Bob: It’s clear in Scripture that we are not to be conformed to this world. We’re to be transformed by the renewing of our mind. Christopher Yuan says, “That’s true when it comes to understanding our sexuality.”

Christopher: We have to distinguish ourselves from the world because the world is really saying, “Your sexuality should delight you, and it should define you.” I look at God’s Word, and it’s like: “No! Christ should delight me; Christ should define me,”—that’s the big difference.

Bob: This is FamilyLife Today for Monday, April 1st. Our hosts are Dave and Ann Wilson; I’m Bob Lepine. When it comes to human sexuality, is your thinking shaped more by what you’re reading in the Bible or what you’re reading online? We’re going to talk more about that today with Christopher Yuan. Stay tuned.

And welcome to FamilyLife Today. Thanks for joining us. You guys have been in local church work for almost three decades now; and I’m guessing, in the last decade, you have seen amped up the issue we’re going to be talking about today, where people are confused about their own emotions/their own feelings; and they are confused about how to show grace, and kindness, and compassion, and represent truth to people who are dealing with gender issues.

Dave: In 1990, when we started, I don’t remember a single conversation about this topic. I really don’t—not that it wasn’t important—it just wasn’t at the forefront of people’s minds like it is today. I can’t go a week now—in the last eight, nine, ten years—

Bob: Wow.

Dave: —without discussions about this—good ones/really needed discussions; but people coming to our church, on weekends, wanting to know: “What is your view on homosexuality? What is your stance?”

Bob: What are wives and moms—what’s the conversation like with them?

Ann: I was just going to say, in the past five years, I can’t even tell you how many moms are coming up to me, desperate. Kids are coming to their parents—especially,
their moms—saying: “Help me. I don’t know what to do, and this is who I am.” The moms are coming to me saying: “Help us.

**Bob:** Right.

**Ann:** “As a church, what are we saying? How do we help our kids?”

**Bob:** Well, we have, here, a book. Let me just read what Rosaria Butterfield said about this book—and Rosaria has been a guest on *FamilyLife Today*—she said, “You’re holding in your hands the most important humanly-composed book about biblical sexuality and godly living for our times.”

**Dave:** Wow.

**Bob:** We’ve got the guy who wrote that book with us today. He is back—Christopher Yuan—welcome back to *FamilyLife Today*.

**Christopher:** Oh, thanks, Bob, for having me back.

**Bob:** What a *nice* thing for her to say about this book.

**Christopher:** I couldn’t believe it. I’m humbled, and she is an *incredible* friend. I call her my “big sis.” She calls my mom and dad, “Mom and Dad”; so we are truly brothers and sisters in Christ.

**Bob:** This is your second book.

**Christopher:** Yes.

**Bob:** Your first book is a memoir; and the last time you were here, we unpacked your story—your mom was with us. In fact, I’d just say to our listeners, “If you haven’t heard Christopher’s story, go to FamilyLifeToday.com and listen to the podcast of your story.” It’s a remarkable story that took you from dental school to drug dealing—

**Christopher:** Yes.

**Bob:** —to prison—

**Christopher:** Yes.

**Bob:** —and along the way, same-sex attraction. You were living in the gay lifestyle. In prison, you started reading the Bible. God gets a hold of your life. You get out of prison. It was funny—you said, “I got out of prison,” and you “wound up as a student at Moody Bible Institute.”
Christopher: Yes!

Bob: Everybody was complaining about the rules; and you went, “Hey, the rules are great!” [Laughter]

Christopher: “What rules?!” [Laughter]

Bob: “I can leave my room when I want to.”

Christopher: Anytime—that’s right; that’s right.

Bob: This book, *Holy Sexuality and the Gospel*, is moving away from memoir and moving into: “Let’s grapple with what the Bible has to say about this issue.” A lot of prayer/a lot of blood, sweat, and tears, went into writing this book.

Christopher: Yes; yes, essentially. My first book—which I think was really unique, written from a mother and a prodigal—you know, not many stories are out there helping mothers to see, “This is what my kid is thinking”; but I introduced this concept, toward the end of my book—that I just used this phrase, “holy sexuality.” I just introduced that concept, so this was in 2011 that my first book came out.

Since then, I knew I had to flesh that concept out. It took all this time to do that. Essentially, my book is a theology of sexuality—not to scare people away with theology—because we think, “I’m not a theologian.” But actually, that’s not true; we are all theologians. If we are a Christian/if we have any knowledge of God—essentially, theology is knowledge of God—then, we are theologians. So, that was my hope with this new book.

Dave: I’ll add this—as I read it—yes; it’s full of theology / it’s very grounded in theology—but it’s very practical. Read it, because it isn’t just theology—it’s the *foundation* you have to have. I want to make sure you define holy sexuality; but then, “How do you live it out?” Let’s go there.

Christopher: I had this amazing theology professor my first year at Moody; and he told us: “Bad theology leads to apathy. Good theology *compels* you into action.” That’s why I want to give people good theology—that you can’t sit on your seat anymore/you can’t sit on your rear anymore—you have to go and *do* the work of God.

Essentially, holy sexuality is this: It is two paths—either chastity in singleness or faithfulness in marriage. That completely, and accurately, and precisely tells us how we all should live.

Bob: Now, when you say, “chastity in singleness,” that encompasses, not just our behavior—
Christopher: That’s right.

Bob: —but that encompasses how we approach our thought life. It’s bigger than just—“What are your actions?”; right?

Christopher: That’s right. I explain it more, and I fill those words in a little bit; but why did I use chastity? Why did I use singleness? Why faithfulness? Why marriage? Chastity—it’s more than just abstinence. Abstaining is just not doing something. God doesn’t give us a call of “No.” That’s why I like chastity—chastity is about purity, holiness, wholeness, faithfulness. That’s why I like that word, chastity, much better than just merely not doing something.

Singleness, which is the state of being unmarried—not necessarily a vocation, or a calling, or whatever—which maybe some are—but I minister to too many people, who are unmarried who say, “I didn’t choose this.” So, that’s why I chose “singleness.” Faithfulness—I’m open to marriage; so if God provides for me a woman to marry, I don’t want to just be, you know: ‘You’re the only woman that I’m going to be sexually intimate with. You’re the only woman I’m going...’—no; it’s going to mean much more than that; right?

As a single man, I don’t have that experience; but I know that that’s what I want to commit to. It is being faithful to her—not only physically—emotionally, relationally, spiritually—I’m committed to her. That’s why I chose that word, faithfulness, as opposed to just other words.

Bob: We often talk about the fact that keeping your vows in marriage doesn’t mean just staying married, because you vowed more than that. When you’re talking about faithfulness, you’re saying: “Sexual intimacy is not just about exclusivity. It’s about more than that.”

Christopher: That’s right.

Bob: Yes.

Christopher: That’s right.

Bob: Let me jump back to singleness; because we’ve got folks, who are wondering, “What should my sexuality look like”—

Ann: Right; I’m—

Bob: —“in that season when I’m single?”

Ann: —I’m listening to those words and: “This is a high bar.”
Christopher: Yes; right.

Ann: Especially in today’s culture, you’re setting a high bar; so what does that look like?

Christopher: Yes; well, I mean, I think we need to, first, realize that we have to distinguish ourselves from the world; because the world is really saying, “Your sexuality should delight you, and it should define you.” I look at God’s Word, and it’s like: “No! Christ should delight me; Christ should define me,”—that’s the big difference.

I don’t want to sound trite or just make it sound like I’m just making it overly simplistic—it’s not! I mean, how we live should not simply be a “No.” There has to be much more to what God is really compelling us to. We need to realize that God has given us affection, and these affections for relationship are real. I’m not saying, though, that I think our desire to have non-sexual, non-romantic desires are part of our sexuality. I don’t think they are; because if we go that route, then that would make everyone at this table gay, or bi-, or whatever; right?

So, instead of just saying, “How do we deal with our sexuality?” I think, “How do we deal with our desires for intimacy?” That intimacy could be physical; that intimacy could be relational, etc.; and that, to me, points us to, then, the true family, which is the church.

What I kind of felt lacking in many of the previous books on homosexuality was this absence of the local church. They are talking about: “We need to do this,” “We need to do that,”—and good things—or even talking about the biblical texts and ethics—you know, “Is it right?” or “Is it wrong?”—how clearly Scripture says that same-sex relationships are not God’s will.

Then, there was this missing piece of the church because, for me, the church was a key part of my growth, and my healing, and my freedom. Without that, there isn’t any because—yes; union with Christ—that’s everything—but then, we focus so much just upon kind of just the person of Jesus Christ that we, then, forget about the body of Christ. You can’t love Christ without loving the body of Christ.

Bob: And when you say the church is vital here, you’re not saying, “You really need to make sure you attend, you know, a couple of services—

Christopher: Right.

Bob: —“in a month.” You’re talking about active engagement with biblical community.

Christopher: Yes; and discipleship. Actually, that’s how I ended my book—discipleship. Anyone in ministry—they talk about discipleship; but when I look at how discipleship is done, I don’t see it done the way that the Bible tells us to. Discipleship is not a support group—not to say that support groups are not helpful; I think they are—but support groups are not meant to replace discipleship.
The context in which discipleship is meant to occur is the body of Christ, which means having headship/which means having someone speaking into your life. Like me and my best friend—that’s not discipleship—that’s friendship; you know, that can be accountability—but God has provided us the body of Christ, with pastors and leaders, who are to be our spiritual shepherds to guide us in that. Unfortunately, I see that kind of as a missing link/almost an afterthought in what—sometimes, in this conversation. That’s why I want to kind of infuse that back into the conversation.

Dave: Yet, so many people, I think—as a pastor, I’m always thinking of the person that’s not coming to my church or any church—so the unchurched single guy/married guy—you name it—out there, who my perspective would be—and this is how I thought before I ever got to be part of a Christ-centered community church—I thought, “The last place I want to go to think about my sexuality—

Christopher: Yes.

Dave: —“is church.

Christopher: Yes.

Dave: “I know what they think.

Christopher: Right.

Dave: “I know their theology,”—whether I did or not, I thought I did—“and I know what the people there are like.” So, everything you’re saying right now, I’m thinking, “Well, the average guy is like, ‘I’m not going there.’”

Christopher: Right.

Dave: Because when you even say the word, holy sexuality, I know what it means—if I’m an unchurched guy—“It means no sex—ever.

Christopher: Right; yes.

Dave: “And those Christians never do have sex. If they do, it’s only for reproduction.”

Christopher: “Sex is bad.”

Dave: Right; exactly. You already talked about it—it’s got to be more than a “No.” So, talk to that guy, who is like, “Why would I even want to know—

Ann: —and woman.
Dave: —“church”—yes; unchurched person, who has got a mindset like so many people, who listen to the culture, thinking: “This is my identity. Why would I go anywhere that combines holy, which means God,—

Christopher: Yes.

Dave: —“and sexuality together? How can that be a good thing?”

Christopher: This is why I want us to make the first thing the first thing. So, if I had a guy that I’m talking to—who doesn’t know Christ, and he’s wrestling with his sexuality—whether it’s heterosexual promiscuity or whether it’s same-sex relationships / whatever it is—you know, those things that aren’t blessed by God—especially, if it’s heterosexual promiscuity or even, maybe, he’s committed to his girlfriend alone; but they are not married—so these aren’t things that are blessed by God.

If I know that they’re not a Christian, I’m not really going to address the sexuality. They might come at me and have these questions: “Well, what do you think about sex before marriage? What do you think about same-sex marriage?” I’m going to say: “Let’s put that on a back-burner, and let’s focus on the first thing. And that is, ‘Is there even a God?’”—because, honestly, why does it matter what God thinks if you don’t even believe in God; right? [Laughter]

Dave: Right.

Ann: Right.

Christopher: “So, let’s go to the first thing.” This is why I think, as a Christian, sometimes, we forfeit our responsibility to preach and share the gospel. We push it into the hands of the church and the pastor, like: “I want my neighbor to know Christ. So, I invited him to church.” Well, great, but have you invited him into your home and shared the gospel?”—or, at least—I’m not saying you need to just hit people over the head; I mean—

Bob: —tell them your story.

Christopher: Yes; right. I mean, like Rosaria Butterfield—

Bob: Right.

Dave: Right.

Christopher: —Pastor Smith—he knew how hardheaded she was, and I’m saying that because I know her really well.

Bob: Right.
Christopher: And she needed to be just softened. You need to live the gospel before you preach the gospel.

Bob: Right.

Christopher: So, I think we need to make the first thing first—it's faith in Christ. As Rosaria says so well: “I was not saved out of homosexuality. I was saved out of unbelief.”

So, with a guy, who does not know Christ, I'm just going to live the gospel—in invite him into my life, and wait for those God-moments to, then, be able to share the gospel. Then, once God begins working in that person’s life, and the Holy Spirit is indwelling in that person and changing, then we’re able to address these other issues; because they have—their mind has gone from darkened understanding to be enlightened in Christ.

Bob: I've shared this story before, but it's because it had such a profound impact on me the first time I heard it. Tim Keller, who was the pastor for years at Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York—in his early years there, he said—whenever he'd get done preaching—he'd say, “Amen,” and all these New Yorkers would flood forward and say, "I've got a question for you."

He said: “One Sunday, a woman comes forward—and there is a whole crowd around me—and she says, ‘I have a question for you.’ She says, ‘I’ve been coming here for three or four weeks. I’m thinking I might want to join the church.’ She said: ‘I’m a lesbian. Would I have to give up my lesbian relationship to be a member here at the church?’” Here he is—in front of the firing squad; right?—with that question. Everybody turns and looks at the pastor in New York and says, “How are you going to answer this one?”

It was brilliant—he said, “I think you're asking the wrong question.” She said, “What do you mean?” He said: “Well, I think you need to be asking the question: ‘Who do you think Jesus is; and do you believe He is who we have been saying He is and who we believe He is?’ If you don’t, then there’s no sense in joining the church. If you do, that’s going have implications for every area of your life—not just your sexuality—every area of your life; but if He is who we say He is, you don’t have any other option than to surrender to Him.”

Christopher: That’s right.


Christopher: Yes.
Bob: But he did the same thing you’re talking about, saying—somebody comes in and says: “I want to know about this question,” or “...that question”; and you say, “Let’s just pull back and say: ‘What do you believe about God? Who do you believe Jesus is? What do you think this is all about?’”

Christopher: Yes; I mean—it’s taking, you know, Jesus’ words: “If anyone will come after Me...” I mean, that’s all of us—

Bob: Yes.

Christopher: —that’s not just some.

Bob: “Anyone” in the Greek means anyone; right?

Christopher: Anyone; right. [Laughter] It doesn’t mean just pastors, just missionaries, just church leaders—“...anyone would come after Me,”—he/she—“must”—that’s “must”—

Bob: Yes.

Christopher: —not sort of/not maybe—“must” deny himself, pick up his cross, and follow Me.” Even the “…carry [your] cross,” Luke adds “daily.”

I think we’ve misunderstood that. We think carry our cross is “carry this burden”: “Okay; my boss—he’s just/he’s an unbeliever—and he’s just so hard on me. I’m just—I just have to carry my cross, and I just have to grit and bear it.”

The cross is probably the most gruesome form of death anyone could ever experience—that is what we are supposed to carry—that’s the symbol of that, so we need to die. I don’t know how else to sanitize that, but it is about just death to self so that Christ can live in us. That’s—to me, that’s a glorious thing; because I know what I’m capable of, and I want Christ to be living in me.

Ann: So, let’s say—let’s get down to some practical things. Let’s say I have my son, or my daughter, or my friend, or a coworker come up and tell me, “I have same-sex attraction,” or “I’ve been living a lifestyle that the church wouldn’t accept.” What’s the best response?—you know, because everybody is like: “I don’t want to say the wrong thing,” “I don’t want to...” When you think about—if somebody is carrying that cross—

Christopher: Yes.

Ann: —they are having these desires, and they are not knowing what to do, but they do want to follow Jesus. Are you saying the best thing we can do is to love them—to love them to Christ?
Christopher: Well, so, okay; first—yes, it is love. I kind of begin in my book, though, kind of tweaking that statement a little bit; because the world says, "Love is love is love"; right?—you know—"We just need to love—

Ann: —"and accept."

Christopher: —"the gay community. The Christians—what you’re doing, you’re not loving."

My point, actually, is that I don’t find issue that we need to be more loving. I believe we need to know what that love is grounded in. All love is grounded in truth. If you have the wrong truth, you will have the wrong love. If you have the correct truth, you will have the correct form. If you have God’s truth, you will, then, be able to love as God loves.

So, if you have a loved one that comes to you and confides with you/opens up, I suggest the first thing is to thank them—"Thank you,"—and say: “You know what? I know how hard it was for you to open up to me. Thank you for trusting me. Thank you for opening up to me. Tell me more.” One thing you don’t want to do, as a parent, is say that—“Thank you,” and they’ll say, “I love you,”—don’t follow that up, right at that moment, with “but….”

Bob: Yes.

Christopher: The reason—and I’m not saying that you don’t believe that anymore. I’m just saying, for that moment, just listen. Save that “…but…” for later; because if you say that “..but…” at that moment, you’ve just erased what you’ve just said.

Bob: That’s right.

Christopher: You better have more conversations after that; because then, you can talk about—and honestly, I can almost guarantee—if you are living for Christ, if you’re in God’s Word, and you’re growing in Christ—they know what you believe. But what they are questioning is whether you’re going to accept them or not.

Bob: Yes; we’re going to talk more about these kind of interactions as we continue our conversation this week. You deal with this in the book, Holy Sexuality and the Gospel. I just keep coming back, guys, to what is at the heart of what we’ve talked about today—pretty simple—chastity in singleness; faithfulness in marriage. We live in a culture, today, that just says: “That’s crazy. That’s not how you think or act.”

Dave: I would add, “It is simple; it’s not easy.”

Bob: Yes.

Dave: It’s actual simple and very profound, in terms, of how to live it out. I love the
Bob: Right.

Dave: That doesn’t mean it’s bad. It means it’s worth pursuing, because it’s a high bar that’s worth living for.

Bob: Well, when you’ve got a book here that, again, I’m going to come back to what Rosaria Butterfield said, “The most important humanly-composed book about biblical sexuality and godly living for our times.” That’s worth getting a copy of and spending some time reading.

Dave: I mean, that—she said it’s right up there with the Bible.

Bob: She—[Laughter]

Christopher: Well, I don’t know about that.

Dave: It’s like: “Wow!”

Bob: Yes, yes; it’s pretty significant, and it is a great book; although, I wouldn’t put it at the Bible level. We’ve got copies of Christopher’s book, *Holy Sexuality and the Gospel*. It’s available in our *FamilyLife Today* Resource Center. You can order it from us, online, at FamilyLifeToday.com; or call to order at 1-800-FL-TODAY. So, again, the title of the book, *Holy Sexuality and the Gospel: Sex, Desire, and Relationships Shaped by God’s Grand Story* by our guest today, Christopher Yuan. You can go to FamilyLifeToday.com to order for your copy online, or call to order at 1-800-358-6329—that’s 1-800-“F” as in family, “L” as in life, and then the word, “TODAY.”

You know, we feel like these are important conversations for us to be having. We’ve heard from many of our listeners, who have said the same thing—programs they’ve heard on *FamilyLife Today* / topics like this being addressed, trying to bring a balance of truth and grace to the conversation—this has been used by God to help shape people’s thinking about subjects that are either not being talked about in local churches or subjects that are not being handled with care.

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Well, Christopher Yuan has given us a lot to think about on today’s program; and the President of FamilyLife is here with some thoughts about what we’ve been talking about today. David—

**David:** Yes; you know, listening to Christopher’s story today, I’m reminded that obedience is going to have implications. There’s no such thing as surrender and obedience without implications.

When I’m discipling men, and I see God working in their lives and drawing them to more—but there is hesitancy on their part of the cost of surrender and what God may be inviting them into—I often use a simple principle I call the Attach/Detach Principle. I will tell them: “Look, let’s invest a season of time of attaching to Christ, and considering His worth, and everything about who He is; and let’s not focus, yet, on the detaching He may invite you into.”

The reality is—He is going to probably invite you to surrender some things, and there will be implications of obedience; but as you see His worth, obedience becomes a joy.

**Bob:** Yes.

**David:** Obedience becomes a choice you choose because the Spirit of God is moving inside you and giving you the power, as Ezekiel 36 says, to follow His decrees. Think of one or two ways you can help yourself or your family see the worth of Jesus and focus on attaching to Him this week.

**Bob:** That’s good. Thank you, David.

I hope our listeners can join us back tomorrow. We’re going to hear from Christopher, again. We’re going to talk about how important it is for us to understand our identity as children of God as we deal with all kinds of temptation, including sexual temptation. I hope you can be back with us for that tomorrow.

I want to thank our engineer today, Keith Lynch, along with our entire broadcast production team. On behalf of our hosts, Dave and Ann Wilson, I’m Bob Lepine. We will see you tomorrow for another edition of *FamilyLife Today*. 
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