

Study Sheet – The Shack, by William P. Young
Windblown Media, Los Angeles, CA, 2007

Please read chapters 1-4 (if not the entire book) before the first class.

Forward – p. 7-13

1. How are we introduced to Mack? to his father? (Keep these in mind as we discuss the rest of the book.)
2. What does Willie mean “Mack is not very religious” (p.10¹)? (see **Matthew 7:21-23**; **Acts 17:22-23**) Are you “religious”?
3. Is God “the Great Interferer” (p.12)? What Biblical examples would either agree or disagree with this statement?
4. Is this a true story or is it just a fantastic tale?

Ch. 1 – A Confluence of Paths

5. What are the two paths? (see **Deuteronomy 30:15-20**; **Joshua 24:14-15**)
6. How possible is it that the note came from God? (see **Matthew 19:26**; **Isaiah 55:6-11**) Has God talked to you lately? How? See **Hebrews 1:1-2** What about people who say, “God told me...”? How can we know if that is true or not?
7. Who is “Papa”? Is this Biblical? (see **Romans 8:14-15**; **Galatians 4:6**)

Ch. 2 – The Gathering Dark

8. What is “The Great Sadness”?
9. Why did Missy ask, “So, is Jesus dying a legend?” and “How come God is so mean?” (p.31) How did Mack answer her questions? Did Mack know the answer to her questions? Do we know the answer to these questions?
10. Will God every ask **you** “to jump off a cliff”? (p.32) (See **Matthew 10:34-39**; **1 Corinthians 10:12-13**; **James 1:12-15**)

Ch. 3 – The Tipping Point

11. What do we learn about Mack and Nan from the campfire conversation with Jesse and Sarah? (p.37-38)
12. Mack said he was not comfortable calling God “Papa” (top p.38). What was his reason for this? When have you also felt like this? What do we learn about Mack’s prayer life? (p.38-39) How would you describe your prayer life?
13. How was the canoe incident “the tipping point”?

Ch. 4 – The Great Sadness

14. Why was Missy kidnapped? Mack asked, “God, how could this happen?” (p.53) Is there an answer?
15. What do we know about “the shack”? (p.62-63)
16. Why are we reminded again that this story is 3 ½ years later (p.65)? What do we know about Mack’s relationship with God and his view of Scriptures, “Sunday prayers and hymns”? (p.65-66) (See **Ephesians 5:15-20**; **Colossians 3:15-17**)

¹ Page numbers are from the paperback

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Please read chapters 5-9 (if not the entire book) before this 2nd discussion time.

Ch. 5 – Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner

1. Would God send a note in the mail? How does God say He reveals Himself to us? (see **Luke 10:21-22; Hebrews 1:1-2; John 14:26; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; John 1:18**)
2. Mack is very angry with God. Is it a sin to be angry with God? (see **Ps. 10, 74, 77**)
3. What do you think of God the Father described as a large, black, African-American woman? (p.82) see **Isaiah 66:13** Why does Mack call her “Papa”? (Elousia is Greek for “tenderness”, see p. 111)
(Malachi 2:10; John 6:46, 20:17; 1 Tim. 6:16; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 3:14-15)
4. What do you think of the Holy Spirit described as a small, distinctively Asian woman who collects tears? (p.84, see p. 110) (Sarayu is Sanskrit for “air or wind”) See **Acts 2:2-4;**
5. What do you think of Jesus described as a Middle Eastern man dressed like a laborer? (p.84, see also p.111-112) (“the message of the cross is the power of God” **1 Cor. 1:18** – how central is the cross in this book?)

See **John 4:24; 1 Timothy 1:17 and 1 John 4:8, 16. (Romans 1:22-23)**

Ch. 6 – A Piece of π (What is the definition of π ?)

6. What preconceived notions about God got in the way for Mack? What preconceived notions about God do you have? (see p.98 “The problem is that many folks try to grasp some sense of who I am by taking the best version of themselves...” and see **Isaiah 55:6-11**)
7. Does God, the Father have scars on His hands? (p.95-96) Did God the Father leave Jesus on the cross? Did God the Father die? (p.103) (**Matthew 27:46; 2 Corinthians 5:21**)
8. Did God “speak Himself into existence”? Did “we (the Trinity) became flesh and blood”? (p.99)? See **John 1:14, 18; Colossians 1:15**
9. The Trinity is explained to Mack (p.101-2) as “love and relationship”. Does this agree with Scripture?

Ch. 7 – God on the Dock

10. What did Mack learn about devotions? (p.107) What are “devotions” for you?
11. How is Jesus described “on the dock”? Does this agree or disagree with Scripture?

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Ch. 8 – A breakfast of Champions

12. What does “The Shack” say about dreams? (p.116-118) What does the Bible say about dreams? See **Genesis 40:8; Jeremiah 23:25-32; Jude 8**
13. What were Mack’s preconceived notions about God” (p. 119-120) Is it true, “God does not need to punish people because of sin”? (p.120) See **Genesis 3:1-5; Exodus 20:4-6; Romans 6:23; Hebrews 2:14-17**. What does this say about Jesus’ atonement for sin?
14. The Shack states that “God does not relate within a hierarchy” (p.124) What does the Bible say? **1 Corinthians 11:3; John 6:38, 8:28**
15. “The real underlying flaw in your life, Mackenzie, is that you don’t think that I am good.” (p.126) Is that true? What does this have to do with relationship and trust in God?

Ch. 9 – A Long Time Ago, In a Garden far, Far Away

16. What is the relationship of the Garden of Eden and this garden shown to Mackenzie?
17. How do you determine what is good and evil? (p.134-136) **Genesis 2:17, 3:5**
18. What is the answer to “didn’t Missy have a right to be protected”? (p.137)
19. What is the purpose of the messy garden? (p.138)

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Please read chapters 10-13 (if not the entire book) before this 3rd discussion time.

Ch. 10 – Wade in the Water

1. “Why do I have so much fear in my life?” (p.142)
2. What is “submission”? (p.145, 149) Are the Persons of the Trinity submissive to each other? Is God submissive to us? See **John 5:16-27; 14:9-21; 16:12-15; Acts 2:32-33; 1 Peter 1:1-2**
3. What is the “turning” and “re-turning” as a result of sin? (p.146-147) How does this agree or disagree with **Genesis 3**?

Ch. 11 – Here Come Da Judge

4. T.S. Eliot quote: “...be prepared for Him who knows how to ask questions” (p.151) What helpful questions did Sophia (the woman inside of the thick, dark mountain) ask Mack?
5. Mack was there “not to be judged but for judgment.” (p.158-159) What does this mean? See **Matthew 7:1-5; Romans 2:1-3, 14:10-13**
6. Will child abusers be in heaven? (p.161-163) How do we judge? See **1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Matthew 5:21-22**
7. What is the answer to “why doesn’t God do something about the evil in the world?” (p.164) See **Genesis 50:19-20; Luke 19:10; John 3:17; 1 John 3:8**
8. Could Mack really see Missy? (p.165-167)

Ch. 12 – In the Belly of the Beasts

9. Can a 6-year-old have a conversation with God, especially while she is so afraid? (p.173) See **Matthew 18:1-4, 19:13-14**
10. What is meant by “learning to live loved”? (p.175) see **John 14:23-24**
11. What is the Church? (p.177-178) see **Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:41, 47; Ephesians 5:22-27**
12. Is Jesus a Christian? (p.182) Are there followers of Jesus who aren’t Christian? (p.182) Do “all roads lead to Jesus?” See **Acts 4:12; 1 Timothy 2:3-6**

Ch. 13 – A Meeting of Hearts

13. Mack said, “I always liked Jesus better than You” (p.186) Is that true for more than just Mack? Why do you think this is or isn’t true?
14. Why do people lie? (p. 187) see **John 3:19-21, 8:44; 1 John 1:5-7**
15. Finally, the cross! (p.192) What is said about the cross? See **1 Corinthians 15:3; 2 Corinthians 5:14-21**

Please read chapters 14 - end (by now you should have read the entire book) before this 4th discussion time.

Ch. 14 – Verbs and Other Freedoms

1. What is the danger in Sarayu saying to Mack, “You will learn to hear My thoughts in yours.” (p.195) see **Isaiah 55:8-9; 1 Corinthians 2:6-14**
2. What are emotions? (p.196-197) Are they “responses to perception”? see **Romans 15:13; Galatians 5; Colossians 3:1-17**
3. What is the purpose of the Bible? See **John 20:30-31; Acts 8:35; 2 Timothy 3:14-16**
The book says: “The Bible doesn’t teach you to follow rules. It is a picture of Jesus.”
 - “rules and principles are simpler than relationships.”
 - “religion is about having the right answers, and some of their answers are right. But I am about the process that takes you to the living answer and one you get to Him, He will change you from the inside.”
 - “I had the right answers, sometimes, but I didn’t know You.”
 - “don’t look for rules and principles; look for relationship – a way of coming to be with Us.” (p.197-198) Do these statements agree with Scripture?
4. Why did God give us the 10 Commandments? See **Exodus 20:1-2; Psalm 19:7-14; Romans 7**
The books says: “Can you clean your face with the same mirror that shows you how dirty you are?” (p.202) “Trying to keep the law is actually a declaration of independence, a way of keeping control... It grants you the power to judge others and feel superior to them.” (p.203) Do these statements agree with Scripture?
5. What does Sarayu mean? “I am a verb... To move from something that is only a noun to something dynamic and unpredictable, to something living and present tense, is to move from law to grace.” (p.204) see **Exodus 3:14** Does what Sarayu says agree with Scripture?
6. What is the truth about “responsibility” and “expectation”? (p.204-206) see **Romans 8**
7. What does it mean as Jesus says to Mack, “Rather than a pyramid, I want to be the center of a mobile”? (p.207) Does this agree with Scripture?

Ch. 15 – A Festival of Friends

8. What is “reconciliation”? How were Mack and his father “reconciled”? (p.214-216) see **2 Corinthians 5:16-21**

Ch. 16 – A Morning of Sorrows

9. Why the change in God the Father’s appearance? Is this more according to Scripture? Why or why not? (p.218, “coming full circle” p.221) Does God the Father “mess” with us? (p.219)
10. Papa said He could’ve prevented Missy’s death – why didn’t He? (p.222) see **Genesis 50:20; Romans 5:1-5; 8:22-30; 1 Peter 1:6-7; 5:10-11**

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11. What is “forgiveness”? (p.224-226) see **Matthew 18:21-35** Are we to “forgive and forget”?

Papa said, “Mack, for you to forgive this man is for you to release him to Me and allow Me to redeem him.” (p.224) Does this agree with Scripture? What is necessary to “allow God to redeem” someone? See **Romans 5:6-11; Ephesians 1:7-8, 2:8-9**

12. Papa tells Mack, “forgiveness does not create a relationship.” (p.225) How is this true? How is this false?

Papa also says that Missy already forgave her abuser “because of My presence in her. That’s the only way true forgiveness is possible.” (p.226) Does Scripture agree?

And, Papa says, “There is power in what My children declare.” (p.227) True or false?

13. What about anger? Papa says it’s alright to still be angry. (p.227) Does Scripture agree? See **Ephesians 4:25-27**

14. Tears: “Don’t ever discount the wonder of your tears. They can be healing waters and a stream of joy. Sometimes they are the best words the heart can speak.” (p.228) Agree or disagree? See **Job 2:11-13; Psalm 126; Luke 7:36-48**

Ch. 17 – Choices of the Heart

15. How did Mack find Missy’s body? (last chapter) What comforted Mack about Missy’s death? What is our comfort at the death of a loved one or any time? See **2 Corinthians 1:3-7; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**

16. When Mack “returned” to go back home, was it to the “real world or the un-real world”? (p.235-237) see **1 Corinthians 15:35-58; Philippians 1:21-27**

17. What happened to Mack on his drive home? (p.238) [remember back on p.12?]

Ch. 18 – Outbound Ripples

18. Did Mack actually go to the shack or did he just dream it?

19. How was Kate relieved of her guilt? When is guilt “healthy”? “unhealthy”? see **Romans 7:14-25; Colossians 2:16-23**

20. How did Mack’s story change Willie? Did it change you?

21. How interesting that the book ends with the truth of Philippians 2:10-11!