

Sermon Title: Out of a Far Country

PURSUE RELATIONSHIP: Opportunities to connect and pray as a group

1. What were the sort of things you did that got you into trouble as a child?
2. Christopher's parents shared their stories of how they came to faith in Christ. How have your families' or friends' stories played a role in your faith story?

PURSUE GOD: Time that is devoted to the Word of God

Read Hebrews 12:1-3

3. Christopher shared from Hebrews 12:1-3 and brought out four points about "running the race" of the Christian life. Christians must:
 - Run in community
 - Get rid of sin in our lives
 - Know our weaknesses and have a plan to overcome
 - Fix our eyes on our final destinationWhat would it look like to purposefully apply one of these four in your life today?

Read Galatians 2:20

4. Christopher said, "My identity should never be defined by my feelings or my sexuality. My identity as a child of the living God must be in Jesus Christ alone." Who or what can distract you from your identity in Christ? From Galatians 2:20, what does it look like to live out our identity in Christ?

PURSUE MISSION: Seek to be the community of God's people in your community

5. Christopher's Mom would spend hours in prayer and fasting, interceding for Christopher. It seemed that her prayers were not answered for eight years. What helps you persevere in prayer for others? How does persevering in prayer change the one who prays?

Read Romans 2:4 and 1 Peter 1:16

6. Christopher said, "Unconditional love does not equal unconditional approval of my behaviour." How do you walk the balance between showing kindness and patience, and communicating to others that God demands holiness?

For Personal Reflection/Prayer:

Revisit question 3. How is God calling me to follow through in one of these areas? What would my life look like if I was doing one of these really well? From question 5, for whom is God calling me to persevere in prayer?

THE WORD (NIV)

Romans 2:4

Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?

Galatians 2:20

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.

Hebrews 12:1-3

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, 2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

1 Peter 1:16

for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."

This week's writers: Thomas Attrell, Edi Dygert, Deb Matiko, David McMillin and Jared Harrison

sermon study summary

Out of a Far Country

Dr. Christopher Yuan, Dr. Leon and Angela Yuan

Dr. Christopher Yuan has taught at Moody Bible Institute for over ten years and his speaking ministry on faith and sexuality has reached five continents. He joins us with his parents, Dr. Leon Yuan and Angela Yuan, to speak of their life journey.

Leon and Angela were not Christians and after 28 years of marriage began the paperwork for a divorce. In the same year, Christopher, who was in dental school, came home after his first year and announced he was gay.

Angela felt devastated, at the end of her rope. Her world was falling apart and she felt the only way out was to end her life. Bound for Louisville to say goodbye to Christopher one last time, she began to read a pamphlet she had been given which explained the gospel. Her eyes were opened. She went to Louisville to end her life, and in reality, she did! "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)

Leon also surrendered his life to Christ acknowledging that God kept their marriage together by drawing them closer to Jesus.

Christopher, feeling unfulfilled and unsatisfied in his search for intimacy began experimenting with and selling drugs. His school administration found out and he was expelled. Christopher moved to Atlanta and began selling drugs within the gay community. He had exchanged the truth of God for a lie. In his world, he had become god.

Christopher's Mom prayed for years, fasting every Monday for 7 years. "Lord, do whatever it takes to bring this Prodigal Son to you." It seemed like God was not answering, but God did bring change: The change was in her and her husband.

However, God *was* at work in Christopher's life. He was arrested and faced ten years to life in federal prison. With no help from friends, he tried calling home, dreading the response. His Mom asked him if he was okay. No condemnation, only unconditional love and grace. Through his Mom, God was drawing Christopher to Himself (Romans 2:4).

While in prison Christopher read the gospel of Mark. God's Word cut through to his heart, exposing his sin and rebellion. Christopher realized that his identity should never be defined by his feelings or his sexuality. His identity as a child of God must be in Jesus Christ alone. God says in his Word, "Be holy, for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:16). Christopher said, "The opposite of every sin struggle is holiness. The ultimate issue is not my feelings or sexuality. The ultimate issue is that I yearn after God in total surrender and complete obedience." Christopher believed that God still had plans for his life.

Miraculously, Christopher's sentence was shortened to 3 years, and one month after his release he began classes at Moody Bible Institute.

Christopher shared from Hebrews 12:1-3 and brought out four points about "running the race" of the Christian life. As Christians we must: Run in community; get rid of sin in our lives; know our weaknesses and have a plan to overcome; fix our eyes on our final destination. Hebrews 12:1 reminds us that there is "a great cloud of witnesses" (Hebrews 11), who have already run the race, cheering us on to persevere.