Bob: Christopher Yuan is a man who has, throughout his life, struggled with same-sex attraction. He admits there are aspects of his life that have been difficult, but he says he still knows where to find joy.

Christopher: People could say I’m suffering because I’m not married. I don’t look at it that way at all. I live in a way that’s so full—more full than it ever was—as a single man. Yes; I’m not in a relationship. Yes; I don’t have children, yet, now. Yes; I don’t have a spouse now; but I’m living a very, very full—full life. It is full of joy.

Bob: This is FamilyLife Today for Wednesday, April 3rd. Our hosts are Dave and Ann Wilson; I’m Bob Lepine. How do we account for the reality of suffering in marriages and in family relationships? How does that square up with our walk with Christ? We’re going to spend time thinking about that today with Christopher Yuan. Stay with us.

And welcome to FamilyLife Today. Thanks for joining us. You said a little earlier, Dave, that you have had countless conversations, over the last decade, with people in your church/people you know, who are trying to deal with—either for themselves or for a friend or a loved one—“How do I understand sexual confusion in our day?”

What seemed simple, when we were in elementary school: “There are boys and girls; and boys like girls, and girls like boys; and they all grow up and get married,”—it all seemed pretty simple. Today, it’s: “Are you a boy or are you a girl?” and “Are you really a boy, or should you change?” and “Who do you really like?” and “Who are you going to marry?” and “You can marry whoever you want.” It’s a whole different world.

Dave: It is a whole different world. I honestly don’t know if I go a week—I know I don’t go two weeks—[without] somebody standing with me—after a sermon, in the lobby/in the auditorium—asking these kind of questions. They’re centered on sexual confusion/gender confusion.

Bob: Yes.

Dave: You know, you look at them; and they really want help.

Bob: Yes.
Dave: And I think they, actually, really want truth.

Bob: —and to know how to bring grace and truth together. I think that’s where it gets tricky for us, because we can deliver truth; but you can bludgeon people with truth; right?

Ann: I think that we need to learn how to do this. People are looking—that's why I feel like this book is going to make such a big impact; because people are looking for answers: “How do I have these conversations?” “How do I respond?” “How do I help people in my church?” and “What does this look like, in today’s age, when things are changing so quickly?”

Bob: The book you’re talking about is a book called *Holy Sexuality and the Gospel*. The subtitle is *Sex, Desire, and Relationships Shaped by God’s Grand Story*. The author is Dr. Christopher Yuan.

Welcome back. I was going to say, “Chris”; but I’m going to say, “Christopher” because, as we’ve already talked about this week, that’s your identity—[Laughter]

Christopher: Yes; thank you, Bob.

Bob: —as a follower of Christ.

This is a second book. Your first book was a memoir of your own story, and I mention this—but if folks have not heard your story, they can go to FamilyLifeToday.com and listen to the interview that we did with you and your mom.

Christopher: Yes.

Bob: It’s a remarkable story of a prodigal, who grew up and headed off to dental school—and said, “I think I’m gay,”—then started living out a gay lifestyle. You were involved in drugs; you wound up in jail—that’s where you met Christ. You came out of jail a new man. You wound up a student at Moody Bible Institute.

Christopher: Yes.

Bob: Today, you’re a professor—

Christopher: Yes.

Bob: —at Moody Bible Institute.
Dave: I think we’re sitting with the modern-day Apostle Paul. [Laughter] I mean, the guy’s in prison! [Laughter] And I didn’t know your story before I picked up your book. Even reading, as you lay in your jail cell—

Ann: Oh, wait! Wait; I want him to share that part.

Dave: You can’t interrupt me! You *always* do this! [Laughter]

Ann: I know! I want to; because I want to hear Christopher share the part, where you’re lying in your cell, in the bed—

Christopher: Yes.

Ann: —tell us what caught your attention when you were lying there.

Christopher: Okay; well, just a little backstory. I was in prison, you know, for drugs, of course; and of course, I needed to be clean. Not all gays and lesbians do drugs—some do; some don’t—but that is part of my story.

I—not only was just sentenced to six years—I just, you know, thought I was going to get out, scot-free; I was fooling myself—but then, I also got the news that I was HIV-positive. It was just the whole world was falling down on me; life was just worthless at that moment. I was lying there, and they actually just moved me to another cell. I was like transferring; and so I was in another cell, and no one else was in there—just down, down, down.

Lying there—look up at the metal bunk. There was just kind of the usual scratch graffiti, and I looked over in one other corner. Someone had scribbled something—I looked; and it read, “If you’re bored, read Jeremiah 29:11: [Laughter] ‘For I know the plans that I have for you,’ declares the Lord; ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you; plans to give you hope and a future.’” I didn’t know what that verse was, and that whole verse wasn’t written.

My mom even says, “You have to tell the whole rest.” So remember—I was just moved to a brand-new cell—I didn’t have my Bible. I mean, they literally strip you down and take everything—I had nothing. I went into that prison cell with nothing, but they had garbage; and you know, just kind of food and paper plates. I got up; and I was like, “I don’t know what Jeremiah 29:11 is.” I kind of got up; and I was just going through—they have a locker there with—there’s plastic cups, and there was a Bible in the back. [Laughter]

Ann: Wow!

Christopher: So I opened it up. I had to go to the Table of Contents, because I don’t know Jeremiah—where that is! I mean, I kind of knew that it was probably a Bible verse.
I read, and then, if you kind of go down after that—how it says that “God will call you back from captivity."

**Ann:** Wow!

**Christopher:** I’m like—all the verses—it was like that was for *me*. Yes, Jeremiah was writing to a *rebellious* nation that had just turned so far from God and, now, He was turning them into exile; but God was telling them, through the mouth of His prophet, “I still”—I *still*—“have a plan for you!”

Yes; that was meaningful for me that, you know, in the midst of my just tragedy—you know, six years—I mean, you know, at that time, this was December 1998; and I thought: “I don’t know! I’ve got HIV. I don’t know how much longer I have. I don’t know if I’m going to survive six years."

**Dave:** I’ll never think of that verse the same! I can *picture* you—

**Ann:** Yes.

**Dave:** —in that cell. I just thought: “There are so many people, listening, that are thinking they’re at the end, and there is no hope.

**Bob:** Yes.

**Dave:** “There’s no way God can do anything and redeem their life.” And I’m sitting here, going: “Yes, He can! You don’t know.”

**Christopher:** Yes.

**Dave:** And I just want to give people hope: “Don’t quit!” “Don’t quit on your marriage,“ “Don’t quit on your life,” “Don’t even think about—

**Christopher:** —or “…on your kids.”

**Dave:** Yes!

**Ann:** Ahhh, good!

And the thing that I thought, too, was: “You were a captive.

**Christopher:** Yes.

**Ann:** “You were *in jail* as a captive, and Jesus set you free!”

**Christopher:** Yes.
Ann: And I think that’s what we’re saying: “Jesus wants to set all of us free,”—

Christopher: Amen.

Ann: —because, sometimes, we’re in situations, where we feel like there is no hope and “I am a captive, and I’ll be like this forever.”

Christopher: Yes.

Bob: Were you aware, as the light was coming on in your life, spiritually—were you aware: “This is going to have implications for my sexuality”?

Christopher: No; one thing about my memoir that I had critiqued—Jerry Jenkins—

Bob: Yes.

Christopher: —you know, he helped me and even kind of read over my book. He was like, “So when exactly did you become a Christian?” I’m like, “I’m glad you brought that up, because I left it open.”

Bob: But there was a point in time when—

Christopher: Yes.

Bob: —when you moved from death to life.

Christopher: Oh, yes!

Bob: You just may not know what that spiritual moment was in your life.

Christopher: Right; right. I definitely know the time—it was while I was in prison.

Bob: Yes.

Christopher: You know, I walked in—drug addict, drug—not only dealer—supplier. I was embracing same-sex relationships. I was embracing this as who I was.

Bob: Right.

Christopher: I was still holding on—I thought I could have my cake and eat it, too; right?—don’t we all?

Ann: Yes.
Christopher: And I really, really thought—I did think I could have God; and I could have, you know, my same-sex relationships—or maybe a same-sex relationship. It took time, and it took changing my identity—that’s so important—because once God broke that paradigm, then, for me, it was just so easy to say: “Okay; this is not who I am. This is what I do. This is the desires that I might have.” Then I was able to not make it so personal—and not feel like I have to hold onto it—because we hold onto things; because we think: “I have nothing else! This is all I am!”

Ann: And we think that’s the only thing that will bring us satisfaction.

Christopher: Yes!

Bob: You know, there are people you could talk to today—there are books that you could get—that would tell you: “You can be a Christian and continue to have same-sex relationships. We’ve misunderstood the Bible on this.”

Christopher: Yes.

Bob: You’ve come to a point, where you disagree with that pretty strongly.

Christopher: Oh, yes! I do. And it’s more than simply just saying, “It is sin.” Honestly, the majority of these books—what they do is—they focus upon the six passages, and they deconstruct them. And, of course, I could go into them—I’ve studied the Hebrew and Greek in seminary. Actually, I committed—all of my papers were on that, because I knew that was my burden. I studied, and studied, and studied, and found out that those interpretations are lacking.

But, honestly, even if those passages aren’t in Scripture, we could still look at God’s Word, and specifically Jesus’s words in Mark, Chapter 10/Matthew, Chapter 19, when He is questioned about divorce. His answer, simply, was not going back to the Law—not going to Leviticus or Deuteronomy—the Mosaic Law. He went back to Genesis; and He said, “In the beginning, the Creator made them male and female, and the two shall become one.”

What He was doing—this is what we often miss—He was being asked about divorce. All He needed to do was to say, you know, “The two shall become one,” from Genesis 2:24—that’s all He needed to do! But then He throws in this component/this aspect from, actually, not Genesis 2—He goes all the way back, even further, to Genesis 1: “In the beginning, the Creator made them male and female.” That actually is the Imago Dei passage—

Bob: Right.

Christopher: —which then connects, not only that marriage is male and female—there’s no other way of understanding why Jesus was saying that. Jesus was throwing
that in; because remember—He is talking about divorce. He threw that in—the "male and female"—why?—because there is no marriage without the male/female complementary—period!

**Ann:** So when people come up to you, and they say, "But Jesus never said anything about a homosexual lifestyle," is that what you would refer to?

**Christopher:** Well, the first thing I would say, "Jesus also never said anything about incest." Silence is never a good enough argument for or against, unless you have other information. I would then point to, "Yes; He didn’t say anything specifically about homosexuality, but He definitely taught on sexuality." I would point them to Jesus's own words—Mark, Chapter 10, and Matthew 19—and say, "Look; He's talking about divorce."

Sometimes, I've heard the argument, where people say: "Well, you know, this whole passage is only about divorce. He was asked a question about divorce, and he was answering." My response is, "Jesus is never constrained by the questioner—ever!"

**Dave:** Ever.

**Christopher:** This is a perfect example. He was asked about divorce and, then, he taught them about marriage.

**Bob:** So when it dawned on you that your new life in Christ was going to have implications for your sexuality—that this was now "off-limits" for you—did you grieve that?

**Christopher:** You know, it was not easy. It would've been easier, you know—have my cake and eat it too.

**Bob:** Yes.

**Christopher:** I could try to have my God and be in a monogamous same-sex relationship—you know, I could, then, you know, be a gay Christian—why not?

What I see—kind of the gay Christian movement—is, in essence, kind of a pseudo- or a neo-prosperity gospel movement: "If you want it, get it!" You have completely lacking—suffering—no suffering. And let me tell you, "There is no gospel without suffering—

**Bob:** That's right.

**Christopher:** —“period.”
And it’s not a suffering that is like “so sad” and we’re so—no! We suffer with joy, because we know all of this doesn’t matter. Yes; people could say I’m suffering because I’m not married. I don’t look at it that way at all. I live in a way that’s so full—more full than it ever was—as a single man. Yes; I’m not in a relationship. Yes; I don’t have children, yet, now. Yes; I don’t have a spouse now; but I’m living a very, very full—full life. It is full of joy.

I don’t want to make homosexuality, or the fact that I have same-sex attractions, primarily an issue of suffering, or even primarily an issue of victimhood. Instead of approaching this primarily as an issue of, “I’m a victim,” or “I’m suffering,” I think we need to, actually, approach this as, “How can I give myself more for the sake of the gospel/or the sake of Christ?” And that is going to be difficult! That is going to be not easy.

I think—a lot of Christians—we should be challenged. I look at that statement, “If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me.” We want to jump over those two things—we don’t want to deny ourselves; we don’t want to pick up our cross—we just want to follow Jesus. Following Jesus should cost us everything. If it hasn’t, we may be following the wrong Jesus.

I think, many times, we’re following this concept of Jesus that He’ll just give me everything that I want—that I will be comfortable/that I’ll have all of my needs met.

**Ann:** And if He loves me, that’s what He’ll do.

**Christopher:** Right; and “If I’m obedient—

**Ann:** Yes.

**Christopher:** —“if I do all the right things—if I go to church/if I read the Bible—then, I will have an easy life.”

No; actually, if you do all these things, and you grow in Christ, you may suffer—

**Dave:** —as you walk through your life now.

And you talk about this in your book—talk about temptation; because it could almost appear: “Hey, man! You’ve got this down.

**Christopher:** Yes.

**Dave:** “You walked away from this lifestyle. You’re a single man; you’re not tempted.” But you talk honestly in the book about, “How does a man”/“How does a woman—single, married, you name it—deal with the temptation?” The desire is still there. What do you do with them?
Christopher: Yes.

Dave: Talk about that.

Christopher: Yes; yes. I wanted to differentiate; because we talk about same-sex attractions—and I use that term in the book—but I said, “Let’s just use the very biblical terms: desire and temptation.” I had this chapter on temptation, where I wanted to help people realize that temptation, in and of itself, is not sinful. “Jesus was tempted in every way,” the writer of Hebrews writes, “but He was without sin.”

What I often see is—as human beings, we always tend to kind of go from one extreme to the other; right? People on one extreme are, maybe, individuals who might experience same-sex attractions; and they’re just beating themselves up about it, you know—they’re like: “Man! I’m just—I’m just the worst! God hates me! I could never…”

I want to encourage those people and say: “You know what? You’re a sinner like everyone else. You’re being tempted with sin. If you’re not giving in to those temptations, don’t beat yourself up about it. You’re like everyone else.” I want to kind of encourage those.

But then, the other side of the spectrum are those people, who are being tempted, and they’re like toying with it—it begins festering and growing. I want to, then, chastise those individuals—to say, “Don’t toy with temptation.” Though temptation, in and of itself, is not sinful; it is not innocent. It is not something that we can just kind of play with.

Bob: Yes; our perspective should not be, “How close to temptation can I get without stumbling?” It’s “How far away can I stay from temptation so that I don’t stumble?”

Christopher: Yes; exactly!

Dave: Yes; and I was thinking, you know—as you flew down here for this radio—it’s pretty interesting—you will not travel alone.

Christopher: Yes; yes.

Dave: Talk about fleeing temptation—why is that?

Christopher: Yes; I have a policy. I do a lot of traveling; I speak at churches. And I know that I have a bullseye on my back. The enemy is trying to pull me down, because he doesn’t want the message that I’m talking about—God’s grace and truth on this issue of sexuality—to go forward; so I have that—and also, I know what I’m capable of. Temptation is not something that I want to toy with.
Even people—young men/young women, who are wrestling with temptation—and who isn’t?—I look to Scripture and how—just like I said, in Hebrews, “Jesus was tempted in every way.” Why is that in there?—it’s because He has been in our shoes. He knows exactly what we’re going through. I know people then say: “Wait a second! Jesus never sinned. So if He never sinned, how can He really know what I’m going through?”—like because He’s sinless; right? We talk about the impeccability of Christ—“Jesus was incapable of sinning; so He doesn’t really, really know what I’m going through.”

This is where that’s not true, because—we think about this: all of us around the table—we’ve all been tempted. What happens? Sometimes, maybe many times, we give in. So, actually, we don’t endure temptation to the end. Jesus Christ endured temptation all the way to the end; so actually, the fact that He never sinned really tells us that He, of all people, completely knows what it is to resist sin; and He’s on my side. He knows exactly what I’m going through—that, to me, is comforting!

**Ann:** So, let’s say we have all these moms out here, and we’re thinking: “Yes! I want my son,” or “…my daughter to have this obedience in Christ,” and “I want them to walk with Jesus like this.”

I’m thinking: “With my kids, raising three sons,”—you know—“Our kids are going through temptation all the time. How can we help them, as parents, face temptation without saying, ‘Do you want me to come with you on the date?’” [Laughter] You know?!—because moms—we would like to do that!

**Bob:** “…follow you everywhere you go?”

**Dave:** That would be a “No!” [Laughter]

**Christopher:** Right; right.

**Ann:** Moms—we want to help our kids.

**Christopher:** Yes.

**Ann:** We’re desperate to help them. How can we help them?

**Dave:** It’s not just moms; it’s dads too.

**Ann:** Yes.

**Christopher:** Yes; yes. I’m just going to come back to maybe what might seem like a simple answer but is not simple. It is praying and fasting. My mom fasted every Monday for eight years. My mom will even say this in her own testimony—she fasted for me, and God changed her.
**Ann:** Wow!

**Christopher:** We need to pray privately; we need to pray corporately.

**Ann:** Moms and dads: “Prayer works.”

**Christopher:** Yes!

**Ann:** Our prayers make a difference in the lives of people that we love and in our children.

**Christopher:** Yes.

**Bob:** You know, as we have this conversation, I just keep thinking: “Somebody is going to shape your thinking about your sexuality, about your desires, about what’s acceptable, about what’s not. Somebody is going to shape your children’s thinking about that. The question is: ‘Is it going to be God and His Word?—or is it going to be a culture that is eager to catechize your kids, and catechize each one of us, into thinking, “This is okay. This is just normal. This is just biology.”’ You’re getting indoctrinated by movies; you’re getting indoctrinated by popular culture/by songs.

This is where we have to renew our minds: “Don’t be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” And this is a book that helps us do that. We've got copies of Christopher’s book in our FamilyLife Today Resource Center. You can go, online, at FamilyLifeToday.com and request your copy of *Holy Sexuality and the Gospel.* Again, the website is FamilyLifeToday.com; or if you’d prefer to call to order, our number is 1-800-FL-TODAY—1-800-358-6329—1-800-“F” as in family, “L” as in life, and then the word, “TODAY.”

You know, I’m always encouraged when we have these kinds of conversations; because we hear from so many listeners, who say: “Thank you for the clarity,” and “Thank you for the tone with which you've addressed this subject.” Here, at FamilyLife Today, that’s our goal—we want to provide you with practical biblical help and hope for your marriage and your family. We want to effectively develop godly marriages and families. We believe godly marriages and families can change the world.

All that we do, here, would not be possible if it weren’t for your fellow listeners—some of you who have donated to make this radio program a reality. Every time you make a donation, you’re helping to expand the *reach* of this program—more people, more regularly—hearing what God’s Word has to say about marriage and family.

Thank you to those of you who are monthly Legacy Partners, and to those of you who, from time to time, will make a donation in support of what we’re doing, here, at FamilyLife®. We’re grateful for you. If you can make a donation, right now, we’d like to say, “Thank you,” by sending you a copy of Dave and Ann Wilson’s new book, which is
called *Vertical Marriage*. Ask for your copy when you donate at FamilyLifeToday.com, or call to donate at 1-800-358-6329—1-800-FL-TODAY.

Well, it’s been good for us to spend some time in conversation this week with Christopher Yuan.

David Robbins, the President of FamilyLife, has been with us this week. I know you have found this conversation to be helpful and challenging.

**David:** Yes; you know, today made me reflect on a part of my story, when identity in Christ became something I think I first fully understood. I had heard the term, but it was when it began to really take root deeper in my soul. Really, it’s something I haven’t stopped learning.

I was sitting on a beach at the end of a mission trip to Romania. We were in a place called Costa Nest, which we affectionately called Costa Nasty; because it was nasty. [Laughter] I was reading my Bible, looking over the Black Sea, recounting the ways that God had shown up that summer. I read, I think, Psalm 139, for the first time that I really remember reading it, where God was overwhelming me with His power, and His knowledge, and His love for me.

Three questions came to my mind, that I remember journaling about, and being really honest about. I actually started telling myself, “I’m going to start journaling about these three questions every day until I believe, in my core, that they’re really true.” And the three questions were: “Do I believe that I am complete in Christ?—nothing else is needed?” The second question was: “Do I believe that godliness is more profitable than anything?” And the third question was: “Do I really believe Jesus satisfies my soul more than anything else?”

These are three questions I haven’t really stopped asking. I’ve gotten to a point where I really know, “These are true in my life, and they’ve begun to have implications on my life.” For a believer, everything is meant to flow from our identity being firmly rooted in Christ. Oh, how it changes things when we live out—not just being a Christian family that does all the right things that Christians do—but to a family of Christ-followers, who put Christ before everything.

**Bob:** That’s what abiding in Christ is all about; isn’t it?

**David:** That’s right.

**Bob:** Well, tomorrow, we’re going to talk about what it is to be overwhelmed. Anybody raise their hand to say, “I know what that feels like”? Kay Wyma says overwhelmed is the new normal. We’re going to talk about how we deal with that tomorrow. If you’re overwhelmed, carve out a few minutes and join us tomorrow. I hope you can do that!
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 back tomorrow for another edition of FamilyLife Today.

*FamilyLife Today* is a production of FamilyLife of Little Rock, Arkansas; a Cru® Ministry. Help for today. Hope for tomorrow.

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