sex – SHB, LLS, LBP, CJT, and JCF
- **Oklahoma City, OK** (Sep 9) Pregnancy Resource Network Retreat – LLS
- **Coeur d'Alene, ID** (Sept 17-23) 3 Main Services at Candlelight Christian Fellowship and 2 Leadership Meetings – SHB
- **Comanche, OK** (Sept 25) Beautifully Broken Women's Retreat – LBP and LLS



Staff setting up Information Booth, Asbury UMC, Tulsa, OK



Stephen Black sharing, Asbury UMC, Tulsa, OK



Chris Giles, therapist, giving clear, common sense answer in Panel Discussion, Asbury UMC, Tulsa, OK

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- Lincoln, NE – LBP Testimony
- Murrieta, CA (Sept 29-30) Filming with Our Watch – LBP
- Hickory, NC (Oct 1-4) IHI WOF & Open Door Baptist Church – SHB, LBP, and CJT
- Indianapolis, IN (Oct 7-10) Revive Our Hearts – LBP Testimony
- Grand Rapids, MI (Oct 7-11) American Decency Association, IHI Screening, SHB & LLS sharing, testifying and teaching, and four churches impacted – Dutch Reformed Churches and GR Church
- Poteau, OK (Oct 16-17) IHI WOF serving LeFlore Baptist Association – SHB, CJT, LBP, JCF and DAG
- Phoenix, AZ (Oct 18-22) Vineyard National Conference – LLS
- Guthrie, OK (Oct 20) Seward Rd Baptist Church Day Women's Retreat – LBP and LLS
- Enid, OK (Nov 6) Cherokee Strip Baptist Association IHI WOF – Linda J, SHB, JCT, and DAG
- Pittsburg, PA (Nov 11-12) Penn State – LBP Testimony
- Norman, OK (Nov 7, 14, 21) Trinity Baptist Church IHI WOF, IHI Screening, 3 Weeks of Presentations – FSM, SHB teaching, LLS co-teaching.

FSM



All 10 teachings on
"The Truth About Sex"
can be accessed at:

<https://asburytulsa.teachable.com/p/the-truth-about-sex>



Stephen Black giving thorough answer about LGBTQ+ Christianity during Panel Discussion, Asbury UMC, Tulsa, OK



Laura Beth Perry sharing, Asbury UMC, Tulsa, OK



Joseph, Pastor James Lambert, Pastor Daniel Dennison (moderator), Chris Giles, Laura Beth, and Stephen. Lively Panel Discussion, Asbury UMC, Tulsa, OK



Joseph Thiessen sharing, Asbury UMC, Tulsa, OK



Fun Times with Stephen, Laura Beth, and Joseph travelling to Hickory, NC



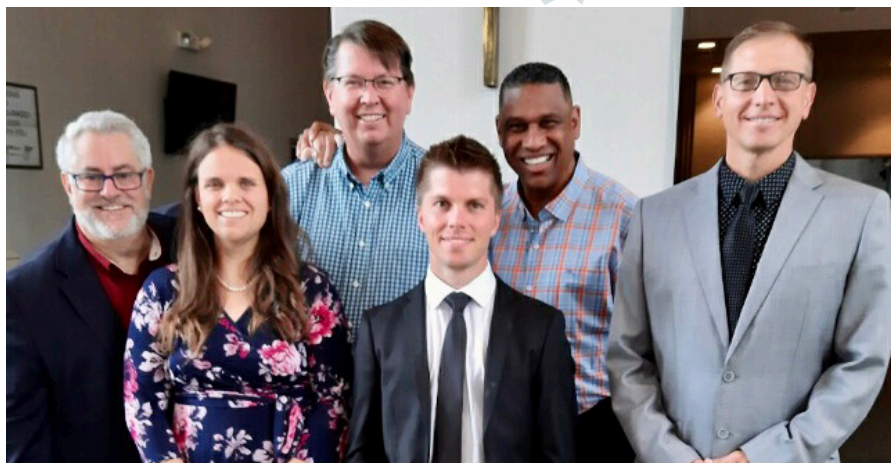
Stephen, Laura Beth, and Joseph, Crawdad Baseball Stadium, Hickory, NC



Laura Beth, Austin & Cassie, Stephen and Joseph, Crawdad Baseball Stadium, Hickory, NC



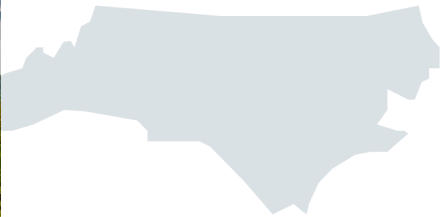
Our Courageous Hosts: Austin & Cassie Annas, Hickory, NC



FSM Team, Austin Annas, Evangelism Pastor Jaime Torres, and Pastor Shawn Davis Open Door Baptist Church, Hickory, NC



Laura Beth, Joseph, and Stephen enjoyed fellowship with a friend in Boone, NC



Laura Beth, Nancy DeMoss Wolgemuth, at Revive 2021, Indianapolis, IN



Laura Leigh Stanlake sharing in Grand Rapids, MI



Joseph, Aaron, Laura Beth, Stephen and Jim at our Information Booth, Poteau, OK



FSM Staff with Host, Bentley Hill, on World's Highest Hill, Cavanal Hill, Poteau, OK



FSM Staff with Host, Susan Hill, on World's Highest Hill, Cavanal Hill, Poteau, OK



FSM Staff at IHI Screening Panel Discussion Trinity Baptist Church, Norman, OK



Laura Beth (3rd from right) presenting to Kingdom Thinkers at Penn State, Beaver Campus, Pittsburgh, PA



FSM

Living Free Support Group

Our work on the development of the Living Free curriculum continues to progress. We ran a pilot program last year working to pull together the subject matter and teaching points for the material. We made good progress and have solid body of material. As we proceed forward, we will refine and rewrite through this year, pressing toward a useful workbook that fits the culture that First Stone is most influential in—evangelical, orthodox Christianity.

Many have asked us why we decided to stop using the curriculum by our friends at Desert Stream. As Desert Stream has sought to find a voice for their realm of influence, we have also looked at how that impacts our offering. Both of our ministries have longevity and respect in healing ministry. What has become evident, however, is that they are moving closer to their Catholic influence and focusing more on that connection. We are not able to move in that direction with them. We are strictly evangelical and have been called to that work. We honor their ongoing friendship and acknowledge the years of beneficial influence, healing and training we gained from them.

We will begin the new year of Living Free on Thursdays at 7:00 p.m. beginning January 13, 2022. Applications are now being accepted. For more information and to apply, click the following link: www.firststone.org/living-free **FSM**



easyTithe

DONOR MATCH CHALLENGE

Our donation provider is offering a special matching program.

For every donor who adds a new recurring donation between November 1 and December 31 of 2021, easyTithe (our provider) will match that first gift, up to \$50, with a maximum match of \$1000.

To qualify, more than one installment must be set up and the first recurring gift must be transacted by December 31, 2021. First Stone Ministries will receive the matching gifts in the first quarter of 2022.

Whatever your ability in giving may be, please know that we appreciate whatever amount you can give.



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firststone.org/marketplace

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Coming Soon!
New resources from AFA exposing the dangerous Revoice Movement.
<https://bit.ly/dvd-perkins>



Groups



PARENTS, FAMILY & FRIENDS

MEETS 1ST & 3RD FRIDAYS
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LIVING FREE

STARTING JANUARY 13
APPLICATION REQUIRED

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Laura Leigh Stanlake
Dir. of Women's Ministries



Joseph Thiessen
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Jim Farrington
Men's Minister



Laura Beth Perry
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Aaron Girod
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For more information about each staff member, including links to any blogs, please visit firststone.org/staff.
Because our spam traffic is so high, please initiate contact with us using our contact form on the link above.

Every Friday at 10 a.m.

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Host: Stephen H. Black



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