

# FamilyLife Today<sup>®</sup> Radio Transcript

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## Changed Heart, Changed Life

Guests: Christopher Yuan and Angela Yuan  
From the series: Out of a Far Country (Day 3 of 3)  
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**Bob:** Christopher Yuan remembers the day that he was busted as a drug dealer; but there is another day, that happened a few weeks later, that he remembers even more clearly.

**Christopher:** All inmates that come through the federal system—they all have to get a physical. So, a week after that, I was called back. I sat, there, in the nurse's office. She was all nervous. She wrote something on a piece of paper, and she slowly slid it across the desk to me. On the piece of paper, I saw three letters and a symbol. It read, "HIV +".

**Bob:** This is *FamilyLife Today* for Wednesday, March 27<sup>th</sup>. Our host is the President of FamilyLife<sup>®</sup>, Dennis Rainey, and I'm Bob Lepine. As a drug dealer and a gay man, who'd been kicked out of dental school and had been arrested for dealing drugs, Christopher Yuan was used to getting bad news. Today, we'll hear about the good news he heard and believed. Stay tuned.

And welcome to *FamilyLife Today*. Thanks for joining us on the Wednesday edition. There have been a handful of times—in the 20 years that we've been doing *FamilyLife Today*—that we have had, as a guest, an ex-con. I mean, I think of Chuck Colson who—

**Dennis:** Right.

**Bob:** —had served time as a convict.

**Dennis:** Ex-con kind of sounds harsh, Bob.

**Bob:** But that's what—

**Dennis:** Former prisoner. I mean—

**Bob:** If you want to soften it up a little bit, I mean—

**Dennis:** Well, especially, when he's sitting across the table from me. Christopher Yuan joins us again on *FamilyLife Today*, along with his mom, Angela. Welcome back.

**Angela:** Thank you, Dennis.

**Christopher:** She would not be the ex-con, though. [Laughter]

**Dennis:** I said, “*He* is sitting across the table from me.”

**Christopher:** Just wanted to be clear.

**Dennis:** What’s it feel like? I mean, you’re a teacher at Moody Bible Institute.

**Christopher:** Yes.

**Dennis:** We’ve shared a bit of your story, here this week, of you being a prodigal—getting off into the gay lifestyle, getting into drugs, becoming a dealer, getting busted—and we’re about to put you in prison. We hadn’t done that on the broadcast, yet. We will in a few minutes.

So, what’s it feel like to be referred to as a—as Bob so harshly put it—an ex-con?

**Christopher:** I accept that because I think it just gives glory to God for what God can do. He could take people that the culture views as trash, and He still has a plan for them.

**Dennis:** We all were prisoners of sin.

**Christopher:** Yes.

**Dennis:** Those who know Jesus Christ have been set free. We shared earlier, Christopher, about you getting busted for having—what was the street value of the marijuana that they found in your apartment?

**Christopher:** Well, I didn’t even have marijuana; but it was equivalent to the street value of 9.1 tons of marijuana.

**Dennis:** Well, you called home from the Atlanta Detention Center. It was the equivalent of a jail.

**Christopher:** Yes.

**Dennis:** You called home—a collect phone call to your mom—and she said to you?

**Christopher:** “Son, are you okay?”

**Dennis:** And that was the beginning of it dawning upon you that there’d been a change in her heart.

**Christopher:** Yes.

**Dennis:** And you write about that in your book, *Out of a Far Country*. Your mom had met Jesus Christ. She'd been praying that God would do whatever He had to do to get your attention and to bring you to faith in Christ.

**Christopher:** Yes.

**Dennis:** And listening to that, Angela, what was taking place on your side of the phone call—I mean, as you got this collect phone call from a jail—from your son?

**Angela:** For some reason, I knew that was the answer from my prayer. In a way, I was sad and I holding back my tears; but during the same time, I just praised God. “You finally got ahold of Christopher!”

At the same time, when I was saying that, in my heart, the hymn came up, you know, “Count your blessings and name them one by one.” So, I knew I had to count my blessings. I tore off a small piece of adding machine tape, and I wrote down these first blessings. I put a date on it; and I said, “Praise God! Christopher called home. Praise God! He is in a safe place.”

**Christopher:** My mom kept adding to that list of blessings. It's over a hundred now. She kept taping more pieces of adding machine tape to it. [Laughter]

**Dennis:** I was going to ask how long the piece of paper she ripped off—

**Christopher:** It's probably six feet long now.

**Angela:** More than six feet. It's a bag—

**Christopher:** Yes, both sides.

**Angela:** —both sides.

**Bob:** Christopher, did you think to yourself, as you were sitting in the Atlanta County Detention Center, “I guess I've bottomed out,”—was there despair?

**Christopher:** It was shock because I did not think I was going to get caught. I thought that I was invincible. No one was ever going to touch me. So, when I finally got arrested, it was unbelief. I couldn't believe that this was it. It was a few days after I was incarcerated—and I was walking around the cell block—I passed by a garbage can. There was just filth coming out of it. I thought, “That's my life—trash.”

I was about to walk by that trash can; and yet, I saw something on top of that trash. I picked it up. It was a Gideon's New Testament. I took it back to my cell. I opened up that Good Book. For the first time, I read through the entire Gospel of Mark that night. But I did not think that this was going to be the answer to all my problems—but as we know, what we have in our Bibles is not ink on paper—but it's the breath of God—

**Dennis:** Yes.

**Christopher:** —and it is sharper than any double-edge sword. It cut through my hard, hard heart.

**Bob:** Was this all new to you? Had you heard the story of Jesus at all?

**Christopher:** You know, I had probably heard about this man Jesus, but I didn't know what it all meant. I just figured He was some man—some good person—but I didn't know that He was Lord. I didn't know that He was Savior, and I didn't know He was God.

**Dennis:** You eventually went to court and were sentenced.

**Christopher:** Yes, I was sentenced to six years. I really thought I was going to get a slap on the hand/get out because "I'm a good kid" from upper middle class. I grew up in Chicago. My father is a dentist. I'm actually—you know—I'm a good person. I'm not a high school dropout. I don't live on the streets.

Well, I got some even worse news. For all inmates that come through this system—the federal system—they all have to get a physical. So, went through the physical, got blood tests. And a week after that, I was called back to the hospital. I sat, there, in the nurse's office. She was all nervous—just uncomfortably struggling with the word. She wrote something on a piece of paper, and she slowly slid it across the desk to me. And on the piece of the paper, I saw three letters and a symbol. It read, "HIV+."

I called home, and my mom took it pretty hard. I didn't know what my future was going to be—if I was going to make it out of prison. I had six years. I know people, who within six years, the virus devastated them and got AIDS—and they passed on.

**Dennis:** Angela, what was that phone call like?

**Angela:** It was like a death sentence to me. So, during the same time, in my ear, I just heard this hymn, "It is well. It is well"—

**Dennis:** "It is well with my soul."

**Angela:** —"with my soul." So, I will go into my prayer closet, which is the shower, and just kneel down and just pouring my tears to the Lord. So, those hymns and God's Word

gave me the strength and gave me the hope to continue because we don't know how long Christopher is going to live—how many years.

**Bob:** Christopher, as you look back on reading that Gideon's New Testament, that you pulled out of the trash in the Atlanta County jail, do you see that as the point where things started to turn for you, spiritually?

**Christopher:** I think that was the beginning; and you know, Bob, I've got to be honest. I'm pretty stubborn. I had a hard, hard heart; and I didn't want to change. Yes, the drugs—obviously, that was not healthy—but: "I'm gay. This is the way I am. I can't change. Why do I even need to change?" So, it took a while.

**Bob:** The chaplain in the jail gave you a book—

**Christopher:** Yes. Yes.

**Bob:** —that affirmed your lifestyle; right? That said being a gay Christian—there's nothing wrong with that; right?

**Christopher:** Yes. Yes. I shared with this chaplain. He told me, "Hey, you know, the Bible doesn't condemn homosexuality." He gave me a book from his bookshelf which explained that view. I was very curious. I thought, "Wow! Okay, so, I can have my cake and eat it to. I can have both. I can be a Christian. I can continue affirming homosexual relationships—pursuing homosexual relationships—and there's nothing wrong with that. God will bless that."

So, I took this book, in the hopes of finding biblical justification for homosexuality; but as I read it, I had that book in one hand and the Bible in the other. As I was reading that book—and as it was going over the different passages in Scripture, and justifying, and saying how it didn't condemn it—I would go to the Bible. I would read the entire paragraph, or the entire chapter, or that whole book that it was talking about. I believe it was a true miracle of God—that it was the Holy Spirit that indwells within us—that convicted me that this was, not only a distortion of God, but it was a distortion of His Word.

So, I couldn't even finish that book. I gave it to the chaplain, and I just read through the Bible. I went through every verse, every chapter, and every page of Scripture—I—looking for anything to justify—to have a positive, to bless homosexual relationships—monogamous, adult-consensual homosexual relationships—but I couldn't find anything.

**Bob:** Yes, and I like the way you write about this in the book because you say you began to see that heterosexuality is not the opposite of homosexuality.

**Christopher:** There is a passage that we see three times—you know—once in the Old, twice in the New—where it says, "Be holy for I am holy." I realized that God wasn't

saying, “Be heterosexual for I am heterosexual;” but He didn’t say, “Be homosexual for I am homosexual,” either. I mean—because what does heterosexuality mean? It means being attracted to the opposite sex—which then could condone adultery, fornication, and lust—all these things.

So, I thought, “Even if I became straight, I would still need to submit my life, my thoughts, and my passions to the lordship of Jesus Christ.” So, I thought, “Even if, somehow, there was this shift from going from gay to straight, I would still need to pursue holiness.” That is why I realized that the opposite of homosexuality is not heterosexuality—that shouldn’t be my goal—but the opposite of homosexuality is holiness.

I needed to pursue holiness. We all need to pursue holiness. It does not matter what your proclivities are. God has called us to live a life of holiness, not on our own strength, but through the power of the Holy Spirit. That was the beginning of me realizing that this is what God is calling me to—not to focus upon my orientation, as the world would call it—not focusing upon, “What are my temptations?—” but focusing upon living a life of purity and holiness, regardless of whether these temptations and struggles go away or not.

**Bob:** For somebody who has lived for so long, with no restrictions on your sexual behavior or your sexual appetites, to come to a place in life where now that is going to be under the lordship of Christ and you’re going to submit to His authority—we’re talking about moving from one end of the spectrum—

**Christopher:** Yes.

**Bob:** —to the other.

**Christopher:** One extreme end of the spectrum. I was not just having a few partners every week. It would be daily. It was hedonism to the extreme. To say that God was saying, “No,” to responding to those things was, I believe, really the hand of God.

**Dennis:** Ultimately, you began to deal with the issue of your heart—that it was an idol factory.

**Christopher:** Yes.

**Dennis:** Dealing with the issue of idols in your life, ultimately, led you to the foot of the cross to come clean. How did that happen?

**Christopher:** I was asking myself the questions—you know, reading through the Bible so many times—we see idolatry and the condemnation. I thought: “I don’t bow to any graven image. I don’t have—you know—I don’t go to an idol temple.” Yet, I realized: “You know what? No, an idol means anything that I feel like I can’t live without.” So, I

began to ask myself that question. Initially, that was obvious. It was the drugs—that was something that I felt like I couldn't live without.

Then, the last thing that God was convicting me of was just the hold that sex had on my life—and the need for intimacy, and physical intimacy, and then, also, my sexuality—how that was such a big part of my identity. I realized that I had put my identity in the wrong thing—in my sexuality.

So, I even struggle when Christians weave and say, “I'm a straight Christian,” or, “I'm a gay Christian.” Even today, I wouldn't introduce myself and say, “I'm a Chinese Christian,” “I'm a male Christian.” I want people to know me, first and foremost, as a follower in Jesus Christ. I don't want there to be any permanent modifier before my main identity in Christ.

I had gone from putting, I mean, my identity in my sexuality to, now, putting my identity in Christ. That was, I think, really a key part in coming to know Who Jesus was and what that meant in living—in the midst of our daily struggles that we continue to have.

**Dennis:** Do you remember the phone call you made to your mother to tell her that you had become a follower of Christ?

**Christopher:** It's hard for me to pinpoint a day because, like I said, I was so hard-hearted—that it was so gradual. That is why God, in His sovereignty, knew I needed to be in prison. He knew that I needed to get away from the world and focus on one thing. Praise God—He helped me to focus on that one thing—which was Him and His Word.

And so, I think my parents, at home, had questions because they knew that I was going to Bible study. I was preaching. I was leading Bible studies. I was bringing people to faith; and they knew about that. I was asking for Bible materials; but they wanted to know, “Where was my heart?” “Where was I?”—had I fully surrendered all that I was to Him, including my sexuality? But one kind of good notice was—you know, after God was working in my life—and I knew that God was calling me—not to focus on my sexuality—but to focus on living a life of holiness—I felt a calling for fulltime ministry, while I was in prison.

**Dennis:** Wow!

**Christopher:** Yes. And I—you know—and I say from a prisoner to professor, now—but I called home, collect. I told my parents of my interest to continue studying the Bible. I wanted to go into ministry. I told them, “I want to go to Bible college.” At that time, the only Bible college I had ever known of was the Bible college which is in our home city, Chicago—called Moody Bible Institute.

I asked them: “Could you find that school and maybe ask them to mail me an application? I want to apply to that school, once I get out of prison.” I always joke that

there was silence. They didn't say anything. I think they dropped their phones. [Laughter] They didn't know what to say. I got the application in prison—

**Dennis:** Well, now, wait a second. Angela—

**Angela:** Yes.

**Dennis:** —what were you thinking, on the phone, when you heard that?

**Angela:** I was shocked! [Laughter] We couldn't believe it. You know? Yes, my husband and I—you know, we were just so thrilled. And yet, it's not what he was going to do. We still wanted to know his heart, "Where is his heart?"

I still remember when the court was going to shorten his sentence. We had to go to the court. Before we go in to see the judge—I went to see him, through the small window. I said, "Can I pray for you?" He said, "Yes." He said: "Mom, I don't even care how many years or days the judge is going to shorten my sentence because with—inside the prison or out of the prison—I will be doing the same thing. I will serve the Lord all my life." And that did it.

**Dennis:** That told you where his heart was.

**Angela:** That's right.

**Dennis:** I'm sorry this is radio, right now, and our listeners can't see your smile on your face. What I want to know is how does—back to Bob's description of you—how does an ex-con get into Moody Bible Institute? [Laughter]

**Christopher:** By God's grace.

**Angela:** Yes.

**Christopher:** By God's grace. I knew that God was calling to fulltime ministry. I felt like Moody was the place. It was in our home town, Chicago. I thought, "That must be where God wants me to go." But I wanted to—how do I say it?—I wanted to test that. My golden fleece was the application. I put everything on there—the drugs, the prison, homosexuality. I thought, "Okay, God, if this is where You want me to go, nothing is going to thwart that." Amazingly, they accepted me. So, I was released from prison July of 2001. I started the very next month in August of 2001. I think they made a special—

**Dennis:** Do you think? [Laughter]

**Christopher:** I think so.

**Bob:** We call it a dispensation. That's what you got. [Laughter]



**Dennis:** Do you think they made an exception for you? [Laughter] I have to believe it. You know, as you've been talking, I can't help but think of John, Chapter 5—these are the words of Jesus Christ. He said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, 'Whoever hears My word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.'" That's the story of your life.

**Christopher:** Yes.

**Dennis:** It's what God has done in your soul. You have placed your faith in the only One Who can forgive sin, Jesus Christ. You have placed your faith in Him; and He declared you, "Not guilty."

**Christopher:** Yes.

**Dennis:** I want to thank both of you for sharing your story and for giving hope to a lot of people who needed to hear this story this week. Thanks for being on the broadcast.

**Christopher:** Thanks for having us.

**Angela:** Thank you for having us.

**Bob:** I hope our listeners will go to our website. Go to [FamilyLifeToday.com](http://FamilyLifeToday.com) and get information about how they can get a copy of your book called *Out of a Far Country*. You can order from us, online; or you can call 1-800-FL-TODAY to order.

There is also a link on our website, on the left side of the home page. There is a link that says, "TWO WAYS TO LIVE". If you click on that link, it will give you a clear explanation of the choice that's before every one of us. Are we going to follow Christ, or are we going to follow the other path? And there really is only one other path to follow, as you'll see pointed out when you go to the website. Again, [FamilyLifeToday.com](http://FamilyLifeToday.com) is our website. You can also call us at 1-800- "F" as in family, "L" as in life, and then, the word, "TODAY". Get a copy of the book, *Out of a Far Country*, and click on that link, "TWO WAYS TO LIVE", when you get in touch with us.

You know, I think all of us have people we know in our work place or our neighborhood—maybe family members, friends—who are in our community who don't go to church and don't have a commitment to Christ. We wish there was some way that we could engage them—some way that we could present the Gospel to them.

I don't know how many folks realize this—but at our *Weekend to Remember*<sup>®</sup> marriage getaways, we present the Gospel in the context of having a strong and healthy marriage. And we see anywhere from two to ten percent of the folks attending make a first-time profession of faith in Christ. On average, it's about four percent who respond.

Our team was thinking: “In light of the fact that this is Holy Week—and we’re focused on the Gospel this week and on the resurrection of Christ—we would like to ask you to partner with us. You know these people that we’re talking about better than we know them. If you’d invite them to come with you to a *Weekend to Remember* marriage getaway and you’ll pay for yourself, we’ll pay for them. Then, we’ll pray for them, too. We pray for everybody who comes to the *Weekend to Remember*, but we’ll pray for your friends to hear the Gospel clearly and to respond to it.”

All you have to do is go to FamilyLifeToday.com. Get more information about an upcoming *Weekend to Remember* marriage getaway. Go ahead and register for yourself; and when you do, type my name—type, “BOB”—in the key code box. As you do that, we’ll send you a certificate that you can pass on to your friends to join you at the *Weekend to Remember* marriage getaway. And you can pass it to them. Tell them, “Be our guest.” We’re happy to partner with you on this. So, consider doing that if you would and take advantage of the special offer that we’ve got here, during Easter week. We hope that we’ll see more and more people coming to faith at a *Weekend to Remember* marriage getaway this spring or, even, into the fall.

And we hope you can join us back here again tomorrow. Barry and Pam Abell are going to be here. They speak at our *Weekend to Remember* marriage getaways. They’ve got a great story of how God transformed their lives and transformed their marriage. I hope you can tune in for that.

I want to thank our engineer today, Keith Lynch, and our entire broadcast production team. On behalf of our host, Dennis Rainey, 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. Help for today. Hope for tomorrow.

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