

"The Shack" Author Defends Book, Shares Testimony at Retail Show

William P. Young, the author of the controversial best-seller The Shack, defended his novel against critics and told of its redemptive impact.



[] The author of the controversial best-seller *The Shack* defended his novel against critics and told of the redemptive impact it had on his own life during the International Christian Retailers Show (ICRS), held this week in Orlando, Fla.

Calling himself "an accidental author," William P. Young told a crowd of roughly 300 people Wednesday morning that the controversy surrounding his *New York Times* best-selling novel, which has sold more than 1 million copies since its debut last year, was "good."

Critics have accused *The Shack*—about a man who encounters God at the scene of a past personal tragedy—of lacking theological integrity and promoting unorthodox theories. Well-known author and radio commentator Charles Colson has been the most vocal in warning people to avoid the book because of its low view of Scripture.

But Young said the fictional story was not written as systematic theology. "It's a parable or a metaphor," Young told author and radio host Chris Fabry during a 10-minute interview for a mock radio program. "Tell Chuck Colson that it's not an allegory."

His comment drew laughs, but Young was more somber as he discussed how he was sexually abused as a child of missionaries while attending boarding school in New Guinea. Young shared that he recently received a call from the main

perpetrator of his abuse, who asked for his forgiveness after reading *The Shack*. "It was wonderful and [peaceful]," Young said as he fought back tears.

Nancy Ford, owner of Words of Wisdom in Swansea, Ill., said Young's testimony brought her to tears. Charlene Wiggs, co-owner of The Master's Mercantile in Pottstown, Pa., said she was touched to hear why he felt he needed to write the book. Wiggs noted the popularity of *The Shack* has made it hard "to keep it on the shelf" at her bookstore.

Young was among the scores of authors and musicians who attended ICRS. Others included gospel artist Martha Munizzi, ex-Korn member Brian "Head" Welch; Super Bowl star David Tyree, whose book *More Than Just the Catch* (Charisma House) releases Sept. 2; coach Tony Dungy of the Indianapolis Colts; and Bible teacher Anne Graham Lotz, who encouraged attendees to "not lose their focus on the Word" during an appearance Sunday.

Also on Sunday, *The Word of Promise* audio New Testament, which features the voice of actor Jim Caviezel as Jesus, was recognized as the Christian Book of the Year, becoming the first audio book to win the honor in the 30-year history of the Christian Book Awards.

In the midst of a sagging economy, attendance at ICRS this year was noticeably down from the nearly 3,000 professionals who gathered in Atlanta last year. Yet the convention is still seen as an important resource to help industry professionals identify new products, make purchases, and develop techniques for bookstore sales and promotions. **-Eric Tiansay**