

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

What's Eating You: A Look at the Rot of Envy

Have you ever felt a little sick when someone else succeeded? That's envy talking. Envy rarely shows itself but prefers to seethe and boil beneath the surface.

We are warned that envy is no small thing but is spiritual cancer. Proverbs 14:30 puts it bluntly: *"Envy makes the bones rot."* What a vivid picture of how it drains life from within. While we may think envy is a harmless, personal struggle within, it can block growth, damage relationships, and even lead to sin that destroys.



**Laura
Leigh
Stanlake,**
Ministry
Director

Cain's story is a clear example. When God accepted Abel's offering but rejected Cain's, Cain didn't turn inward for repentance. He glanced sideways at his brother's favor, and envy took root. God counseled him, *"You will be accepted if you do what is right. But if you refuse to do what is right, then watch out! Sin is crouching at the door, eager to control you. But you must subdue it and be its master (Genesis 4:7 NLT)."* But Cain opened that door wide. Envy led him to murder.

Galatians 5:19–21 reminds us that envy is among the "works of the flesh" that lead to destruction. It's in the same category as sexual immorality, idolatry, and hatred, and is not just a shortcoming, but a serious spiritual issue.

And Proverbs 23:17 reminds us of where our eyes should be: *"Do not let your heart envy sinners, but always be zealous for the fear of the Lord."* In other words, don't envy someone else's path or success, but fear the Lord and trust His timing, His favor, and His provision for you.

Pay attention to what you are thinking and feeling. Envy cannot grow where contentment lives. The antidote is intimacy with God, living as loved, walking obediently by His Spirit, cultivating thankfulness for your life, and trusting that He sees and rewards rightly.

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Healing the Ache of Fatherlessness



**Jim
Farrington,**
Men's
Minister

The absence or distortion of fatherhood is one of the deepest wounds in our culture. "When we fail to receive from our earthly fathers what God intended, or we receive something not intended, like abuse, a father wound can occur." The Father Wound is the painful ache left when we don't receive what we were meant to from our earthly fathers—affirmation, protection, or unconditional love. In that emptiness, we're tempted to seek

worth and identity from anything that offers it, even if it harms us.

It's no wonder this wound causes trouble in a believer's walk with God. Whether sourced in experience or perception, we can develop a mindset or heart attitude toward God the Father rooted in old pain—wounds, abandonment, neglect, or shame. Many believers worship Jesus, read the Bible, and speak of faith, yet unconsciously pull back from the Father-heart of God, yet Jesus said, "If you've seen Me, you've seen the Father." Our spiritual identity is deeply tied to how we perceive God as Father.

In my story, my father was impossible to please. He couldn't delight in me simply because I was his son. That made it nearly impossible to imagine a Creator who wanted me, let alone delighted in me. Yet Psalm 18:19 says, "He brought me out into a broad place; He rescued me because He delighted in me." How does your heart respond to that?

This wound doesn't just affect men. Women feel it too. It can lock us in shame, distort our worth, and sabotage our relationships. Author Gordon Dalbey, who writes extensively about the healing of the masculine soul, recognizes that the father wound is central to a man's struggle to define himself. And according to American Family News, even our society reflects this crisis: "The government has failed at fatherhood."

But there is hope.

Malachi 4:6 reveals God's plan: 'He will turn the hearts of the fathers to the

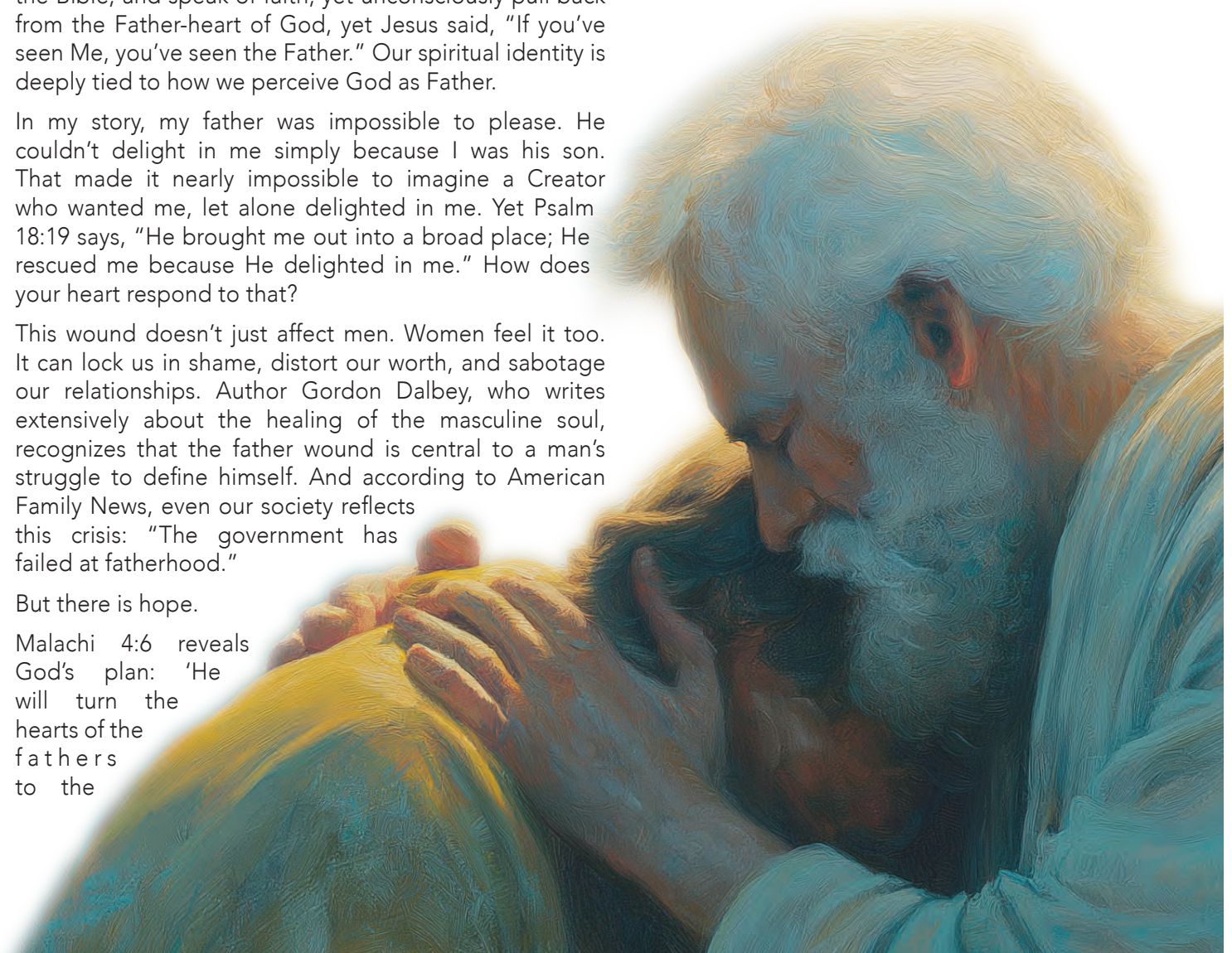
children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers.' Healing begins with forgiveness. It didn't erase the lies I believed, but it opened the door to truth. The Holy Spirit meets me in my pain and is restoring my sonship.

Healing is a process, not a moment, that invites us to know the Father as present with us. As I walk it out, I'm learning to live as a son who is loved, delighted in, and known by my Heavenly Father."

Endnotes:

1. First Stone Ministries, *Living Free*, (FSM, 2024), 10-1.
2. John 14:9
3. Joecks, Victor. "The government has failed at fatherhood." June 11, 2025. <https://afn.net/opinions/victor-joecks/2025/06/11/the-government-has-failed-at-fatherhood/> accessed June 26, 2025.

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The Problem with Unforgiveness



Bronwyn Welch,
Women's
Minister

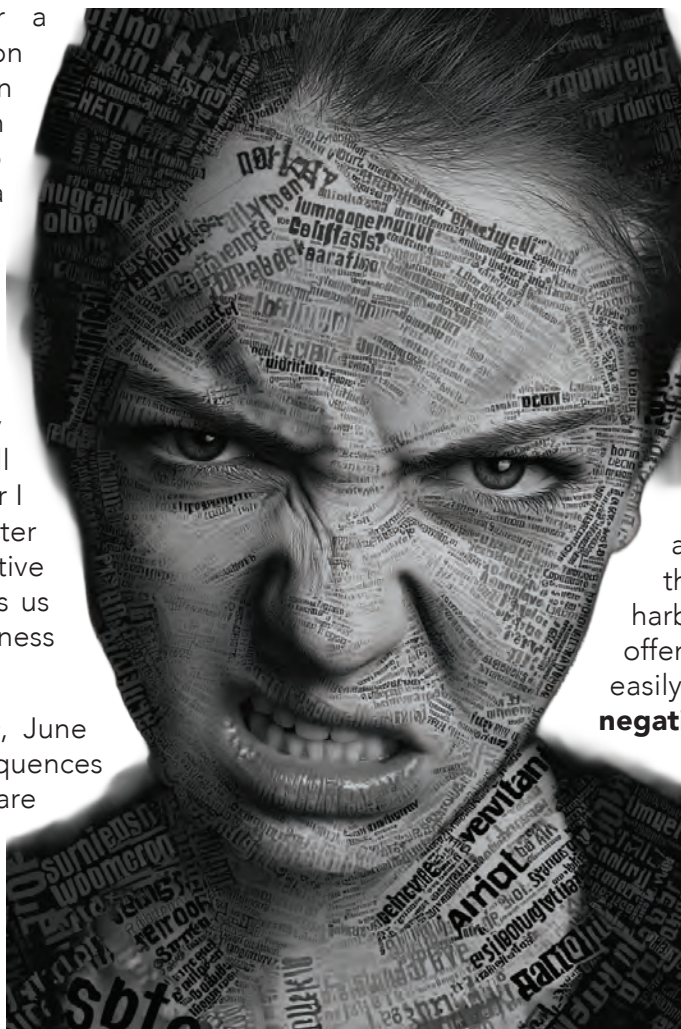
Unforgiveness is a rascal, carrying serious consequences in our relationship with God and with others. Jesus tells us in Matthew 6:14–15 (NLT), 'If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins.' That should make us think twice and take unforgiveness more seriously.

Beyond our own need for forgiveness, unforgiveness can produce spiritual dryness, a blocked prayer life, or a diminished sense of connection with God, especially when we need Him most. It can even open the door to the demonic and reveal a graceless heart. Forgiveness, by contrast, is of God and reflects God's heart.

As Peter preached in Acts 8:22–23 (NLT): 'Repent of your wickedness and pray to the Lord. Perhaps he will forgive your evil thoughts, for I can see that you are full of bitter jealousy and are held captive by sin.' Unforgiveness makes us captives to sin, but forgiveness sets us free.

In her booklet, *Forgiveness*, June Hunt lists some consequences of unforgiveness that are important to note: "The unforgiving heart is **judgmental** – focusing on the past wrongs that the offender committed... **merciless** – rehearsing the

reasons why the offender does not deserve mercy... **resentful** – begrudging the success of the offender... **vengeful** – rejoicing when the offender experiences failure, difficulty, or hurt... **maligning** – talking to others about the faults of the offender with the intent to hurt... **prideful** – elevating self above the offender, who is considered less deserving... **profane** – verbally abusive toward the offender... **complaining** – quick to quarrel over personal choices, words, and deeds... **impatient** – exhibiting little patience while being easily provoked... **bitter** – feeling weighed down with unresolved anger.



The unforgiving heart has **condemnation** – being intolerant of any present failures of the offender... **contempt** – looking down without mercy on the offender... **envy** – coveting the accomplishments of the offender... **retaliation** – desiring to get even with the offender... **slander** – sharing unnecessary negatives about the offender... **haughtiness** – acting with arrogance toward the offender... **bitterness** – harboring hostility toward the offender... **annoyance** – feeling easily irritated by the offender... **negativity** – feeling no joy and no approval concerning the offender" (pp.27-30). This list displays the serious characteristics of unforgiveness and demonstrates how it disrupts our relationship with God and others.

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Save the Date

**Restored Hope**
Network™

Annual Conference
COLORADO SPRINGS
June 12-13, 2026

restoredhopenetwork.org

Jesus Met Me in My Control and Freed Me



Joseph Thiessen,
Office
Admin

Jesus has been leading me through deep soul work—bringing up painful experiences to help me acknowledge how they affected me, learn from them, and repent where needed.

While working through a video and workbook on manipulation and control, I grew uncomfortable. At first, I was focused on how others had manipulated or controlled me. But the Holy Spirit gently shifted my focus to the log in my own eye.

He brought up memories of times I had been manipulated in ways that seemed playful but were aimed at gaining attention, praise, or control. It hurt to realize I'd been coerced in the name of fun, but deeper still was the realization that I've done the same.

The thought of this was familiar and painful to think about; I knew that I had engaged in this sort of behavior myself. I remembered manipulating others to join me in sin or cleverly trying to secure more of someone's time instead of trusting God to provide what I needed relationally.

After I finished my study, I turned to my journal and wrote the following:

I see how I too want others to be as I am, and that little games I play are attempts to manipulate others to get

them to do as I want. My own unsettledness is grounds for manipulation of others, even attempts to control them. It's ugly. It's wrong. It needs to find its end on the cross.

I prayed:

"Father, I ask for your forgiveness for this behavior. I renounce it and ask for your help to walk in repentance from it. Free me from codependent behavior that keeps this control at play. Teach me how to relinquish everyone and everything back to you."

Right after writing that, three involuntary things happened: I burped, yawned, and stretched my chest forward. Because these followed repentance, I wondered if a stronghold had been broken.

Later that day—and every day since—chronic fatigue that had plagued me since childhood was gone. For most of my life, I've needed a daily nap to function. But aside from allergies or a rough night's sleep, I haven't needed a nap since!

I'm still in awe over this miracle.

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re@storied25
SOUTHWEST

BEYOND LGBTQ STORIES OF TRANSFORMATION
TOOLS FOR MINISTRY

WHEN THE CHURCH
IS EQUIPPED,
NEW STORIES ARE TOLD.

Nov. 7-8, 2025
Radiant Church
Surprise, AZ

Early-bird rate ends Sept. 1
\$79 (regular \$99)

Register Now! →

restoryministries.org/conferences

Upcoming Groups



OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Tuesdays
AUGUST 2025

FEAR OF MAN

UNDERSTANDING THE ROOT OF
APPROVAL ADDICTION

REORIENTING YOUR FOCUS:
PLEASING GOD OVER MAN

STEPS TO OVERCOME
APPROVAL ADDICTION

CULTIVATING A GOD-CENTERED
COMMUNITY

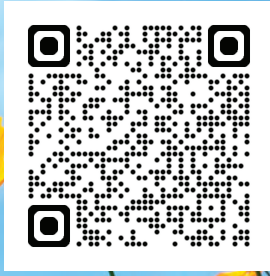


[FIRSTSTONE.ORG/AUGUST-SERIES](https://firststone.org/august-series)



LIVING
Free

begins
SEPTEMBER 16, 2025



**INFORMATION &
APPLICATION**

[FIRSTSTONE.ORG/LIVING-FREE](https://firststone.org/living-free)

*If you are a parent with an LGBTQ loved one,
we have two group options for you...*

ONLINE

1st Monday



IN-PERSON

3rd Friday



Be
STEADFAST
PARENTS GROUP
1 COR 15:58

firststone.org/parents-group

Join us quarterly to pray for FSM

FRIDAYS

July 11th

October 10th



bit.ly/prayer-rsvp

With enough interest, we may stream these.

Staff

For more information about each staff member, including links to any blogs, please visit firststone.org/staff.



Laura Leigh Stanlake
Executive Director



Jim Farrington
Men's Minister
Be Steadfast Coordinator

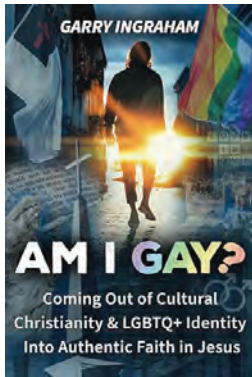


Joseph Thiessen
Office Administrator



Bronwyn Welch
Women & Parents Minister

Recommended Reading



Am I Gay?: Coming Out of Cultural Christianity & LGBTQ+ Identity Into Authentic Faith in Jesus

My friend and mentor, Pastor John Hawco, often said, “In the American church, my fear is that many have been inoculated to the gospel, confusing religion with true faith.” This story is about a God who relentlessly pursues and a church that often struggles to respond well to sexual sin and identity issues. More importantly, it offers hope for how the church can do better, living in both love and truth, with strength and compassion. It’s a call to invite broken people into real, growing relationships with Jesus and His authentic community. The church can become a vibrant, well-equipped “teaching hospital” for the wounded, offering belonging, purpose, love, and meaning.

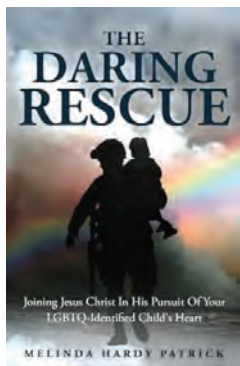
Amazon link: <https://amzn.to/44FvuD0>



All Things New: A Former Lesbian's Lifelong Search for Love

For those who experience same-sex attraction, the love we often seek in others can only be truly fulfilled by the One who created us. The emptiness we feel is meant to draw us closer to God. Jesus Christ alone satisfies the heart’s deepest hunger. Once filled with His love, we can love others—men and women—through Him. For Ministry Leaders - How should you respond when someone’s life contradicts your beliefs? This book offers a loving, eye-opening approach that promotes healing for them and growth for you. For families and friends of strugglers, judgment can’t heal, but unconditional love can. This book will help you love those in your life who experience same-sex attraction with compassion and grace.

Amazon link: <https://amzn.to/45Q8Lp6>



The Daring Rescue: Joining Jesus Christ In His Pursuit Of Your LGBTQ-Identified Child's Heart

We’re not just losing children to the LGBTQ community, many parents who once followed Christ are now compromising God’s Word and drifting from their faith.

Since my daughter embraced an LGBTQ identity in 2011, I’ve lived in the tension of grace and truth. As parents, we long to stay close to our children, but our calling as followers of Christ is to be ministers of reconciliation. Loving well while standing firm in truth is God’s best for them, while compromise carries eternal weight.

Our homes are ground zero for Kingdom impact. We are in a spiritual war, and the hearts of our children, and the generations that follow, are on the line.

Amazon link: <https://amzn.to/44oOfT9>



The Healing Church: What Churches Get Wrong about Pornography and How to Fix It

Despite widespread awareness of pornography’s impact, many churches are unprepared to support those struggling with it. Shame keeps people silent, and when they do seek help, leaders often lack effective strategies.

In The Healing Church, Sam Black—former journalist and Director of Recovery Education for Covenant Eyes—offers practical guidance for pastors and ministry leaders. Drawing from over 70 interviews, he shares stories of healing and outlines proven approaches used by churches to restore those trapped in porn and sexual sin.

This book equips leaders to create safe, grace-filled spaces for transformation. The church can ignore, condemn, or guide people to the cross. The cross is where healing happens and broken lives become stronger servants in Christ.

Amazon link: <https://amzn.to/4lfvT5i>



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