

# Episode 4: Second Adolescence w/ Jon Carl Lewis (he/him)

Wed, 2/2 8:51AM 42:16

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

adolescence, queer, people, shame, gay, life, sexual, younger selves, erotic, helping, book, spiritual, folks, person, important, experience, queerness, story, feel, sexuality

## SPEAKERS

Adam James Cohen (he/him), Jon Carl Lewis (he/him)

---

### A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 00:08

Hello, hello and welcome to this episode of the second adolescence podcast. I am your host, Adam James Cohen. And gosh, this episode is a good one. I had a really great conversation recently with John Carr Lewis, who is a spiritual director whose work now really focuses on helping queer people reintegrate their own relationship to both spirituality and their sexuality. And we here on this episode, his own personal story of what it was like growing up as a queer black man of faith, and how he navigated discovering his identity coming out and coming out amidst the AIDS pandemic of the 80s. And he shares how his second adolescence has really involved traveling through those missed developmental tasks from his first adolescence while integrating in his spiritual and sexual parts of the self into one. It was a truly fascinating story. And I'm really excited to invite you into it. And as with each episode of this podcast, where we have a new peer person coming on to share their story, I really want to invite you to listen with open curiosity, and know that each of our stories are unique, you might hear people share parts of their experience that differ from yours, as well as parts that absolutely speak to what you went through or are currently going through. And I hope that all this happens, and that we can continue to grow and community with one another and continue expanding our awareness of what life and queerness and healing can be for folks. At the end of this episode, feel free to head on over to second adolescence pod COMM For show notes and resources highlighted in that episode and any Instagramers out there can head on over to Instagram and follow the show at second adolescence pod. We love to hear from you. Alright, enough for me for now, let's dive into today's conversation. Thanks for being here.

### J Jon Carl Lewis (he/him) 01:56

Hi, my name is Jon Carl Lewis, I am a gay black man who identifies as queer to be in solidarity with the rest of the rainbow. I am a spiritual director in private practice. And I am writing a book on sexual ethics for queer Christian men.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 02:16

Ooh, okay, so many questions about your book and your work. And on that note, like what is the spiritual director,

J

Jon Carl Lewis (he/him) 02:24

the spiritual director is a companion who walks alongside you as you walk along your spiritual journey. What that looks like, in practical terms is we meet for an hour, and we talk about where you are experiencing the transcendent in your life. If you call that God, that's something we can work with. If you call it something else. It's something we can work with. But it's all about helping you see where the Transcendent is intersecting with the mundane and integrating that more fully into your life.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 03:00

Gosh, that sounds like such important work. Yeah, I'm thinking about what that work must be like with queer folks around their own spirituality and spiritual journey. Because I know for many they can have had an experience growing up in a context where religion and faith perhaps complicated their relationship to that their identity. Do you see the shop with queer people you work with?

J

Jon Carl Lewis (he/him) 03:22

I have seen it with a couple of folks, I've spoken with people who do not consider themselves Christian. But because of their Christian upbringing, or living in a society, which is more influenced than we'd like to think by particular forms of Christianity, there is often a need to untangle what that Christian piece means, so that they can either move on to something else or move into the fullness of a deeper Christian faith or no faith. It's really where the person needs and wants to go. But I do think is useful to acknowledge that Christianity has wounded all of us in very many ways. And my approach is to face that hug along and say, Hey, let's talk about how to get past that, through that around that.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 04:17

And yet so important. I'm curious to know more about how you got into this work. But first, actually, I want to pull back a bit and to back up into you and your story. So yeah, where did your life start? Where did your story begin?

J

Jon Carl Lewis (he/him) 04:32

My life started in a small town in the New Jersey Pine Barrens, very rural, and I lived in a town where my family had been upstanding Negroes in the community for about three or four generations. So we grew up in an atmosphere where there was a lot of respect. Our family was very loving. Very true. Going straight laced family. And we were also expected to live up to

certain standards of conduct and appearance, which my brother and I managed to do quite nicely. But what did that mean? It didn't leave a whole lot of room for expression as a young gay person. Yeah. Although everybody knew that I was gay. Turns out, I Well, I never showed any interest in chasing young women or dating or anything like that. So people just basically over time got the sense that well, he is not that kind of boy.

**A** Adam James Cohen (he/him) 05:41

Yeah. Do you have a sense of what that was like for them to have this observation of, oh, he's not that quote, unquote, kind of boy, what do you know about what they were thinking us they were observing this potential queerness. within you,

**J** Jon Carl Lewis (he/him) 05:53

we had two things going on, there was my family. And then there was the wider spiritual community. And I will say first, that the wider spiritual community turned out to be pretty okay with by being gay and coming out of the closet later, the folks it disturbed the most per my parents, because of course, they had the greatest stake in this news, aside from me, and had expectations and goals. And I came out in 1987, which was the height of the AIDS epidemic. Yeah. And they were concerned for my safety. They're concerned, not right, not get beat up. They're concerned that I not die alone and alcoholic and friendless is some of their associates had. So it was based in a lot of fear, and a little bit of of dashed expectations.

**A** Adam James Cohen (he/him) 06:51

You know, where our world was at, and particularly our culture at the time. This is just swimming in fear, swimming in misinformation about what it means to be a queer person. And for you, I'm curious about what was your own path to discovering your queerness. And what was that like to learn about yourself?

**J** Jon Carl Lewis (he/him) 07:13

It was easier than it was for a lot of people, I think, I knew that I was different at four, I knew I had an obsession with other boys short was, by the time I finished kindergarten, and I just knew I was different in terms of what I was supposed to be interested in. And yet I kept a quiet, it didn't really start to cause me pain until I was age 13. And my best friend's start to to chase young women. And I felt alone and abandoned and lonely and didn't really see a place for me to as we will talk about go through a normal adolescence, I knew that I was deprived of that. I had studied the Greek myths when I was in elementary school. And so on some level, I had a sense that bonded male friendship was a good thing, and was possible in some way. But in college, I found the person to bond with, he was straight, but we had an intimate relationship, which felt to me like love. I feel like he loved me and I loved him. But we're not going to hold hands and run off into the sunset as a gay couple.

**A** Adam James Cohen (he/him) 08:42

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 09:12

Gosh, I have so many questions about you and your story. A couple of things I'm hearing is first off, it sounds like you had a pretty similar experience to a lot of queer folks in that when they look back at the beginning indications of being queer it often can start with this feeling of different this is unconscious sense that I'm different in some way, the people around me particularly the peers of my same gender. And then it's later, often in adolescence, when unconscious feeling a difference shifts into a more conscious understanding of how you are different than the norm you're exposed to, from the onset of our sexual development that really shifts us into more of that space of understanding and knowing Ooh, okay, yeah, I get how these feelings are different than what I'm seeing my peers around me feeling and gosh, that moment can be a super tricky time for young queer people. And you mentioned 13 year old you having his friends go off and pursue interest in girls and you were feeling really one that's not what you wanted to do. But also feeling left behind, what was going on for you at 13?

J Jon Carl Lewis (he/him) 09:50

Well, my big pressure the time but as a guy I'll call Bruce. He started to to hang out. We used to have sleepovers and stuff like that. spend time together. And I remember he bought me a Jaws t shirt as a present when the movie came out, so that will date me. And we were really good friends just hung out, wander around the woods talked about nothing. I was never sexual with anybody as a child up through college. So there was none of that going on. But I remember when he got interested in KTX, in the eighth grade, and I was crushed, because I realized that my affection for him and his affection for me were different and had changed in some significant way. Yeah,

A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 10:37

I think there are so many of us who had those complicated relationships with friends of our same gender that felt so close and so important. So much so that when that friend pursued other things, or dating people of another gender, it felt so much like the pangs of heartbreak and jealousy, and all at a level that often our younger selves, they couldn't really understand. I absolutely had that experience in my own life in middle school, and so I can really relate with this part of your story. So how did this progress for you in your first adolescence, what happened next?

J Jon Carl Lewis (he/him) 11:15

Okay, what my first general lessons was like, I was a very studious and devout boy. And so I thought I was saving myself for the woman I would eventually have feelings for. I ran into an Evan Jellicle circle, a radio station that I listened to all the time. And I believed that God could change anything about me that God didn't like. And I thought God didn't like me being gay. So I prayed and prayed and prayed. I prayed through high school and prayed that God would take away my desires for men, and he would take away my sin of masturbation, neither happen. And so as high school went on, I was fine thinking God was going to fix this. When I got into college. I was thinking, you know, God, this is taking a long time. Are you going to do something about this or not? So I started to counseling with one of the missionaries who had our youth group, and I would meet with him once a week for an hour and we would sit and he would ask me how my prayer life was and how I was handling my temptations, or I was

handling my temptations pretty well, because I had no idea there was a big old cruising area in the basement of the English department. I had no idea that I was surrounded by closeted gay men who wouldn't come anywhere near me because I was a raving Jesus freak. Cry. So I spent college shooting myself in the foot in retrospect, wow. Yeah. And then I came under the conviction that God wasn't going to change me. But I need to live a sober life, which meant that I started telling people I was gay and sold it. And I thought this would endear me to people, but it really didn't. It made them rather suspicious, because obviously they knew more about gay people than I did. And although there are Sobek gays that's not the norm and it's not healthy for most gay people.

**A** Adam James Cohen (he/him) 13:33

Yeah I can imagine the important question is, what is driving the call for that celibacy for that? Where a person is it from a place of shame where consciously or enough shame is intercepting the person's openness to exploring their sexual selves? Or is this speaking to asexuality and the person's experiencing less of sexual energy and desire naturally? What do you think

**J** Jon Carl Lewis (he/him) 13:56

I sort of am inclined to agree with you that the motivation behind that celibacy is all important. I have learned more about the asexual community the whole range of options from not not having sexual attraction to another person to demisexual only having attraction if there was deep friendship and all the gradations in between. But I also think there are gay people with a sex drive who have chosen to be sold it for a time and that makes sense for them given their situation. But it was not good for me as a young man trying to make connection as one naturally does for the most part in one's early 20s 30s etc

**A** Adam James Cohen (he/him) 14:44

and I keep thinking back to when you shared about younger you who was praying day in and day out to have these feelings within him be changed or go away. And then they didn't. Passion? What was that like for you hungry?

**J** Jon Carl Lewis (he/him) 15:00

Well, I had probably my first of several spiritual crises then. And it was more of a, you know, I've done everything that I'm supposed to do, and God hasn't delivered, what is the deal. And I had to just figure out what sort of relationship I had with God all over again. I mean, I was reading the Bible every night I had since I was five. You know, I was conversing in the scriptures. I went to church every Sunday, I participated in high school and college Christian youth groups. And I guess that communism in my coming out, and that was when I decided that God must not want this to change, he must have something special to do with my life that doesn't involve getting married to a woman and lying to her about my feelings that weren't there. And that precipitated to be quite honest, a deep depressive episode. Oh, I became

suicidal after that, and didn't have the means to do it. Because I wasn't sure whether suicide was an unforgivable sin or not. So I couldn't really rushed into that, thank God. But it was just, it was torture. I just went to bed weeping every night.

**A** Adam James Cohen (he/him) 16:21

Yeah, gosh, I can only imagine how hard that time was, gosh, what is it? What is it like in this moment to look back and see younger you at that moment?

**J** Jon Carl Lewis (he/him) 16:33

it's sad, if I hadn't come through, it would be crushing which you know, which pushes me to be mindful of all of those queer kids who are in that situation today. There is such support and love outside of those narrowly interpreted Christian circles. But by the nature of the Christian circles that oppress gay people, they don't know those resources exist. And if they do, they're taught to miss trust. So I'm obsessed with how to get to those people before they kill themselves before they marry someone of another gender in order to look appropriate. I guess I have a big savior complex around that.

**A** Adam James Cohen (he/him) 17:26

I mean, yeah, I can understand that completely. Because you knew the pain of what it felt like to be there. So the thought of young people going through that today, of course, you want to do whatever you can to show them another way? Yeah, I absolutely get that and resonate with that personally. And yeah, so I guess on that note, like, Are there resources that you point people towards who are in that space?

**J** Jon Carl Lewis (he/him) 17:47

Well, the Trevor Project is amazing. And I believe the Trevor Project partnered with a religious organization to produce a range of materials, specifically for queer people coming out of a conservative Christian context. Human Rights Campaign has faith based resources on its website that help people get comfortable with being gay and talking about talking to other religious people, not just Christians about how they can be faithful queer people within their traditions. And there is an app called believer without the last day, which is a dating app for Christian queer folks just launched last year. And one more resource, Scarlet team has amazing resources for all young people about sexuality, and it's very queer, friendly, and very nuanced. And they've produced some good materials for how to not only be a queer person, a trans person, but also to be a good ally, and a friend to someone who's queer, trans.

**A** Adam James Cohen (he/him) 19:03

Awesome. Thanks for highlighting all those resources. I'll be sure to link to each of them in the show notes or Fox. I have so many things I want to talk with you about. Let's get back into your story. What got you through in that really deep crisis point in your life to help you move forward

like what happened next?

**J** Jon Carl Lewis (he/him) 19:22

It's interesting, because I have blocked out a lot of that time. I think it was being caught between my fear of suicide and my fear of indulging in homosexuality kept me alive, but kept me in misery. I started finally I forget what the first book I read that was an affirming take on homosexuality from the Christian tradition. It may have been John Boswells, homosexuality, social tolerance and Christianity and That really opened my eyes. I got really excited I read the whole thing, which is like, what, 500 pages or something like that. And all the footnotes, which are in about six different languages I didn't read. And I actually traveled to Yale and met with John Boswell and talked to him about his work. And he was maybe the first of several mentors that I thought I would have around to look up to and be schooled by and formed by before he died. I wonder what life would have been like with his mentorship, but just having all that wisdom, all the stuff that didn't fit into his book, I'm still grieving that loss.

**A** Adam James Cohen (he/him) 20:41

Absolutely. I mean, because it sounds like finding his work at the time you did was so pivotal for you, and then getting the chance to meet with him. Yeah, I can imagine grieving what could have been with him having him as a resource, and just as you were going through your own story, and then it sounds like he was offering such important work for the collective time. Yeah, holy smokes,

**J** Jon Carl Lewis (he/him) 21:07

I hope people take a look back at his work. I mean, there's wonderful work being done now. But there was so much work done before and during the height of the AIDS pandemic that has been lost, just because there hasn't been an unbroken chain of mentors to recommend these books. They think they have nothing to say, but they do lesbians like Carter Hayward, writing in the 80s, about the power of God as erotic love. And Michael Bernard Kelly, who died not too long ago, writing about the responsibility queer people have to remake the world in a way that honors the erotic and heals society through conscious loving,

**A** Adam James Cohen (he/him) 21:59

gosh, I am eager to find these pieces of work and, and yeah, this idea of the erotic and historically what external factors and culture has done to intercept queer people's ability to understand and explore the erotic. There is so much important healing work in all this.

**J** Jon Carl Lewis (he/him) 22:18

And I'm thankful that there's been a revival of that work. There are a number of sex and relationship and intimacy coaches out there who are helping gay men reconnect the spiritual with the sexual and the erotic, mostly outside of the Christian tradition. But I'm finding a lot of

ex seminarians and clergy kids among the people doing that work.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 22:45

Wow. Yeah. Cool. What important need I think for so many of us, regardless of the context we grew up within, so much of our first adolescence is marked by internalizing these certain beliefs about queerness, about sexuality, about faith about everything. And so much of second adolescence is really about uncovering these beliefs and looking at which ones need to be unlearned or tweaked or experienced in a different way? And yeah, it really sounds like those folks are out there doing that work. And was this part of your experience to looking at the beliefs that were internalized in your first adolescence and exploring what needed to be done with those in your second adolescence?

J

Jon Carl Lewis (he/him) 23:25

Yes, that's exactly what happened. I was mindful because I had been so much immersed in the ancient Greek mythological tradition that one could not properly mature into adulthood without mentorship and without rituals and without guidance. And so I quickly found my way to the men's movement, which was going on in the 80s and 90s, where grown men were attempting to initiate each other into a manhood that would be worthy of the women who are going through the feminist movement. And of course, there was a subset of those men who were gay trying to figure out what it meant to be authentically gay and male, as opposed to whatever society said we were that we weren't man or that were too sexual. The gay branches of that were very healing for me, and very affirming of me as a desirable person. I realized laying in bed several nights ago that one of the tasks of adolescence might be to experience oneself as an object of desire, or at least a potential object of desire. Because I perceived all the men around me were straight. I never felt desired or desirable until I started spending time in these Circles of men that were both deeply spiritual, not necessarily Christian and deeply erotic.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 25:06

Yeah, I mean, first off, I think that idea that came to you, the other night feels so true for so many of us. I know in my own personal story I had to learn as I started really pursuing dating for the first time, in my mid 20s, I had to learn how to see myself as someone who was sexual and could be seen as sexual by another person, particularly by another man. And yeah, I think so many of us queer people, and first adolescence, we shut off our sexual and romantic selves. And some of us did this consciously. And for some of us, this happens unconsciously. But because we were immersed in an anti queer world around us, it was a threat to let those parts of us get time to breathe. So in an effort for protection, we desexualize ourselves or experienced sexual desire in private and then have a ton of shame become internalized for these feelings. I mean, there are so many ways in which our younger queer selves healthy development of a sexual identity was was intercepted. And as you're pointing out, it then becomes an integral task of second adolescence to learn how to invite in our romantic and sexual selves, letting them join the party giving them space, not only to grow, but to become more healthfully integrated into our self concept.





**J** Jon Carl Lewis (he/him) 26:31

There's a wonderful book called *Beyond shame* by Matthias Roberts, he's a therapist who is writing about gay men's reactions to the shame we've inherited and interested me that there were several approaches to shame. One was to repress it, the other is to jump into it unreservedly. And the other is to just sort of go on autopilot, and maybe be a little bit, you know, one way one day one way or the other and being satisfied. But I feel that his work is important because like the work of Brene Brown, naming the shame is one of the first steps to healing this naming particular behaviors, as attempts to deal with that shame allows us to see them in a light that is generous, and knowing

**A** Adam James Cohen (he/him) 27:31

what you're speaking to, is what I found to be the essence of second adolescence. For queer folks, so much of our stories like shame was at the beginning, shame guided the middle and shame is what has to be reckoned with at the end. Second, adolescence, yes, it's about gaining the experiences we missed out on in first adolescence. But way more than this, truly, at the core of second adolescence is helping our younger selves heal. From that chronic shame they injured for so long, you know that, that day in day out onslaught of direct and indirect messaging about our wrongness like, this is the work and like you're saying, learning how to identify a name, shame, and see how it shows up in all of its complicated ways. And then from this self compassionate place, interact with the shame, constantly finding ways to engage with our younger selves around the shame that they came to internalize and helping our younger selves, let go of it. Yeah, it's powerful and important work. And it sounds like you've done a lot of this work with shame in your own story. What has that been like for you working with shame?

**J** Jon Carl Lewis (he/him) 28:40

Well, that makes me mindful of what strategies I've used to get through that second adolescence. It's interesting, because I've always thought of it as a delayed adolescence. But I think second adolescence makes more sense, because we did have an adolescence, I just didn't fulfill the tasks that I was supposed to during the adolescence. And so this really is a second adolescence, it can't be like the first. And I think that for me, looking for groups that could nurture me, as helped me get through the second adolescence without needing to resort to too many self destructive behaviors. I joined a leather tribe in Boston when I was in my mid to late 20s. And one of the nice things about being part of a leather tribe is at first, the leather community was the hardest hit by HIV and AIDS. But because they were the first and the hardest hit, they manage to pivot their sexual practices in their language around sexuality, and it became one of the safest communities to be in just because they have a language around sexuality that other communities didn't. It was very rare to go into a leather bar and see someone drunk high off their ass running around presenting themselves to whoever would take advantage of them that night. Consent was a thing that and permission had to be given for a sexual acts. And the people who didn't play by the rules were called out. I remember being interested in one man and my other buddy said, No, you, we won't let you go home with him. He's a bad talk, he'll hurt you. And you know how many lives would be saved. If we had those networks of people in place to watch out for each other, my heart breaks for the young queer

folk who think that their destiny is to go out and get drunk or high enough so they can lower their shame threshold enough to go home with anybody but not really be sober enough to connect and get the intimacy that they really want.

**A** Adam James Cohen (he/him) 31:05

Absolutely. That just said, for so many of us, you know, underneath our shame is simply a deep desire to connect and be seen and known and held. And yeah, that can absolutely be a driver underneath those behaviors totally. So what else ended up being helpful for you to move through the shame for you to move through your own second adolescence?

**J** Jon Carl Lewis (he/him) 31:25

I have always been committed to a journey of self improvement. I don't know where that comes from. I'm sure I inherit that from my family. I'm sure some of it is coming from the desire to be the best schoolboy in the world. But it's helped me I've read a lot of self help books, tried to find a spiritual path that works for me. And basically, I would say being on a spiritual path has really helped me avoid some of the dangers of that journey. I have been partnered for 26 years, married for five and a half to the same guy, strangely enough. And that has been a steadying force in my life. I met him when I was 29. And I often talk about second hour lessons, I think I still have a second 30s to go through. I've often wondered what it would have been like to be single in my 30s, which is another formative period. But I am very thankful for my husband, and you know how I've been nurtured and protected in that relationship.

**A** Adam James Cohen (he/him) 32:40

Yeah, yeah. I want to I want to hear about this relationship. But first, I'm actually curious, like, what was your relationship history like before meeting your husband?

**J** Jon Carl Lewis (he/him) 32:49

relationships would work out for about a year, and then they they either went three months, or they went a year for the shorter ones, the other guy would get bored, or the longer ones I would get bored. And, you know, it wasn't the right guy to go the distance with but I spent a lot of time searching for sex and searching for connection. It was my obsession. And my obsession was to go boyfriend not necessarily have lots of sex. It was this tremendous thirst for intimacy, all through my 20s.

**A** Adam James Cohen (he/him) 33:23

Yeah, what's that, like, in this moment? Looking back at that point in your story,

**J** Jon Carl Lewis (he/him) 33:28

it makes me sad. It makes me angry, which is an emotion I'm only learning to deal with now. So I can the anger is why, why couldn't something have been done? Totally. Yep.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 33:41

While you're speaking to this, this sadness and anger, these wise, those are all part of the grief that is an important part of second adolescence to, to let be here. First, so many of us queer people, we can look back and point to countless points in our story where we wish things could have been different, where we're paying to see what was and we're paying to see what we wish could have been, this is grief. And this is often what I see as an imperative part, to growing through second adolescence and integral to queer healing, you know, the grieving for and with our younger selves for what was and what never could be. Gosh, I mean, for me, I've done a ton of work around my own grief for my younger selves, and I can still easily access that sorrow that I hold for them when I look back and, and I see younger me when I see him at various ages and what I wish could have been true for him instead of what was you know, at three at 12 at 17 at 23. And yeah, it's super painful to be in that grief.

J

Jon Carl Lewis (he/him) 34:53

So you know, I translate that to what can we do now to break this cycle so that all these people People who still need to go through secondary adolescence. And I'm not even sure that the queer folks going through their first lessons right now are able to meet all the tasks of a first adolescence, given the fact that they see blatant homophobia and transphobia. In the media every single day of their lives, they're not out of the woods, they've got more information, but they're not out woods yet. And I'm looking, one of the reasons I was so excited about your book project is that we need therapists and people in helping professions telling us more and suggesting to us different ways of moving through this in a healthy way. Because the unhealthy ways are all out there. And people will try wherever they can to get where they need to be. And a book like yours is going to be a lifeline.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 35:49

Yeah, and for folks listening just to give some context, I spent the past couple of years writing about the experience of second adolescence using my own story as a framework to talk about this experience, which has led to then wanting to start this podcast to join in conversation with other queer people who have journeyed through their own experience of second adolescence, because though there are cornerstones that are universal to the experience, so much is different for each person. Yeah. So again, I'm just excited to have you here, talking about all of this. And I see how even today, the world that a lot of our queer youth in our culture, even here, in I live in San Francisco, like even here, one of the most progressive and queer supportive cities, I still work with adolescents who are queer and are experiencing homophobia at school or in their homes. And so this idea of lessons, yeah, it might be a part of the queer story for a bit longer, until we have a culture that lets queer youth experience first adolescents free from shame, and able to have all the experiences they want. The ones you know that they see their SIS straight peers getting to experience, and I hope we get there. And yeah, I think you and I, we have this shared life mission of wanting to support the greater work of queer healing. And so that's why I'm so, so grateful to get time with you. Because it's just such an

honor to meet with other queer people who, you know, we're all doing it in different ways. But it's all part of the same mission. And so I feel really appreciative of you your work. And yet in this conversation, before we go, I want to make sure that we get some time to hear about your book, you know, like, What are you writing about?

**J** Jon Carl Lewis (he/him) 37:37

The book I'm writing right now has the working title "Sex and the Gay Christian," this will be a guide for queer folks to help them make healthy sexual decisions in light of their spiritual convictions, specifically, their Christian faith, to help people develop a personal sexual ethic to live by so that they've got some principles, helping them form relationships, and engage in sexual encounters. And I would like to, at the end of that suggest ways to integrate one's sexual life and one spiritual life, and how to build a community around yourself that allows you to flourish.

**A** Adam James Cohen (he/him) 38:23

Gosh, this sounds so important. How did you get to this point of knowing this is what he wanted this piece of work to be and put this out in the world?

**J** Jon Carl Lewis (he/him) 38:33

I haven't found what I was looking for, in terms of a guide to an ethical, spiritually informed sexual life. One of the first questions I asked when I entered the Episcopal Church in 1990, I asked the priest, you know, what are the rules for me as a gay Christian, and he didn't have an answer for me. He basically said, become a part of the community and, you know, attend to your spiritual life and pray. And basically, his assumption was that I would figure it all out, which I did. I think I would have liked a little bit more guidance. Yeah, I hope it's useful information.

**A** Adam James Cohen (he/him) 39:15

Yeah, absolutely. So then you're, you're offering that to folks now. And I'm struck by similar perhaps in both of our stories, well, for me, I'll speak doing the work of second adolescence first, in my own personal journey, then in the work I do with my clients in my practice, and then extending that outward into these conversations and the book I've written and in many ways, I'm offering what I hoped I could have had access to and what I feel my younger selves could have so greatly benefited from and yeah, I wonder if that feels true for you. Yeah, yeah, definitely. Yeah. And going back to second adolescence, we all carry within us our younger selves and an often the wounds of our younger selves and so much about second adults. essence is doing things to offer healing to those wounds of our younger selves. And, and part of that is creating pieces of work and offering something to other people that we wish we could have had. And yeah, it's just really cool and really special, what you're doing. Thank you. I appreciate that. Yeah. And so if any of our listeners wanted to reach out to you, after hearing this conversation, or follow your work, like, what's the best place they can come connect with you?

**J** Jon Carl Lewis (he/him) 40:25

The best place to connect with me right now is at my website, which is [sex.gaychristian.com](http://sex.gaychristian.com). It's not the most streamlined website right now. It's going to experience a makeover, but you can find me there. And I encourage people to find me, because I'd like to talk to them and hear their stories, both about how they've integrated their sexuality and their spirituality and the struggles they've had along the way.

**A** Adam James Cohen (he/him) 40:51

Well, Jon Carl Lewis, thank you so much for coming on today and sharing your story and sharing about your work. I am going to be thinking about this conversation for a while and I just so appreciate you and so look forward to continuing to be in relationship as we keep moving forward.

**J** Jon Carl Lewis (he/him) 41:11

Me too. Thank you

**A** Adam James Cohen (he/him) 41:20

Well, thanks folks for joining us for this conversation. Feel free to head on over to [secondadolescencepod.com](http://secondadolescencepod.com) for show notes and resources highlighted in today's episode and you can connect further by following the show on Instagram at [secondadolescencepod](https://www.instagram.com/secondadolescencepod). If you're interested in being a future guest on the show and you want to come on and share about your own second adolescence, visit [secondadolescencepod.com](http://secondadolescencepod.com) and you'll see how you can submit your interest there. I'd love to have you on. Alright, that's it for me whether it's morning, afternoon, night, wherever we're finding you and your day. Please go out there keep doing things that would make younger you feel absolutely stoked. That's what it's about. All right. Take care.