

AUTHOR INTERVIEW

Q: How would you summarize the story you tell in *Providence*?

A: *Providence* is set in a fictitious college town and tells the story of a pastor named Jack Clayton who writes a best-selling book, much to everyone's surprise (especially his own), and finds himself a reluctant media darling (and target). The last thing Jack wants to do is discuss his past, but that's exactly what happens. Prompted by circumstances, relationships with his closest friends, and the still, small voice of God, Jack begins to tell his personal story in a memoir. Because of his faithfulness, God begins to heal the past and restore the most essential relationships in his life.

Q: As the host of Soul2Soul Radio, your Christian celebrity interviews are heard all over the world. How does this experience inform *Providence*, a story where the main character is a Christian icon, who ironically won't do interviews?

A: One thing I've noticed about Christian recording artists and authors is that most of them enjoy having a platform to share about things that matter most to them. It's part of the way they're built. I was intrigued by the idea of a story featuring a character like Jack Clayton who *wasn't* "built" that way. I wanted to explore what it would be like for an introvert like Jack to be thrust into the spotlight and proclaim Christ in a very public forum. I think it's fascinating to watch him deal with the crisis of obedience to God in a culture that is most foreign to him.

Q: There are a few clear "good guys" and "bad guys" in *Providence*. The media is an unlikely and controversial bad guy. Why did you cast cable news and newspapers in this light?

A: The news media is one of the principal shapers of the information

we receive. Consequently, the media is the dominant purveyor of how we view the world around us. That's a considerable amount of power. We're used to seeing bad guys in books and movies acting as independent agents. But because the power of the media is a reality in our real world, I wanted to explore how Jack Clayton, using faith alone, would fight this battle.

Q: Why did you choose to write *Providence* primarily as a love story? You're a male author ... shouldn't you be writing about car chases and explosions?

A: *Providence* is primarily a story about one man's lifelong love for a woman, but it's also about God's eternal love for everyone. I think women are curious about what men really think about romantic love and the idea of soul mates. Well, that's what I decided to give them—an inside look, so to speak, of one man's view on infatuation, love, and commitment.

Q: *Providence* is set in the pop culture of the 1980s as well the current time. Why did you choose these two eras?

A: I think because the contrast is so striking, these two eras work well together. Even though the Cold War continued into the 1980s, we think of that time as idyllic now. This was before the highly technical computer/cell phone/PDA culture, before the intrusive but necessary airport-security screenings. It was the last great era of pop music, and the last season that saw baby boomers coming of age. The 1980s is a fascinating era on its own, but when readers of *Providence* experience the contrasts between the two eras, it really shows how far we've come.

Q: You're promoting your debut novel in a novel way. What can you tell our audience about *Providence Cares*?

A: In my own life, I've watched friends, church members, and

people in my community face catastrophic illnesses. It's a common misconception that health insurance or state agencies cover treatment and after-care costs for significant health issues like these. They don't. Families are shocked to learn they must raise tens of thousands of dollars on their own, and that's an incredible task. Providence Cares is a way for a family to raise some of that money in a single night. It's essentially an event based around my book that churches and individuals can host for a needy family. I'll come and speak at the event and 100 percent of the proceeds will go to the family toward their care and expenses. I see this as a practical, real-world example of the kind of community ministry Jack Clayton did in the book. It's just my small way of trying to put feet on the ideas presented in *Providence*. (For updates and more information, families can visit www.providence-book.com.)