

# FIVE FORKS BRETHERN IN CHRIST CHURCH

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**SERMON:** *Put Down Your Stone*

**SERIES:** *Stone & Shield*

**SCRIPTURES:** *John 8:1-11*

**SPEAKER:** *Brady Smith*

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Good morning everyone, I appreciate you all joining us this morning. I'm going to go ahead and address the elephant in the room right away, because I'm sure that for those of you who are sitting here in the auditorium, you may be wondering why I asked you all to grab a stone as you entered. **\*Pic of basket of stones outside Aud\***

Well... as the Student Ministry Pastor we like to play dodgeball with our Middle and High School Students, but sadly we didn't have enough of those, so we are improvising this morning!

Just kidding, just kidding. In a moment you will see why I asked for each of you to pick up a stone on your way in.

You see this morning we are going to take some time to look at a passage that I believe most of you are familiar with. It's a passage and story that I've heard countless times, but I found myself never taking it as seriously as I needed too.

It is the story of Jesus and the woman caught in adultery. We are going to take some time to look more deeply into that passage later on, but let me first provide you with an overview of the story.

Found at the beginning of John chapter 8, Jesus is in Jerusalem and is teaching to this large group of people.

While he has this large group gathered with him, the teachers of the Jewish religious law and the Pharisees bring a woman who was caught in adultery in front of the crowd. **\*Pic Of the woman caught in adultery painting\***

Why did the Pharisees and religious leaders do this? Because they were trying to have the woman stoned for her crimes, and wanted to know how Jesus would react.

There is much more to this story, which we will get into later, but I want to stop us right there and have you think on this question...

**How would you describe the Pharisees and religious leaders in this story?**

Perhaps you would describe them as...

**Ruthless?**

**Heartless?**

**Selfish?**

**Evil?**

I mean think about it... they honestly did not care about the woman at all, their main goal was to use her in order to get Jesus to “slip-up” and make a mistake.

That’s pretty messed up, wouldn’t you say? How could these people who claim to believe in God and his Word react this way?

I have probably read or heard this story about a hundred times. And every time I find myself thinking, “Wow! Those people were RUTHLESS!”

But when I was rereading this story again for the hundred and first time, something clicked... Those Pharisees and religious leaders that I always viewed as being ruthless, actually reminded me of someone else who can be pretty ruthless sometimes, despite how they fully believe in God and his Word...

That person? ...is myself.

You see, a few months ago I was making dinner for Lexie and I, and while I was just about done making it she walked into the kitchen and said, “You know what really bums me out? Things like this...” And she proceeded to show me a post from social media of somebody calling out the hypocrisy of Christians and Christian faith.

As she showed me this picture, my initial reaction was, “That frustrates me so much! If you’re going to call out Christians, then you need to at least know what it is that Christians believe!” But Lexie responded by saying, “It’s not that, it just makes me sad that this is how Christians are viewed by others sometimes.”

If I’m being honest, Lexie’s words didn’t even register with me in that moment as I was still all huffy about what this person had said. And as I continued to make dinner I found myself thinking of what I would say to this person if we were to have an actual debate.

Maybe I’m the only person who does this, but sometimes in my mind I will have this hypothetical debate with someone about a topic and I’ll go through what I could say in response or questions I would ask them.

So here I was having this made up debate or discussion in my head with this person. I found myself occasionally smirking as I would come up with zingers and good points about what they said was wrong, and after doing this for a few minutes I paused.

Because the next question that I came up with if I were having this discussion with this person was, “Okay, now tell me what it is that YOU believe.”

And you want to know something? I was so quick to get angry and frustrated about what they said about my beliefs, but it took me so long to even think about asking why they would say that in the first place! What experiences did they have that led them to say these things? Just as I am criticizing them about knowing so little about my beliefs, I know so little about theirs.

I was so quick to come up with witty arguments, ready to attack... but when I do that, I’m not acting out what it is that I say I believe. Because man... I can be ruthless. And I don’t think I’m the only one who is like that.

That’s why our goal for this two-week series is for us to continue discussing a topic that Pastor Ray introduced to us a few months ago. We want to practice showing extravagant love to others, even in times of disagreement.

But how do we do that? How can we practice showing extravagant love to those during times of disagreement?

We have to know what we have to do with our stone and shield. **\*Show series graphic\***

Now you may be wondering, what on earth is Brady talking about here? What does showing extravagant love have to do with stones and shields?

Allow me to explain...

First, we must practice the act of putting down our stones and not being so quick to attack others during times of disagreement.

Second, we must be ready to hold up our shield. Being ready to defend our faith and beliefs in a way that does not attack others, but makes sure we are ready to explain our faith and beliefs.

For the rest of our time this morning, I'd like us to talk more about what exactly it means to "put down our stone". Next week, we will look into having our shields ready.

## **I. How Jesus Put Down Stones**

So, let's talk about putting down our stones, putting down the stone that you would have grabbed on your way into the auditorium this morning.

To do that, we are going to take a more in depth look at the John 8 passage we discussed earlier talking about the story of Jesus and the woman caught in adultery. Then, we will look into some practical ways that you and I can practice putting down our stones and perhaps not be so quick to pick them up again during times of disagreement.

### **A. Breakdown of John 8:1-11**

If you have your Bibles, please open to John 8, starting at verse 1. As you make your way there, allow me to provide you with some context as to what it happening in this moment.

Jesus and his disciples are in Jerusalem during **The Feast of Tabernacles**. For those who may not know, The Feast of Tabernacles is a week-long fall festival commemorating the 40-year journey of the Israelites in the wilderness following the great Exodus.

Similar to Passover and the Festival of Weeks, The Feast of Tabernacles is one of three great pilgrimage feasts recorded in the Bible when all Jewish males were required to appear before the Lord in the Temple in Jerusalem.

So here Jesus and his disciples are in Jerusalem for this week-long celebration with this massive group of people for The Feast of Tabernacles, and as we often see throughout the 4 Gospels whenever Jesus is in one location for a period of time with a lot of people nearby, he finds himself teaching to large groups of people as he was very popular due to his incredible teachings and miracles.

Thus, the passage begins with Jesus at the temple and a large group gathered around him, so he began to teach them as it writes in the first 2 verses. And while he was teaching this crowd, we see something very interesting happen.

Starting at verse 3, lets read together...

**3 As Jesus was speaking, the teachers of religious law and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in the act of adultery. They put her in front of the crowd. 4 “Teacher,” they said to Jesus, “this woman was caught in the act of adultery. 5 The law of Moses says to stone her. What do you say?”**

Alright, so as we read these first couple of verses I want you to pause and think of this question, “Why are the Pharisees asking Jesus this in the first place? Why are they asking Jesus’ opinion on whether or not the woman caught in adultery should be executed?”

The answer to this question we find in the next verse in verse 6 where John writes,

## **6 They were trying to trap him into saying something they could use against him**

As we see throughout the New Testament Gospels, the Pharisees were threatened by Jesus. Because of his growing popularity, they knew he was impacting their own influence and power, so they wanted to try and catch him in a trap, hoping that he would slip up and give them a reason to arrest him.

And I will give the Pharisees credit, it was actually a pretty good trap that they had Jesus in...

You see, they were quoting Deuteronomy 22:22 where it writes,

**If a man is found sleeping with another man's wife, both the man who slept with her and the woman must die. You must purge the evil from Israel.**

Surely the answer should be obvious then... Jesus should just let the stoning happen! The woman broke the law and was caught and as it clearly states she is to be killed. But you see...there was a problem with that.

If Jesus were to recommend stoning the woman, he would be breaking Roman law.

According to Roman law both the woman AND the man were to be executed at the same time. While the Jewish law states both the man and woman should be killed, it doesn't state how it should be done.

The Pharisees are probably smirking, thinking, "We finally got him! We got him in a trap that he won't be able to break out of!"

But think about it... What's Jesus going to do? As he proclaims to be the Jewish Messiah and Son of God, there's no way he is going to disobey the Jewish law by not having the woman executed, right? But if he does have the woman stoned, that means he will be disobeying the Roman law by having her killed without the man there as well. So what's Jesus doing to do?

I have to say, I absolutely love Jesus' response to this so-called trap he was in...

**Jesus stooped down and wrote in the dust with his finger. 7 They kept demanding an answer,**

Imagine the anger and rage building up with these Pharisees as Jesus just draws in the dust with his finger, completely ignoring their question. I'm sure some were starting to feel tempted to start throwing their stones at Jesus.

But finally, Jesus stands up and says something that the Pharisees and religious teachers were not ready for...

**“All right, but let the one who has never sinned throw the first stone!” 8 Then he stooped down again and wrote in the dust.**

I just absolutely love how clever Jesus was with his response, and the fact that right afterwards he resumes drawing in the dirt with his finger.

This trap that Jesus was supposed to be ensnared in just took a complete 180 and Jesus now had the Pharisees trapped!

What were they going to do? Would someone actually throw a stone against the woman, proclaiming that they are perfect and never sinned in their life? That would be absolutely blasphemous!

**9 When the accusers heard this, they slipped away one by one, beginning with the oldest, until only Jesus was left in the middle of the crowd with the woman.**

There was nothing else they could do other than walk away.

Now with it being just Jesus and the woman, we find him standing up once again and asking the woman,

**“Where are your accusers? Didn't even one of them condemn you?”**

**11 “No, Lord,” she said.**

**And Jesus said, “Neither do I. Go and sin no more.”**

It's an incredible story, whenever you slowly read through it and figure out what exactly was going on, it makes you appreciate it all the more. And now that we have this better understanding of the story, the next question we need to ask ourselves is, "What is the key takeaway from this story? What do we learn from this story?"

There are many key takeaways and important lessons we can learn from this story, but for this morning I'd like to focus on this one key lesson...

### **B. Jesus Does Not Cast a Stone At ANYONE!**

Jesus does not cast a stone at anyone.

As I shared earlier, I thought Jesus' response to the situation was absolutely brilliant because it really did seem that no matter what Jesus was going to say or do, something bad was going to happen, and he would take the blame.

However, he managed to respond in such a way that did not bring shame or pain to the woman, but instead he offered repentance and mercy.

**In a world that so quickly wants to destroy, Jesus is quick to save.**

But what makes the story even more incredible to me is that it was not only the woman caught in adultery that Jesus never cast a stone at, but he also didn't cast a stone at the Pharisees, religious leaders, and members of the crowd who were going to participate in this stoning.

Jesus very easily could have started yelling, screaming, and belittling those trying to ensnare him in this trap. But just as he was there to help save that woman, he was there to save each and every person in that crowd.

Even those that constantly ridiculed and chastised him, Jesus still refused to cast a stone at them.

It's a tremendous example of what it looks like to show love and care to all, even in a tricky situation. No matter the trap he was in, no matter what kind of background each person has, he refused to throw a stone...

## II. How We Can Put Down Our Stones

But that begs the question... What about you and me? What does it look like for us to show that type of extravagant love and care to others in even the most difficult of situations?

Because I don't know about you all, but I've never been put in a situation where I was asked whether or not someone should be stoned to death.

However, I have had tough conversations about politics where I disagreed with somebody else and wanted to cast stones. I've had difficult moments while playing sports where I disagreed with a call that the umpire made and wanted to cast stones. I've had co-workers fail to do their job properly and my initial reaction was to cast stones...

With that all being said, what does it look like for us to begin practicing putting down our stones here in 2022? What does it look like for us to practice not being so quick to attack others despite the disagreements we may have with them?

To answer that, there are three things that I'd highly encourage us to begin practicing and being more aware of as we interact with others who we may have disagreements with, so let's go over them.

First, is to **listen intently** to the other person.

Second, is to **be open for conversation, not debate.**

Third, is to **be patient.**

### A. Listen Intently

Let's talk about what it means to listen intently. A few months ago in one of his sermons, Pastor Ray shared with us the importance of listening to others, and in that sermon he shared this quote from Pastor Bruce Larson that said,

**“I know you believe you understand what you think I’ve said, but I’m not sure you realize that what you heard is not what I meant.”**

Let me repeat that one more time...

**“I know you believe you understand what you think I’ve said, but I’m not sure you realize that what you heard is not what I meant.”**

I had a hard time truly understanding this quote when I first heard it. It kind of sounded like some jumbled mess, so what exactly is it talking about here?

To help explain, I want to show you something that I discovered recently. It’s actually pretty hilarious. There’s a song by Celine Dion called My Heart Will Go On. **\*Pic of Album Cover\***

It’s a pretty popular song, so I am sure some of you have heard of it before, but in the chorus of the song it says, “Near, far, wherever you are. I believe that the heart does go on.” HOWEVER, it was pointed out to me that it kind of sounds like she is singing “Near, far, wherever you are... I believe that the HOT DOGS go on.”

We have the audio clip, so let’s see if you can hear what I am talking about...

**\*Play Audio Clip\***

Now you won’t be able to unhear Celine singing about hot dogs next time you listen to the song! But the reason I joke about that, is because how easily and often things like that can happen when we misunderstand others say.

**“I know you BELIEVE you understand what you think I’ve said... but I’m not sure you realize that what you heard is NOT what I meant.”**

When we fail to properly listen it leads to miscommunication, which can often to lead to anger and frustration that makes us want to pick up that stone and get ready to throw.

But it is as James wrote,

## **We must be quick to hear and slow to speak. (James 1:19)**

We must be quick to hear and listen intently and have a clear understanding of what the other person is trying to say.

For example, you can do this by repeating back to them what you heard. Such as saying, “What I think I’m hearing you say is...”

Before we try to respond, let us make sure we truly understand the other person.

So that’s the first thing we want to do practicing when it comes to putting down our stone. We want to listen intently.

### **B. Be open for Conversation, not Debate**

Second, we want to be open for conversation, not debate.

Let me be clear right off the start... These are not the same thing! Conversation is when I keep my mouth shut, and as we just talked about... I listen intently. And then after I fully understand what the other person is saying, I respond cordially.

On the other hand, debate is when I spend my time listening for when the person may “Slip-up” or perhaps twist their words to make it sound like they’re saying something they don’t really mean. They’re very very different!

I will be real with you all and say this is one that I have always struggled with. As I shared earlier, I was even having a fake and made up debate in my mind with the person that made that social media post, I don’t want to know what an actual conversation would have looked like in that moment!

But I know that’s not the first time I’ve reacted that way to something or someone I disagreed with... When my brother and I were growing up we would always get into arguments about the tiniest of things. **\*Pic of Young Brady and Evan\***

We would go back and forth talking about why we were both right, and I’ll be honest, I would hardly listen to what he would say, I was just trying to come up

with my next “zinger”. Our arguments and debates would just go on and on and on until eventually my brother would say to me, “Can you just stop?! Why do you always have to get the last word?!”

Thinking back, I wasn’t trying to have a conversation with him about these things. I wasn’t even trying to hear his point of view and his thoughts. I just wanted to overpower him, I just wanted to come out on top, even if I knew I was wrong!

But that’s not what real conversation is about. Real conversation is about making sure the other person knows that they are being heard, it’s not about trying to “one-up” them.

It’s just as the Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy,

**14 Keep reminding God’s people of these things. Warn them before God against quarreling about words; it is of no value, and only ruins those who listen. (2 Timothy 2:14)**

Very very rarely will you be able to change the opinion of someone through debating and coming up with powerful “zingers” that will just put them down... But when they know that they are truly being listened to, that will invite them to listen to what you have to say in return, which will create proper conversation.

However, that will not always happen right away, and that’s why we must be sure to practice the 3<sup>rd</sup> and final point when it comes to putting down our stones...

### **C. Be Patient**

**BE PATIENT!**

I said the last point of making sure we are being open to conversation rather than debate was hard, but I think this may be even more difficult for us.

We like things to happen fast! If our phones or computers take longer than 3 seconds to complete our Google search, we get frustrated. If the drive thru at the fast food restaurant is anything but fast, we get frustrated. And if we are trying to

talk to someone about our thoughts on a topic, but they aren't interested in listening... we get FRUSTRATED!

And do you know what happens when you get frustrated as your patience wears thin? You want to pick up that stone and throw!

There's actually a pretty hilarious story from whenever I was younger of me losing my patience, and rather than throwing a stone... I actually threw a cat!

Which I know, it sounds absolutely terrible, so let me explain. **\*Pic of young Brady with a kitten\***

When I was around 4 or 5 years old I was playing with one of our outdoor cats on the deck of our house, which was located directly off the kitchen.

I was trying to play with the cat, and I wanted to hold and pet it, but the cat was not too interested in that. When I finally got a hold of the cat in my arms, it was squirming around and while it was squirming it scratched my arm.

After trying so hard to be nice to the cat and wanting to show it my love and care... I reached my breaking point after it ended up scratching me in rejection! So I picked up the cat one more time and instead of trying to bring it in to hold and cuddle it... I chucked it off part of our deck!

Now mind you, it wasn't too high of a drop or anything, and the cat was completely fine afterwards...but as my Dad watched all of this happen from the kitchen window, I got in a bit of trouble...

But how easy it can be for us to have good intentions at the start but lose our patience quickly into the process. Wanting to help others, wanting to connect with them, wanting to understand them better... but if it doesn't go how we planned we can lose our patience and throw them off a deck!

I'm totally kidding... but in all seriousness, our gut reaction may be us wanting to pick up our stones when things get difficult and aren't going the way we had planned.

But praise God that He is not like that with us. It reminds me of what Peter wrote in his second letter...

**“Bear in mind that our Lord’s patience means salvation” (2 Peter 3:15a)**

Just as He is so patient with us, we are called to be patient with others.

Brothers and sisters, it’s time we put down our stones, and put them down for good. Let us not be so quick to attack and ensnare others, but rather be quick to listen and try to understand others, while also showing great patience.

That’s why I’d like to encourage you this week to take that stone with you as you leave this morning and keep it in your pocket or purse throughout this whole week. And may it serve as a reminder to you that next time you want to cast a stone at someone that it is instead time to take a deep breath, and set it down.

We must put down our stones and not be quick to attack others when we have disagreements with them... but we don’t want to be completely defenseless, especially when it comes to defending our faith, so join us next week as we talk about what it looks like for us put up our shield when it comes to defending our faith.

Let’s Pray.