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Out Of A Far Country: A Gay Son's Journey To God. A Broken Mother's Search For Hope



Synopsis

Christopher Yuan, the son of Chinese immigrants, discovered at an early age that he was different. He was attracted to other boys. As he grew into adulthood, his mother, Angela, hoped to control the situation. Instead she found that her son and her life were spiraling out of control - and her own personal demons were determined to defeat her. Years of heartbreak, confusion, and prayer followed before the Yuans found a place of complete surrender, which is God's desire for all families. Their amazing story, told from the perspectives of both mother and son, offers hope for anyone affected by homosexuality.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In this joint memoir, mother Angela Yuan and son Christopher Yuan alternate chapters in describing Chris' prodigal son experiences, in parallel with Angela's experiences as a mother moving from suicidal depression to Christian community, along with hope and prayer for her still-troubled son. Their voices trade off as describe Chris' early successes in grad school, his growing identification with the gay community and embrace of a partying lifestyle, and his movement into success as a drug dealer. His crash when busted and jailed, along with his mothers' prayers and involvement, leads to his conversion to Christianity and eventual role as a prison minister. Now, it seems, he and his mother speak at Christian events about his transformation, a role which I assume has produced this book. I got this review copy for free from WaterBrook Multnomah (full disclosure!), and was initially quite skeptical and concerned with how the book would portray homosexuality. Because the

book is written within the conservative Christian social field, it probably will not be appreciated by liberal or secular readers. But for its intended audience, it strikes the right note. Addressing this social issue with both grace and truth has been a difficult issue for the American church, and it would be easy to turn this story into a polemic about sexual identity and the church. But the Yuans, in general, refrain. While their story clearly fits within the cultural genre of "Christian testimony" (with overtones of Augustine's confessions as well as an identification with the specific trope of the prodigal son, moving from pride to fall to faith to restoration), it is well-handled, emotive, and lovely -- a good example of the genre.

On January 16 I attended a Chicago area seminar titled: "A Conference on Faith and Sexuality." The topic was same-sex relationships and the church. The host church invited four speakers to give biblical and theological presentations. The speakers clearly held widely different perspectives. The last of the four speakers was Christopher Yuan. Since I did not know Chris at the time I was not prepared to be moved to my depths by his story of a life of homosexual practice and drug dealing followed by a powerful conversion to Jesus Christ. After three years in prison, an HIV-positive blood test result, and an obvious transformation in Christ, Chris entered his new Christian lifestyle, a lifestyle that has been tested and proven for some years now. *Our of a Far Country* is a unique book in so many ways but one of the most unique aspects is that it is the story as told by both Chris and his mother, Angela. This means parents will be especially grateful for insights they can gain on how to respond to a prodigal child. Christopher Yuan is one of two sons of Chinese immigrants. His father, as my father was in his professional career, is a dentist. Angela assisted Dr. Yuan in his dental practice. Chris' dad had a nominal Catholic background but Angela was an atheist. Chris was thus raised in a context without the church or any real expressions of faith around him. At an early age Chris discovered that he had an attraction to other boys. He tried dating girls but still felt strongly attracted to guys. His mother was, in her own testimony a "controlling mom." The more she tried to control her own life, and that of her son Chris, the worse things got in the Yuan family. Then Chris returned to Chicago from dental school in Louisville, Kentucky, and "came out of the closet" about his sexuality.

In the 1990s, Christopher Yuan was a gay man who worked hard and played harder. After an experience with the drug Ecstasy, Yuan quickly became one of the top drug dealers in the major gay clubs of the Southeast, living the glamorous lifestyle marked by cars, clothes and the adoration of his new family in the homosexual community. As spectacular as the story of his life in the 90s is,

it is not the subject of this book. Yuan's world eventually came crashing down. Arrested for conspiracy and intent to distribute illegal drugs and later sentenced to six years in prison, Yuan was abandoned by all but a very few of his supposed "friends". To add insult to injury, Yuan learned, while wearing the tell-tale orange jumpsuit of the Atlanta Detention Center, that he was HIV positive, likely the result of one of his sexual encounters of the previous several years. As dramatic as the story of his Yuan's fall is, it is not the subject of this book. In recent years, Yuan, now a Christian speaker and HIV/AIDS activist, has garnered a fair amount of notoriety for his frequent speaking engagements in which he talks about HIV and issues surrounding sexuality and Christianity. For this he has been both praised and roundly (and often angrily) criticized. Though one of this book's thirty two chapters is entitled "Holy Sexuality", neither HIV nor questions of Christian faith and sexuality are the subjects of this book. What is *Out of a Far Country* about? It is a modern-day prodigal son story, about a son who rebels against his parents and effectively abandons his natural family in favor of living life on his own terms.

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