

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

## Foreword

It has been many years since First Stone Ministries wrote to request permission to reprint this wonderful article. The ministry that first published it and the people who contributed to it were truly foundational to the work that First Stone Ministries continues to do. Of late, we have been reviewing old articles for their content and relevance to our time in history.

The article you are about to read still has "teeth." The understanding of "relinquishment" and how it can affect our lives and the lives of those we love or have loved is still vigorous today. Our desire is that it is a helpful tool for the variety of readers who receive our newsletter.

Metanoia is no longer a working ministry, but their influence in many of our lives continues.

The Staff of First Stone

## Relinquishment: What Does it Really Mean to "Let Go"?

by Bob Davies and Lori Rentzel

The Turning Point for Family and Friends ... to "give up" someone we love.

### What Is Relinquishment?

One of the most frustrating pieces of advice one Christian can give another is to "just give your problems up to God." Most people aren't sure what "giving up" really means. Three basic dictionary definitions of "relinquishment" are:

1. to surrender a right
2. to put aside a plan
3. to loose one's hold on something or someone



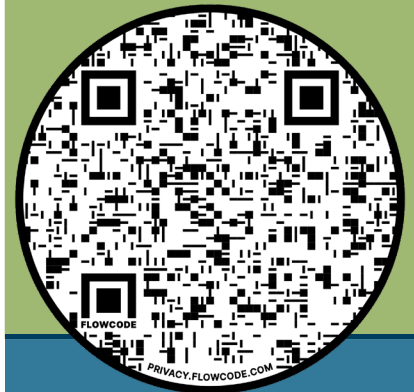
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This lays out what we're talking about in more concrete terms. The kind of relinquishment we're dealing with usually involves all three of these actions!

### Who Is Affected By Relinquishment?

All of us in some way are involved in relinquishment. Daily we must make choices. Things that separate us from God must be given up. We can understand this when it concerns things, but when it comes to people, there is often confusion as to our Christian responsibility. Also, relinquishment is so difficult because it often involves someone we are closest to, just the last person we would want to let go of.

Hannah knew the pain of relinquishment. She was a godly woman who prayed continually for a son, vowing she would dedicate him to the Lord's service. God granted her prayer when she gave birth to Samuel. Hannah brought him to the temple, saying, "I prayed for this child, and the Lord has granted me what I asked of Him. So now I give him to the Lord. For his whole life, he will be given over to the Lord." (1 Samuel



1:27,28). That must have been a very painful relinquishment for a mother who had spent her whole life longing for a child! But Hannah's priorities were in order, and she knew to whom Samuel belonged. Relinquishment is never easy -- people who say that it is probably haven't yet experienced it! It is something that is meaningful only in the context of deeply committed relationships.

### Is Relinquishment A Form Of Punishment?

When God asks us to let go of someone close to us, the pain of letting go may feel like punishment -- but it's NOT!. Relinquishment is not the act of God removing from our lives someone we're sinfully attached to. Real "giving up" is a mature decision we make in response to God's request. Abraham saw his surrender of Isaac as an act of worship (Genesis 22:5). When God asks this of us, He is testing our loyalty, perfecting our ability to trust Him with that which is most precious to us. The fact that God requests us to relinquish someone is an

encouraging sign that He knows we already have established a relationship of trust with Him. He doesn't ask us to relinquish above the level of our capacity.

### How Does Relinquishment Differ from Abandonment?

Relinquishment is "giving someone up;" abandonment is "giving up on someone." When we let go of someone we love, we stop taking responsibility for them, but we don't stop fulfilling our responsibilities to them. In one counseling session, we talked with parents whose Christian son was active in the gay lifestyle. He was content being gay but had difficulty keeping work, and his parents frequently bailed him out financially. When they relinquished their boy, the financial support stopped, though they continued to communicate their love to him in other ways.

### What Are Some Aspects of Relinquishment?

- **Facing Our Limitations**

Eventually we reach the point of acknowledging our own helplessness in relating to our loved one, realising we've reached the limits of our human love and wisdom. We are ready to acknowledge our need to let God take over.

- **Acknowledging God's Ownership**

Like Hannah, we realise that the person we love belongs to God -- not to us. Though we may have been entrusted with a position of care and responsibility toward them, they ultimately belong to God and are His responsibility.

- **Letting Go of Our Expectations**

We may have had many things we hoped would be fulfilled by the person we love: hopes that our children would marry and raise families; exciting plans for the future we made with our husband or wife when we married. And it's certainly not wrong for us to have these hopes! But part of relinquishment is coming to terms with the fact that these things may not happen. We surrender our expectations, realising that God will still bring fulfillment to our lives, though maybe not in the way we had planned.

- **Giving to Someone the Same Freedom God Gives Us: Responsibility for One's Own Choices**

This is perhaps the most difficult part of relinquishment, allowing our loved ones to face the consequences of their own actions, even if they experience pain and tragedy in the process. It is important to realise that this does not reveal a lack of love on our part. As his children, God gives to each one of us that same

*continued on page 6*

# Testimonies of Grace

Being an independent missionary was stressful, and unfortunately, after 15 years, I was unknowingly suffering burnout. Burnout turned into a crisis. In desperation, I emailed several ministries. Only First Stone reached back across the ocean to me. They started ministry long-distance, and that was before long-distance ministry was easy. First Stone gave me a safe place to come back to. A place where I could come back for rest, healing, and to begin the journey towards restoration.

My restoration didn't come easy, not because of FSM's lack of trying, but because of my own overwhelming doubts, fears, and stubbornness. I'm grateful for FSM. If you have been wounded and disenfranchised, and as long as you're willing to walk towards Jesus, they are willing to walk with you, even if it means going the extra miles to reach you in the first place. ~ LG

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When I came to First Stone, I had experienced a fair amount of forgiveness with my parents. God had also revealed to me I wasn't born gay. Both experiences brought a good measure of freedom from what had entrapped me in homosexuality.

One of the things I still lacked, however, was confidence in my femininity. At First Stone I learned about God's design and plan for femininity and masculinity, and through biblical discipleship I grew in areas necessary for walking in healthy femininity. I learned, for example, how to have healthy same-sex relationships (friendships with women), and I learned to honor and relate with men in healthy ways. I also grew in my ability to respond to love, and my heart came alive as a woman. Femininity went from being foreign to me to being enjoyable and pleasantly familiar. ~ K

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I was saved in 1985. During that time, I was free from porn for about 1-1/2 years. Then at a youth camp I found some porn. That began my 32-year battle with porn. I struggled off and on. My bondage destroyed me and my family. In 2005 I reached out to First Stone and began the process of true accountability and support, but I decided to drop out and deal with it on my own. So in a short amount of time, I ended up wallowing in my vomit again. In 2019 I decided to go back to First Stone to try it again. This time I stuck with, and I've been porn free ever since! I praise God all the time for this ministry. ~ DM

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When I came to FSM, I was running from intimacy with others due to growing up in a home that was neglectful to my emotional and relational needs and where

I experienced trauma from sexual and physical abuse. I met the Lord who literally saved me from hopelessness and brokenness, but I ran from the church because of fear.

I also feared my gender. I didn't understand who I was as a woman of God, the First Peter 3 woman that could stand in quiet confidence as a daughter and a princess. He wanted to show me who I was and how He could rescue me from pain and the deep struggle of not understanding my gender. FSM taught me how to admit my struggle, my hiddenness and unfolded truth that was deep within me by always pointing me back to my Creator. I learned that my gender wasn't a mistake and to trust that the beauty He spoke over me at the beginning of time wasn't something to fear. He showed me how beautiful His Bride, the Church, really is. And how to stand as that quiet confident woman of God. ~ MH

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When we first came to First Stone as parents to an adult child who believed he was gay, we were looking for answers and healing. Our desire was that after a few visits our son, age 24, would understand God's perfect Design for his masculine sexuality. He agreed to come with us for a meeting.

We met with Stephen and our son met with a male counselor. We went to lunch together afterwards only to hear him say he would not be returning for help. We were crushed but not surprised.

We began attending parent support group. I remember hearing from one couple that first night say they had been there for 10 years, I thought "Oh no, God will heal our son much quicker than that. God wouldn't require us to walk that long in this storm." It's been over 10 years now, we are still standing on God's Word and trusting Him to guide us, praying that one day we will celebrate with our son as He walks away from this sinful lifestyle.



God's Word offers Hope. We are thankful for ministries, like First Stone, who are in the trenches teaching Truth to any that have ears to hear. "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 NIV ~ Parents of Prodigals

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Coming to First Stone, I was confused by my same-sex desires and unsure of whether or not I wanted to be gay. I knew from my Baptist background that God didn't condone that, yet I struggled to submit my right to control my feelings and sense of self to a God that I couldn't even bring myself to trust. Nevertheless, my parents relocated our family from another state to Oklahoma City so that I could receive ministry through Living Free sessions and individual counseling.

I was scared of what I might encounter; but, through the work of my servant-leaders at First Stone, I was graciously confronted with the Truth. I began to experience a walk with Jesus in a new way, a way that started with a healthy fear of God but grew beyond that into overwhelming love and peace, especially through "hearts open, walls down" worship. I am continually blessed by the ongoing investment of the First Stone team in my life! ~ M

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I stepped foot in First Stone a few years ago knowing that I could not tackle alone the issues I was facing which had crippled my



life for over 2 decades. I came to the realization that I had lived a powerless life and needed help. Being a victim of sexual abuse from an older woman minister and living with her for several years as a caretaker, I was broken and in need of help. The counseling at First Stone helped me to overcome the bondage of codependency, emotional dependency, and shame I had covered up for many years. I established a life of independence and strengthened my identity as a single woman in the Lord. I have become more confident in my decision-making and have made huge progress in renewing my mind from the sexual brokenness that occurred. I am hopeful about my future and expect God to bring amazing things into my life as I continue to learn to have Him and Him alone as my source. I have been set free from fear and rejection as I have grown to realize my identity is not in how I have been mistreated. I've grown in my value and worth as a woman. ~ IM

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"The spiritual discipleship and mentoring from First Stone Ministries did more for my recovery in 6 months than 15 years with professional counselors, therapists, life coaches, and psychiatrists. The FSM staff knows how to work with the sexually broken. Stephen Black offers long-suffering, compassion, spiritual guidance, love, and tenderness. Stephen offers a path back to the heart of Jesus Christ and perspectives on how to live sexually pure. I am grateful to Stephen for holding my hand through the trenches of heart change while reflecting Jesus Christ." ~ JCS

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# Sabbatical



Board Grants Stephen Sabbatical  
[firststone.org/articles/post/sabb](https://firststone.org/articles/post/sabb)

# Night of prayer



August 15, 2023 - RSVP to Attend  
[bit.ly/prayer-8-23](https://bit.ly/prayer-8-23)

## MAJOR MOVE

First Stone Ministries  
PO Box 76476  
Oklahoma City, OK 73147-2476

A sewage flood forced us to move.  
Please note our new mailing address.

freedom of choice, and His relationship to us is one of perfect love.

- **Giving Up Efforts to Control Circumstances**

In a very practical way, we must begin to truly trust in the work of the Holy Spirit. Coming away from homosexuality requires a vision and determination that can only come from God. He alone can bring conviction of sin and a desire for change. We must begin to act on what we know is true: that God can work out someone's situation better than anything we could come up with.

### **When Do We Relinquish Someone?**

Though we may have friends admonishing us to "let go" of someone, God is the only one who knows when we are actually capable of doing this. Though we may be continually "giving" someone to the Lord in our prayers, there will come a specific time when God will ask us to let go, and that is when the anointing and strength will be there to do it. When God commanded Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, it wasn't when his son was a newborn baby, but when he was probably a teenager. The request came when Abraham was ready, after he had seen God's faithfulness proven in many other circumstances.

### **What Is the Purpose Of Relinquishment?**

Why does God ask us to relinquish someone we love? From our finite perspective, we wonder, "Could He possibly be insecure about our love for Him? Why does God require such drastic proof of our commitment?" The answers to these questions come only as we grow in the knowledge of God's character, realising that everything He asks of us is for our benefit. The purpose of relinquishment becomes more clear as we look at the results in our lives: increased security and greater freedom.

- **Security**

Relinquishment tests the foundation on which our lives are based. Jesus talks about setting our affections on things above, but most of us will admit our affections are pretty earthbound. We care deeply about our children, our families, our friends and our jobs. These are legitimate concerns! When God says, He wants us to love Him above all others, He isn't implying that we should be careful not to love others too much. But He wants us, above all, to have our ultimate commitment to Him and to have our ultimate security in Him. The world we live in is unstable. The people we are most about are not unshakable pillars. Security in God is not an option. It is a total necessity if our lives are to be founded on something solid. If our securities have become fastened too tightly on something shakeable, relinquishment

loosens our hold on the temporal and places our grasp back on the eternal and unshakable.

- **Freedom**

When we are able to release the one we are so concerned about to God's care, we are freed from an "emotional roller coaster" type of existence where our moods are dependent on our loved one's actions. One mother of a gay son knew relinquishment had taken place when she no longer sank into depression every time her son mentioned his involvement in the gay lifestyle. This is not to say we are totally unaffected by the actions of the other person, just that we are not controlled by them. Another benefit of relinquishment is that our minds and hearts are freed to focus on other things and to care about other people. When we are so wrapped up with one individual, other relationships and responsibilities may be neglected. "Letting go" enables us to engage in new pursuits with joy and enthusiasm. We are freed from the compulsion to try and bring that person "back to the Lord," and we are released from a sense of guilt and responsibility for their choices. Although we may not realise it, such pressures from us may actually have the opposite effect of driving that person further from God, rather than further from his sin. Relinquishment frees us to love that person in a more relaxed, non-possessive way, allowing them the freedom to choose God for themselves without the pressure of our expectations.

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LIVING FREE

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# Staff



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For more information about each staff member, including links to any blogs, please click their photo or visit [firststone.org/staff](http://firststone.org/staff).



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*Thankful for You!*

A recent forced move jumbled up the timing of well, everything.

We are truly grateful for those who served on a moment's notice to help us move, and for those who graciously fed us.

For those who didn't know, we are safely in our new location, but are still surrounded by unopened boxes.

In light of these sudden changes, please consider making a special donation to help cover these unexpected expenses. Please note our new mailing address above and on page 5.

