

FAMILY TESTIMONY

Guest Speakers – Christopher, Leon & Angela Yuan | 11AM Service | 6.30.2019

[Pastor Lee speaking]

Lord God,

Lord, the hardest thing is us surrendering and giving up. There are so many things that have just grabbed on to us and we've given in to those things but we're struggling to surrender everything to You. But right now, Lord, we're reminded You're God, You're King, and You want us to just give it all to You. So we trust our life to You, our hopes, our dreams, our cares, and put them in your hands.

Lord God, I pray for this morning, I pray for each person in this room, divinely appointed to be in this room at this moment. You loved us so much to bring us to this moment, and I pray Lord Jesus that your Holy Spirit would move individually and particularly in each heart and life in a way that we could have never guessed or imagined coming into this room today. Lord, I pray that our futures would be impacted by what happens in this room today.

It's in Jesus' Name we pray. Amen.

You can have a seat.

Thank you so much for coming. We were full first hour, so many of you who are here this hour, thank you for being here, thanks for joining by way of livestream. We listen very carefully constantly to the things that are on your heart and the things that you're dealing with, and I believe and I know because I saw what happened last hour. And God's just gonna move powerfully in this room this hour to speak to the issues that are on your heart and mind.

At Calvary we are passionate about generosity and here's why, we have a gracious God who has just graciously given us all things. And as we steward those things, as we hold those in trust, we recognize and we don't want to be so selfish as to not take and leverage those things for something that's gonna last beyond this moment or this day or this week or this month. In the book of Mark, Chapter 12, verse 41, speaking of Jesus it says:

⁴¹ And he sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money into the offering box. Many rich people put in large sums. ⁴² And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which make a penny. ⁴³ And he called his disciples to him and said to them, "Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the offering box. ⁴⁴ For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on."

~ MARK 12:41-44

Generosity is so simple. It really is about my response to God and what He's done in our lives. That's why we do this during our worship time because it's about our worship to God. It's not about just passing buckets, it's about worshipping. It's about taking things in this hour that are most important saying, "I surrender to You, God." And one of those things is our money.

And I think about this widow. She didn't allow what she had to prevent her from responding to God that way. I talked to someone just a couple weeks ago and they said to me, they said, "You know what? I just decided I'm just gonna start with



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something.” And they said they automated it, they just put it on that app and they’re just doing it every week starting with where they’re at. This widow didn’t say, “I’m gonna wait until I have it,” she said, “I’m gonna do it.” And I love her heart, she said, “I don’t have much, but I’m gonna give.”

And I don’t want you to give today out of pressure or guilt, or any week for that matter, that would just—we beg you not to do that. But rather, I’d like to invite you into doing something and participating in something that has huge eternal results; that’s gonna just fill your heart with joy it’s gonna impact so many other people.

My wife and I have since, even before we were married but for our entire marriage we just every time we received any income at all we just, first thing we do is we give back the first ten percent of that. And we can give you testimony after testimony of watching God show up in huge blessing in that.

When we read about this lady right here, giving out of her poverty—highlighted in the Bible—and I’m certain Jesus, the God who has called over His disciples going, “Look at this.” I’m sure she didn’t go hungry. And I’m sure she didn’t miss a rent payment because she put her faith and trust in the God of the universe. And He calls His followers over and says, “Look at this.” And so this morning, as a group of people who are surrendering our lives to Jesus, who are putting our hope and our trust in Him, we do so right now as part of our morning and our giving. So I’m gonna give you an opportunity to respond in giving right now. Let me pray for that giving before we pass the buckets.

Lord Jesus,

Everything we have is yours, and as we give back generously, Lord Jesus, we give it to You and we pray that You would be glorified, You would be lifted up because of it. I pray that your kingdom would be extended. And Lord, change us by our giving. Allow us to hold things a lot more loosely as a result of it. Help us to think about those who have less. We just thank You for the blessing of giving right now.

It’s in Jesus’ Name we pray. Amen.

We’re gonna pass the buckets right now, and I know many of you give through the app.

I want to introduce to you Dr. Christopher Yuan [pronounced YOU-whan]. He’s our speaker. Many of you have been hearing about this for a while, you’re looking forward to it. He comes to do what he does on college campuses, in seminars, in churches, not only in America but all over the world, to share with you about this sexuality. As I mentioned a moment ago, I am convinced a subject that is talked about constantly, but we believe that in the church we shouldn’t hold back, that we need to bring forth answers on this subject.

He is a graduate of three major phenomenal organizations, the Moody Bible Institute, Wheaton College, and Bethel Seminary, some of the finest places. Today he is joined by his parents, Dr. Leon and Angela, so we’re blessed today. We don’t just get a speaker, we get three phenomenal communicators who come to us with information and knowledge from a whole lot of different angles. The things that his parents bring that is going to be helpful to many of you is they understand, so first-hand from their heart what it’s like to parent a prodigal and to watch God do His thing in their lives, and so they’re gonna share about that today. They’re gonna share about that again tomorrow night. You’ve gotta come back tomorrow night. Actually, Dr. Christopher is gonna share tonight, you’ve gotta come back tonight, but first of all I want you to meet them. Dr. Christopher has written two books, one of those books he’s written in conjunction with his mother. He’ll tell you about those, they’re available for your resource in

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the lobbies afterwards. But church, we're blessed to have them in the house today and I would love for you to give them a warm Calvary welcome right now.

[Applause]



Dr. Leon Yuan

[Dr. Leon Yuan speaking] America, where money grows on trees [Laughter] and streets are lined with gold. Well, at least that's what I perceived when I first passed through Ellis Island in New York City on October 30, 1964. But I quickly realized how wrong I was. The first night I stayed at my friend's run-down apartment in the slum of Harlem near Chinatown. Even more surprising was the day after, October 31, when little people wearing masks ring doorbells and say, "Trick or treat." [Laughter] I said to myself, *What have I gotten myself into?*

Angela, my college sweetheart, came a few months later and we married the next year. I also assumed just because we were in love we would simply live the happily ever after. How naïve I was. [Laughter] We were not Christian then. After years of unresolved issues and self-centered living, our marriage was a disaster; so was encouragement from both of ours and so we began the paperwork for divorce after 28 years of marriage.

So in that same year, May 15, 1993, our son Christopher came home after his first year in dental school and he made an announcement, "I am gay." Since our marriage was hopeless, I could not work as a team with my wife to face this enormous challenge. Not only did I not comfort her, but I also accused her of making our son gay. Christopher's declaration affirmed my belief that we should all go separate ways. Let him be because there is nothing I can do about it; besides, isn't it more important to be happy? But my wife responded quite differently.



Leon & Angela Yuan, 1965

[Angela Yuan] You would never think that three simple words – "I am

gay" – could cause so much pain. I actually thought I could threaten Christopher with an ultimatum: To choose the family or choose homosexuality. But Christopher already bought into the lie that he couldn't change, that he was born gay. So he said, "If you cannot accept me, I have no other choice but to leave." Without any hesitation, Christopher picked up his bags and left. Nothing can describe how I felt at that moment. It was worse than receiving news of Christopher's death. He could have cut me with a knife, it would have hurt less in my mind. Christopher, who was closest to me, in my last ray of hope, had also betrayed me. I was at end of my rope.



Angela Yuan

As my world fell apart around me, I had no more reason to live so I determined to do the unthinkable, I was going to end my life. Even though I was not a Christian at that time, I felt the need to meet with a minister who gave me a pamphlet on homosexuality. Then I bought a one-way Amtrak ticket to Louisville where I planned to say good-bye to Christopher for the last time before ending it all. With only my purse and the pamphlet from the minister, I boarded the train and thinking that death was the only answer to all my problems. Never been much of a reader, on the train I began to read the pamphlet which explained the plan of salvation that all of us are sinners, yet

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God loves us in spite of our sins. God opened the eyes of my heart. Then I realized that just as God loves me in spite of my sins, I could love Christopher in spite of him living as a gay man.

After arriving in Louisville I called the number on the back of the pamphlet and was connected to a Christian lady who began to disciple me for six weeks. I immersed myself in the Bible and felt as if I couldn't soak up enough. You see, I went to Louisville expecting to end my life. In reality, I did. One of my favorite verses today is Galatians 2:20:

²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

~ GALATIANS 2:20 (NIV)

[Leon] After six weeks I got a phone call from the lady who was discipling my wife. The lady was very excited and she told me, “Your wife has surrendered her life to Jesus Christ. She has been saved.” I was not very pleased. [Laughter] I told her, “This is not a good news.” This is my worst nightmare because from now on she has God on her side. [Laughter] But what I realized is her transformation was not a Sunday-only change but, in fact, that every aspect of her life. What she had was not religion, but an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ.

Little did I know God was also working on me. So I started to go to church with her and a friend of ours invited us to a Bible study called BSF, Bible Study Fellowship, where we go deeper into the understanding and love for God and His Word. While studying the Word in my church and BSF, I also surrendered my life to Jesus Christ. God became the glue, kept our marriage together by joining both of us to Himself. This was God's way for preparing us for the difficult years ahead as our son Christopher walked further and further away from God.

[Dr. Christopher Yuan] For my childhood years I was like most other Chinese-American kids: Obey your parents, do well in school, and of course, practice piano. [Laughter] You see, I didn't fit in with the other American boys. I looked different, I acted different, and I had different interests. God had given me the gifts of music, of sensitivity, and Satan can't take away those God-given gifts—BUT he can twist the perception of them. And from a young age I was viewed and ridiculed as being effeminate.

The first time I remember having these attractions was when I was nine years old after I came across pornography at a friend's house—at nine. At that young age I was confused and afraid of those feelings. Without any parental guidance on sexuality, those magazines gave me a distorted view of sex and they soon became my master. With pornography fueling my desires, I had my first encounter when I was 16 years old *but* I kept my feelings hidden through high school, college, even the Marine Corps Reserves.

In my early twenties I started secretly going out to the gay clubs. Then when I moved to Louisville, Kentucky, where I was pursuing my doctorate in dentistry, I no longer kept it secret and I came out of the closet. I spent most of my free time in the gay clubs and I went from relationship to relationship seeking intimacy and **[INAUDIBLE 0:45:06.5]**, which I found, but it still left me feeling unfulfilled and unsatisfied. So I began experimenting with drugs. Now, to be clear, not all gays



Dr. Christopher Yuan



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I came out of the closet

and lesbians do drugs. Not all gay men are promiscuous, some are, some are not, but that definitely is part of my story and when I tell you it I have to be honest. But I also want to tell you that when you encounter Jesus, He will impact every aspect of your life.

So I began experimenting with drugs, but like my classmates I didn't have much money. And if I was gonna do drugs, I needed to find a way to support my habit. So I did that by selling drugs and I sold to friends, classmates, even a professor. You see, I actually thought I could live this double life of being a graduate student by day, and a promiscuous drug dealer by night. But three months before I was to

receive my doctorate the Administration expelled me.

So my parents flew from Chicago to Louisville and I thought they were gonna fight to keep me in school. My dad's a dentist, he knew the Dean very well. All they needed to do was to threaten a lawsuit and I would stay in school for three months and get my doctorate. Besides, isn't that what any good Chinese parent would do anyway? But to my surprise, as we sat there in the Dean's office my mother looked at the Dean and said, "It's not important that Christopher becomes a dentist. What's more important is that Christopher becomes a Christ follower." And she said that they're going to support whatever decision the school made. You see, my mom knew that when it comes to her children, nothing is more important than her children following Jesus; even more important than education, even more important than a career.

It's not important that Christopher becomes a dentist. What's more important is that Christopher becomes a Christ follower.

But the sad reality is many people might go to church on Sunday and worship God, but they'll return home and worship idols. The idol of education, the idol of career, the idol of their 401(k), and in essence, we are forcing our children to do the same. Think about this, parents putting more emphasis upon their children getting their homework done on a daily basis, getting a better grade, getting into a good school—OR—should Christian parents be putting the most emphasis upon their children following Jesus? It's no wonder why many youth grow up in church go off to college and they leave their faith behind because maybe they weren't really worshipping God in the first place. **NOTHING IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN FOLLOWING JESUS.**

But I have to be honest with you, I was not happy about my mom's decision. She was not on my side, she was on the school's side, which meant I moved further away from them, further away from Chicago to the big city of Atlanta, Georgia. And there I quickly took over the drug scene in the gay community and I became a supplier to other dealers in over a dozen states. In addition, it was nothing for me to have multiple, anonymous sexual encounters each and every day, because according to the world I had it all: Money, fame, drugs, and sex. I had exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and I began worshipping and serving the creature rather than the Creator because in my world I had become god.

... in my world I had become god.

[Angela] Leon and I had no idea that Christopher was dealing drugs, but we knew his biggest need was to know Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior, so I sent him Christian cards several times a week. And I filled them with encouraging words, Scripture, and hymns. At the bottom of each card I signed, "Love you forever, Mom." But little did I know he never read them; he simply tossed them into the trash.

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[Leon] My wife and I knew the only way if we wanted to see our son we would have to fly from Chicago and go to Atlanta, so we did. But on the second day he kicked us out, not even allow us to call our friends to pick us up. Before leaving, I offered Christopher my very first Bible. Not surprisingly, he refused, so I left it on his counter anyway and walked out. We found out later he took my Bible and threw it into the trash. It was more than obvious that he was totally unreachable and completely

**he was totally unreachable
and completely hopeless**

**so my wife and I committed
not to focus on our hopelessness
but on the promises of God**

hopeless, so my wife and I committed not to focus on our own hopelessness but on the promises of God. Along with over a hundred prayer warriors from our church, from the BSF, we cried out to God for our son Christopher. My wife began to pray a very bold prayer: *Lord, do whatever it takes to bring the prodigal son to You.* In her desperation she fasted every Monday for eight years; once fasted 39 days for our son Christopher. Every morning she would literally

spend hours inside her prayer closet on her knees reading the Bible, interceding for Christopher, praying for herself, for me, and for many others.

She wrote out some of her prayers and following is one of those prayers.

[Angela] *I will stand in the gap for Christopher. I will stand until the victory is won, until Christopher's heart changes. I will stand in the gap every day and there I will fervently pray. And Lord, just one favor, don't let me waiver. If things get quite rough, which they may, I will never give up on our son—nor will You. Though the enemy seeks to destroy, I will not quit as I intercede, though it may take years. But I give you my fears and tears as I trust every moment I pray.*

I prayed those prayers for eight years and it seemed like God was not answering them, but God did answer my prayers, just not in the way I expected. His answer for me was: Wait. Be still and know that I am God. Looking back upon those years when I prayed for change, God did bring change. The change was not yet in Christopher, the change was in me and my husband. What God intended for that time was that we will be changed, that we will be transformed, that we will be trophies of God's mercy. Oswald Chambers¹ said:



Angela's Prayer Closet

*We are not here to prove God answers prayer,
we are here to be living trophies of God's grace.*

– Oswald Chambers, My Utmost for His Highest

¹ August 6 devotion, *My Utmost for His Highest* by Oswald Chambers, (1992 Updated Edition), Oswald Chambers Publishers Association, Ltd.

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As we lived out those years of waiting, we learned to walk as monuments of His grace as God drew us to Himself each and every day.

[Christopher] Often the answer to prayer doesn't come quickly, and this definitely was not an exception. My parents were unwavering in their faithfulness to intercede on my behalf. Like the persistent widow, my mother bombarded Heaven with her prayers. She knew that it was going to take nothing short of a miracle to bring this prodigal son to the Father. And a miracle is exactly what God did.

This miracle came with a bang on my door. I opened up my door and on my front doorstep were twelve Federal Drug Enforcement agents, Atlanta police, and two big German Shepherd dogs. I had just received a large shipment of drugs, not my largest, but they confiscated all my money and my drugs and I was charged with the equivalence of 9.1 tons of marijuana. With that amount I was facing ten years to life in federal prison. I'd started with a bright future among society's finest in academia and I found myself in the ditch among society's despised in the Atlanta city detention center.



Miracle at my door

So I tried calling my friends, you know, those type of friends that say, "Hey, whenever you need something, just give me a call." Those friends that really get me more in trouble than anything else. But what I didn't know was I had a praying mother at home—watch out. And she knew that as long as I had those types of friends around, I would find no

need for God and no need for my parents. Remember she loved bold prayers? Well, she had prayed specifically years ago that somehow, somehow God would cause all of those friends to desert me, and on that day not one friend answered my collect call. So, mothers—beware of their prayers, they are going to come true.



Now I was facing 10 years to life

So I was down to the bottom of the list – home – and I did not want to make that phone call because I imagined the earful that I was going to get on the other line. But my mother's first words were, "Son, are you okay?" No condemnation. No berating words. Just words of unconditional love and grace. The Apostle Paul says in Romans Chapter 2, verse 4, that it's God's kindness that leads us to repentance.

4 Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?

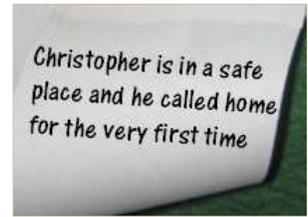
~ ROMANS 4:2

Notice Paul wasn't saying that it's God anger. It's not God's wrath, but it's God's kindness that leads us to repentance. That even on that miserable day God was pouring out His grace and drawing me to Himself through the words of my mother. Actually, my mom was excited to get that phone call, if you can believe that or not, because I hadn't called home in years and she knew without a doubt that this was God's answer to her prayers. So she hung up that phone fighting back the tears, she knew she had to do like that good old hymn says, "Count your blessings. Name them one by one." No matter what storm

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she was going through, she had to count her blessings. So she set the phone down. Next to the phone was a calculator and she tore off a little piece of the adding machine tape and she wrote down these first blessings: Christopher is in a safe place—*compared to before*—and he called home for the very first time.



List of blessings

As my years in prison passed, she kept adding to this list and counting her blessings. But today this list of blessings is longer and taller than she is—both sides. [Applause] Three days later I was walking on a cell block and honestly, I was doing all that I could to stay to myself. I mean, I didn't want to mingle very much with those really *bad* people, those criminals. And I passed by this garbage can and I looked at this trash and I thought, *This is my life*. I'm from an upper middle class suburb of Chicago. My father has two doctorates. I was only three months away from receiving my own doctorate. I had it made. But now I found myself among common criminals. Trash.

With my head down I was about to pass by the garbage can and something on top of the trash caught my eye. I bent over, I picked it up, and it was a Gideon's New Testament. I took that New Testament back to my cell. I opened up that Good Book, for the first time I read through the entire Gospel of Mark. And let me tell you, I wasn't thinking, *This is the answer to my problems*. I simply thought that I've got an enormous amount of time on my hands and I better pass it somehow. But as many of you know, what we have in our Bibles is not just ink on paper, but what we have in our Bibles, ladies and gentlemen, is the very breath of God and it is living and powerful and sharper than any double-edged sword² able to cut through the hardest of hearts, exposing my sin, my rebellion, and it wasn't a pretty sight. And I thought things couldn't get any worse. I was wrong.

A couple weeks later I was called into the nurse's office. I was handcuffed, I was shuffled into her office, I knew something wasn't right. She was uncomfortably struggling with the words, she couldn't even give me eye contact. So she wrote something on a piece of paper and slowly slid it across the desk to me. I looked down and I saw three letters and a symbol; it read: HIV+.

[Angela] A few days before Christmas I received Christopher's phone call from jail, the noise in the background could not cover up his sad and hopeless words, "Mom, I am HIV positive." His sullen and weak voice trailed off as body went limp. I felt dizzy and the world around me seemed to have stopped. Ever since Christopher told us he was gay I had lived with this constant fear that Christopher might one day contract this deadly virus. My worst nightmare was now a reality. Christopher was sentenced to six years in federal prison, but news of his HIV status was like a death sentence, a verdict I could not accept.

Hung up the phone, the pains of grief tore and broke my heart like a knife. Aimlessly I stumbled out the steps and dragged my heavy body into my prayer closet. Under the cross I fell to my knees as steamy tears burned my eyes. This affliction was more than I could bear. In the silence of my sorrow a melody began to play in my heart, the soft and sweet tune of a hymn filled my ears and repeated over and over, "It is well, it is well with my soul."

² For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. ~ HEBREWS 4:12

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[Christopher sings]

It Is Well With My Soul

When peace, like a river, attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll;
Whatever my lot, Thou has taught me to say,
It is well, it is well, with my soul.

[Leon] Sing with us.

It is well,
it is well,
with my soul,
with my soul,
It is well, it is well, with my soul.

[Leon] One more time.

It is well,
it is well,
with my soul,
with my soul,
It is well, it is well, with my soul.

[Christopher] A few days after receiving that devastating news I was in my prison cell all by myself just contemplating the mess that I'd made of my life. I lied there and I looked up at the metal bunk above me. There was graffiti, profanity, gang symbols, but someone had written something else in the corner and it read, "If you're bored, read Jeremiah 29:11."

"For I know the plans I have for you,"
declares the LORD, "plans to prosper
you and not to harm you, plans to give
you hope and a future."
Jeremiah 29:11

This is the most hopeless point in my life, the Lord God was using the words penned by a prophet thousands of years ago to a rebellious ancient Israel to tell me that regardless of who I was and what I had done in my past, He still had a plan for me. I had no clue where that plan was going to take me, but God gave me enough faith, enough strength to get through that one day, and the next, and the next. My transformation was gradual.

I wish I could tell you that at that moment I said the sinner's prayer and then everything after that was perfect, like no more problems. Far from the truth. God was convicting me of my idols, which were many. The most obvious was drugs, but within a few months God delivered me from that addiction. God kept bringing to mind other idols and there was one that I felt like I just couldn't let go of and it was my sexual identity. So I went to a chaplain and I asked him his opinion. And to my surprise, this chaplain actually told me that the Bible does not condemn homosexuality and he gave me a book explaining that view. So with much curiosity I took that book in the hopes of finding biblical justification for homosexuality. I had that book in one hand and the Bible in the other, and can I just tell you from a purely human perspective, I had every reason in the world to accept what that book was

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claiming to justify the way I had been living. BUT God’s indwelling Holy Spirit convicted me that those assertions from that book were a clear distortion of God, His Word, and His unmistakable condemnations against same-sex relationships.

I couldn’t even finish that book and I gave it back to the chaplain, which meant I turned to the Bible alone and I went through every verse, every chapter, every page of Scripture looking for justification. *I wonder if I’m any type of a positive affirmation for a monogamous same-sex relationship*, so I went through the whole Bible. I went cover to cover several times... I had time. I looked and I looked and I looked—and I couldn’t find any. So I was at a turning point and a decision had to be made: Either abandon God and His Word, live as a gay man, pursue a monogamous same-sex relationship by allowing my attractions—get this—by allowing my *sexual* attractions **to dictate** not only who I was but also how I lived, OR abandon pursuing a monogamous same-sex relationship. How? By freeing myself from my sexuality, by not allowing my *desires* to control who I was, and live as a follower of Jesus Christ. My decision was clear and obvious, I followed Jesus.

[Applause]

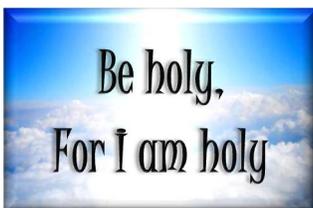
As the days and the weeks and the months of abstinence passed, I learned several important lessons. First, I learned that abstaining from sex is actually possible. Yes, I know that might sound weird, but the world kept telling me it wasn’t, but it actually is. Who knew?! Second, I learned that sexual abstinence is not going to make me psychotic or sick no matter what Freud and Oprah say. [Laughter] Third, I realized that sexual abstinence even for a little while that my identity does not *have to be* my sexuality, does not *have to be* the core of who I am. I told myself before God loves me unconditionally, and that’s true, but don’t we sinners like to add to God’s truth? I added, “so therefore He doesn’t want me to change,” similar to your friends who say, “God loves me just the way I am, so leave me alone.”

But after reading the Bible several times I learned that unconditional love is not the same thing as unconditional approval of my behavior. Let me say that again, unconditional love is not the same thing as unconditional approval of my behavior. My identity should NOT be defined by my sexuality. My identity shouldn’t be grounded in my desires. My identity is not gay, is not ex-gay, is not even heterosexual for that matter, because **my identity as a child of the living God MUST be in Jesus Christ alone**. God says be holy, for I am holy.³



**UNCONDITIONAL LOVE
IS NOT
THE SAME THING AS
UNCONDITIONAL APPROVAL
OF MY BEHAVIOR**

You know I had thought that if I were to become a Christian that I would have to become a heterosexual, that somehow the more sexually attracted I was to lots of women, the more of a Christian man I would be. But I realized even if I had opposite sex attraction, I would still need to flee temptation. I would still need to put to death my sin nature. So actually, heterosexuality is not the goal because God never commanded, “Be heterosexual, for I am heterosexual.” But neither did God say, “Be homosexual, for I am homosexual.” Rather, God said, “Be holy, for I am holy.”

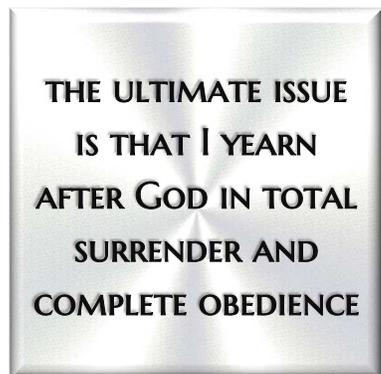


³ “Be holy, for I am holy.” ~ LEVITICUS 11:44, 19:2, 20:7, and 1 PETER 1:6

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So therefore, the opposite of homosexuality is not heterosexuality, that's not the goal, but the opposite of sexuality is holiness. As a matter of fact, the opposite of every sin struggle is holiness. I don't need to focus upon whether I'm struggling. I don't need to focus upon whether I'm tempted. But I need to focus upon living a life of holiness and living a life of purity because change is not the absence of temptations. God does not promise you that when you come to Jesus you won't be tempted again. No, change is not the absence of temptation, but change is the Spirit-wrought ability to be holy even in the midst of temptation because the ultimate issue is not whether I'm struggling, not whether I'm tempted, but the ultimate issue is that I yearn after God in total surrender and complete obedience.



As I began to live this life of surrender and obedience, God began to reveal His plan for my life and He called me to full-time vocational ministry while I was in prison, of all places; and I realized it didn't matter where I was, whether I was in prison or out of prison because my calling would have remained the same regardless of the location.

And with that change of heart, God did another miracle and he shortened my sentence from six years to three years, which is almost unheard of in the Federal system. So with only about a year left of my prison sentence, I knew that if I was going to continue on in ministry after prison, I had to learn more about the Bible. So I called home collect to my parents and I told them, "I think that God's calling me to ministry." And I asked them to mail me an application to the only Bible college I had ever heard of at that time called Moody Bible Institute, but there was silence on the other line because I think they both dropped their phones.

They mailed the application in to me in prison, I was excited when I got it, tore it open, and I was filling it out until I got to the last page where they asked me for references—and not from anybody, but these had to be people who knew me as a Christian for at least one year. I had some slim pickings in prison. [Laughter] But I was able to enlist the prison Chaplain and a prison guard and another prison inmate to be my references for Moody, so amazingly, Moody actually accepted me. [Laughter] Praise the Lord. [Applause] I was released from prison in July of 2001 and I started the very next month in August, so imagine the surprise of my classmates when I answered their question: What did you do this summer? [Laughter]



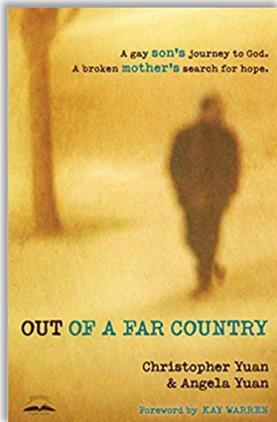
I graduated from Moody in 2005, went on to my Master's of Biblical Exegesis at Wheaton College Graduate School, received my doctorate of ministry from Bethel Seminary in 2014, and again, [Applause], really, a miracle. And back in 2011 I had the immense honor of co-authoring a book with my mother called *Out of a Far Country: A Gay Son's Journey to God, A Broken Mother's Search for Hope*. We wrote this together; she wrote Chapter 1, I wrote Chapter 2, she wrote the odd

chapters, I wrote the even chapters because we wanted to tell you from our own voice how you can have the same situation told from two totally different perspectives, alternating narratives, interwoven chapters.

But the best part is how God in His power and His grace brought us all back together. Our book has been translated into seven different languages, Chinese, Korean, Spanish, and there's a free 8-week discussion guide in the back of all of these books that we found out that not only a small groups are using it, not only are parents using it with their kids, but Christian high schools have been using this as a

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text book and that makes sense because I hope you realize this parents, our children, they are being flooded, inundated, intentionally inundated with resources on sexuality all from a non-Christian worldview. And yet unfortunately, we stand by and do nothing.

Do you know the job, the primary job to teach sex education should not belong in the hands of the public schools. [Applause] It should not rest primarily in the hands of the public schools, AND, something else; the primary responsibility to teach your youth, your teenagers, your kids, about sex and sexuality also

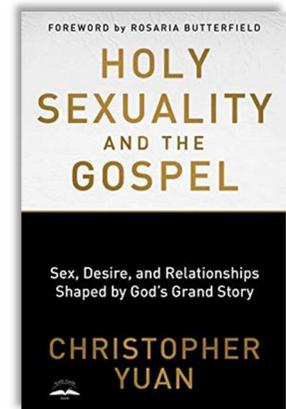
shouldn't be the primary responsibility of the youth and children pastors. Not to say that shouldn't talk about it, they should, but it should be supplemental, not primary. And I suggest, parents, do not pull your kids out when in youth group they're talking about sex and sexuality. You know why? Where else are they going to hear about biblical sexuality? In schools? From their peers? BUT it isn't the primary responsibility of youth pastors, they should be supplemental, meaning where should the primary responsibility rest, in whose hands? Parents. And I'm going to break that down to what parents mean.

Mothers AND fathers, because I know many fathers, they can be all manly and tough and fearless in almost everything except when it comes to talking to their kids about sex, then they're scaredy cats. Then they're like, "Oh, I don't know how to do it." How did that ever stop you from doing something? I think it's time we brought some change; that we take back what the world has taken—actually, the world hasn't taken it, we've given it to the world. We've surrendered it to the world and the world has taken it gladly. Let's take it back. Amen? Let's take it back. [Applause]

And I'm gonna add it's not just the responsibility of parents, guess who else? Grandparents. [He chuckles] You're like, "WHAT?!" [Laughter] You know why? You've got too much time on your hands. [Laughter] But also, if you think back when you were teenagers, not too long ago, when you were teenagers, how much did you listen to your parents? Maybe, grandparents, you have more of a listening ear to your grandkids than the parents do. Are we using it to the glory of God, or not?

There was one other church we spoke at. After we finished there was a grandmother that was really convicted, she made a beeline to our book table and she said, "I need ten books." She was really determined. "I need ten books." I was like, "Wow, you just need one." "No, young man, I need ten." She said, "One for myself, nine for my grandchildren." She said, "I'm going to mail every one of them the next day a book." She said, "I'm not gonna waste any time, I know what they're teaching in schools. I'm gonna mail them one, each one, and I'm gonna read the book with them"—a grandmother—"and I'm gonna discuss it with them." That's a grandmother that's actually taking back from the world the responsibility that we've given and surrendered to them, taking it back. And not to expose our children, but equip them. You know the question that many parents and grandparents ask today, "When is it too early to talk to my kids about sex?" That's the wrong question we need to ask ourselves; the question we need to ask is, "When is it too late?" Because honestly, if you're not *the* first one to talk to your kids about sex and your grandkids about sex, you're late. Let's be the first. Let's talk to our kids.

I know parents who have been reading our book from nine years old on up, even younger, talk to your kids. You know, "Billy, has anyone talked to you about sex yet?" "No." Praise the Lord! "Let me be

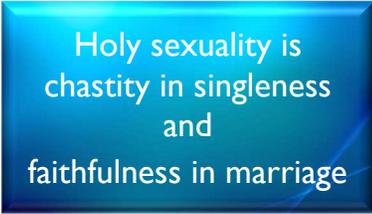


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the first one.” Amen? Let’s be the first. Let’s be that one because silence is no longer an option. Amazingly, God has given us back the years that the locusts have taken away.

And my parents and I travel around the nation, around the world as a two-generational ministry—how cool is that?—talking about God’s grace and God’s truth on this issue of sexuality. My newest book, *Holy Sexuality and the Gospel* is not a story. The first book, *Out of a Far Country*, was a book for the heart, telling our story, coming to faith. My next book is for the head and for the hands and telling us that biblical sexuality is not a list of simply what not to do. It’s not simply, “Don’t do this,” “Don’t do that,” “Don’t do this,” that’s important but you cannot build a Christian life on God’s “no”—what is God’s “yes”? So I wrote this book, *Holy Sexuality and the Gospel*; holy sexuality is chastity in singleness and faithfulness in marriage, and this in reality is good news for all. So this book is not just on homosexuality, it’s a book for everyone as we all are wrestling with our own sexual brokenness, and how holy sexuality is good news for all.



Holy sexuality is
chastity in singleness
and
faithfulness in marriage

But God has a sense of humor because He’s brought me back to Moody Bible Institute where I am now teaching in the Bible department. So I went from prisoner to professor, how about that for a resume? [Applause] But God has done far more abundantly beyond all that we have asked or thought.

You know, I look back upon my life, most of which was far apart from Christ, I see a lot of bad decisions I made. Some that have resulted in some big consequences; one of those consequences being HIV positive. But do you know I realized something, that I’m no different than any of you. All of our days are numbered. Not one person in this room has ever been promised tomorrow here on this good earth, but don’t we take it for granted?

Do you know it took contracting this virus for me to realize important truth, that as a child of God I must live with a sense of urgency. Can I tell you something? This world we live in today with all its craziness, here in our country we’re at each others throats, we can’t agree on anything. We go overseas and we see threat of terrorism, threat of nuclear war, orphaned widows, diseases, tsunamis, earthquakes. When I look at the world *today* I’m fully convinced we don’t need another “good Christian,” a good Christian who might go to church every Sunday, a nice person in the eyes of man but doing little for the Kingdom of Heaven. We don’t need any more “good Christians” but what we need, what this world demands are great Christians.

Christians who don’t settle for mediocrity. Christians who don’t care what the person on the left says or the person on the right says, but they’re living for an audience of One. Christians who are living with a sense of urgency. Christians who know that they’ve been crucified with Christ and they no longer live, but Christ lives in them.⁴ Our days are numbered. God has created in every one of us to be great—not in the eyes of man, but in His eyes. Worldly greatness means, “Oh, look at how great I am,” and lording over people; but great in the eyes of God means being the least of these. Great in the eyes of God means not coming to be served, but coming to serve. Because whether you’re ready or not, every one of us



⁴ *I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. ~ GALATIANS 2:20*

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will one day stand before our God, our Creator, and my hope is that He can look at you face to face and say, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” [Applause]

Will you bow your heads with me? Before we pray, I want to put a challenge out there. As you’ve heard, the power of God in a broken family, and as you see around us our youth not being taught the beauty of biblical sexuality. If you’re a father, a mother, a grandparent, an uncle, an aunt, maybe you’re someone who wants to be a parent, you’re a future parent, if you feel convicted, if you want to take on this challenge that you will commit to talking to our youth about biblical sexuality, raise your hand. Raise your hand today and say, “I am going to talk to my kids about biblical sexuality.” Raise your hand high. If you’re a grandma and say, “I’m going to from this day forward, even though I might have been silent before, even though maybe I was doing a little before but it wasn’t enough,” raise your hand high.

Father God,

I thank you for everyone with their hand raised, Lord God, that we’re going to commit, that we’re going to rise up an army of Christians who are committed to equip this younger generation on biblical sexuality. God, we thank you for giving us this gift, but not only your Son, but not only your truth, but this beautiful gift of biblical sexuality, Lord. Help us to do that for your glory. And God, I pray that we would no longer just settle for mediocrity, but settle to be great in your eyes.

Father, we praise You and we look forward to seeing You face to face. We love You, O God. Help us to love You more than life. And we ask this in the beautiful, matchless Name of Jesus, the Messiah.

And the people of God said “Amen.”

[Applause]

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[Pastor Lee speaking to Christopher] Can you share a little bit about what you’re gonna share tonight?

[Christopher] Tonight I think, um, you know, we know what God says when it comes to sexuality, but now what? How do we love well? How do we share Christ with those in the gay community? How do we minister to believers in Christ who are experiencing this attraction? And so that’s what I’m going to—I’m gonna give some real practical things to do.

[Lee] And you’re going to open up a time for Q&A?

[Christopher] Yes, we will have a Q&A as well.

[Lee] And we can just—

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[Christopher] Anything.

[Lee] Anything. Just—

[Christopher] Anything is fair game.

[Lee] Awesome.

[Christopher] Yes.

[Lee] Thank you. Thank you so much for sharing so much of your heart today.

I have spoken with a number of you today. You told me that you are waiting until Tuesday to start your vacation, you waited to be here this weekend. You've gotta come back tonight, 6 o'clock tonight. We've had such a huge response of people saying they're gonna be here that we're moving it into this room, 6 o'clock tonight, be here early. Tomorrow night, 6:30, and the cool thing tomorrow night, we're going to have two sessions; one with Dr. Yuan and another one with his parents. So a lot of you who are dealing with prodigals and trying to figure out the whole family dynamics of all this, they are going to be talking with you. So tomorrow night, 6:30, but come back tonight at 6.

Thank you so much for making this a priority today. I encourage you, resource yourself, there are book tables out here and I'm just so thankful that you've been here this morning.

Have a wonderful week and we'll see you back here tonight at 6 o'clock. God bless you. Dismissed.

[Applause]

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