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Clayton ('95) and Sharie King Recognized with National Award for "True Love Project"

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C. – Gardner-Webb alumnus Clayton King ('95) and his wife, Sharie, have been honored with a national award for their book "True Love Project," published by B & H Publishing Group and promoted by Lifeway Christian Resources.

Photo Credit: Colin
Mukri

"True Love Project" was named a 2015 Christian Retailing's Best award winner in the Young Adult Nonfiction Book of the Year. The awards are sponsored annually by *Christian Retailing* magazine. "We are feeling a combination of emotions right now," King shared. "Joy, thankfulness, humility, exhaustion, but mostly surprise. We were not expecting to win this award at all, so the element of surprise was a bit breathtaking!"

"True Love Project" is a rewrite of "True Love Waits," Lifeway's most successful product. In honor of its 20th anniversary in 2013, LifeWay officials handpicked King to develop and write the new curriculum.

"True Love Waits," an international moral purity campaign designed to challenge teens and college students to commit to sexual abstinence until marriage, initially debuted in 1994, when King himself was a college student. As a traveling evangelist and speaker even during his years at Gardner-Webb, he remembers speaking at True Love Waits rallies all over the country. When LifeWay officials decided to relaunch "True Love Waits" in honor of its 20th anniversary, King was their first choice to rewrite the material.

"I was blown away, I couldn't believe that I would have an opportunity to do that," he shared. "Then Lifeway decided they wanted to add three additional books. It was pretty overwhelming, but it was also the kind of opportunity that we just couldn't turn down, especially to be a voice for Biblical purity in a culture that's becoming more confused and broken spiritually and relationally."

Introduced in 2001, the awards—formerly known as the Retailers Choice Awards—have been acknowledged as an important way of recognizing some of the most significant, life-changing products in the Christian retail industry. Each year, nominating companies submit books, Bibles, gifts, DVDs and other pieces to be considered in the competition. Christian retailers, publishers, church store managers and volunteers are eligible to vote,

and are asked to judge the nominations on overall impact, ability to touch people's hearts and evoke emotion, open people's minds to new ways of thinking, and encourage and affirm Christlike living.

"Out of all of the Christian books published in the previous year, the voters felt that 'True Love Project' had spiritually impacted young adults more than any other title," King marveled. "When we wrote the book, I literally lifted my hands to God in prayer and asked him to touch the book in a special way—one that would help people grow, change, and know Jesus better. I believe he answered that prayer."

King just released his 13th book, "Stronger," which chronicles the Biblical account of Paul's conversion to Christ and parallels his own suffering and loss. "Writing 'Stronger' felt at times like kicking a hornet's nest," he reflected. "It stirred up the grief and depression that I'd experienced in the process, but it was healing and liberating to share my story for God's glory. I wanted to write a book that told a story that captivated the mind and the heart of the reader and was a page-turner they couldn't put down. I hope I've accomplished that."

Located in Boiling Springs, N.C., Gardner-Webb University's purpose is to advance the Kingdom of God through Christian higher education by preparing graduates for professional and personal success, instilling in them a deep commitment to service and leadership, and equipping them for well-rounded lives of lasting impact, Pro Deo et Humanitate (For God and Humanity).