



ENTERING
THE SHACK:
A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

Tonight

- **Our Prayer:** Psalm 119:66 “Teach me good judgment and knowledge, For I believe Your commandments.”
- **Our Mission:** 1 Thess. 5:21 “Test all things; hold fast what is good.”
- **Our Encouragement:** When faced with questions on the nature of truth, the unsaved Bereans “searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so” (Acts 17:11).

The Book: the facts

- 2007 – 11,000 copies printed
- February 2017 – 22 million copies
- On amazon.com right now:

The Shack: Where Tragedy Confronts Eternity Paperback – July 1, 2007

by [William P. Young](#) (Author)

★★★★☆ ▾ 12,149 customer reviews

#1 Best Seller in Reference

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The Book: the facts

- Rave reviews, ardent supporters, individuals who would describe themselves genuinely helped by this book.
- *“This book has the potential to do for our generation what John Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress" did for his. It's that good!”* - Eugene Peterson (author of The Message paraphrase)
- *“THE SHACK will change the way you think about God forever.”* — Kathie Lee Gifford, cohost, NBC's Today Show
- Pragmatism says “Excellent book.”

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The Genre: a debate

- Author: Allegory (e.g. Chronicles of Narnia, Pilgrim's Progress)
- Actual: Didactic fiction - a story with the intention of teaching
- Seeks to answer the question, "What is God like?" through the infallible mouths of members of the Godhead.
- How to evaluate: on the basis that it intends to affect change in people's hearts and minds on the nature of God.

The Genre: a debate

- “Narnia is allegorical fiction that engages select tenets of the Christian faith through their analogs [or counterparts] in a fantastical world. This created world has a similar but not identical religious system and its story is told through similar but not fully-corresponding characters. The Shack is didactic fiction that engages select tenets of the Christian faith in a realistic world through characters meant to accurately represent divine persons described in the Bible.” (Challies, *Why Papa of The Shack is not Aslan of Narnia*)

The Plot: emotional

- "The Shack revolves around Mack (Mackenzie) Philips [a father of six]. Four years before this story begins, Mack's young daughter, Missy, was abducted during a family vacation. Though her body was never found, the police did find evidence in an abandoned shack to prove that she had been brutally murdered by a notorious serial killer who preyed on young girls. As the story begins, Mack, who has been living in the shadow of his Great Sadness, receives a strange note that is apparently from God. God invites Mack to return to this shack for a get together. Though uncertain, Mack visits the scene of the crime and there has a weekend-long encounter with God, or, more properly, with the godhead." (Challies, The Shack.pdf).

The Characters: a surprise

- Mack - had an abusive father, father of a murdered girl
- Papa - God the Father, a large African-American woman. Later, when Mack needs a father-figure, God appears as a pony-tailed, gray-haired man.
- Sarayu - The Holy Spirit, a young woman appearing to be of northern Chinese or Nepalese or even Mongolian ethnicity
- Jesus - A Middle Eastern man in workman attire

The Problems: many

- **Basic problem: The Shack puts words in the mouth of all three persons of the God-head.**
- **“When [The Shack] puts words in God's mouth, words other than God's as revealed in Scripture, the author subjects himself to a higher standard. Mack can and does say all kinds of wrong things and the author shouldn't be held accountable for them, because Mack is only a flawed human character. But when a member of the triune God says something that is contradicted by Scripture or known fact, it's another matter.” - Randy Alcorn**

Authoritative Truth undermined:

- Sarayu, the Holy Spirit, says *"You will learn to hear my thoughts in yours"* (p. 213). *"You might see me in a piece of art, or music, or silence, or through people, or in creation, or in your joy and sorrow. My ability to communicate is limitless, living and transforming, and it will always be tuned to Papa's goodness and love. And you will hear and see me in the Bible in fresh ways. Just don't look for rules and principles; look for relationship – a way of coming to be with us."* (p. 216).
- Is the Bible merely one way of many to perceive the Holy Spirit's character and nature with understanding and accuracy?

A Troubling Characterization

- God is above and beyond human gender as we know it.
- God continually refers to himself in masculine terms in Scripture, while occasionally using more feminine metaphors (Isaiah 49:15; Luke 13:34) to illustrate his character or the character of Jesus.
- God intentionally avoids any confusion on the issue (Num. 23:19).
- To portray the invisible God in the visible form of a human is to give God characteristics that he simply does not have.

Errors on the eternality & nature of God

- **Papa:** *“When we three spoke ourselves into human existence as the Son of God, we became fully human. We also chose to embrace all the limitations this entailed. Even though we have always been present in this created universe, we now became flesh and blood.”* (p. 101).
- **Psalm 90:2** - “from everlasting to everlasting”; **Gen. 21:33** - “the Everlasting God”
- **Nowhere in Scripture does God the Father and the Holy Spirit take on flesh and blood.**

Errors on the functions within the Trinity

- Jesus tells Mack: *"Papa is as much submitted to me as I to him, or Sarayu to me, or Papa to her. Submission is not about authority and it is not obedience; it is all about relationships of love and respect. In fact, we are submitted to you in the same way"* (p. 155).
- *"Mackenzie, we have no concept of final authority among us, only unity. We are in a circle of relationship, not a chain of command or 'great chain of being,' as your ancestors termed it. What you're seeing here is relationship without any overlay of power. We don't need power over the other because we are always looking out for the best. Hierarchy would make no sense among us"* (p. 127). The discussion from there through page 130 makes it clear that from the "Trinity's perspective," hierarchy is an evil necessity due to the fall.

Errors on the functions within the Trinity

- “But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God” (1 Corinthians 11:3).
- Functional (not essential) within the Trinity – John 6:38: Jesus says “I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me.”
- John 8:28 he says, “I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me.”
- And Christ will continue to be subject to the Father forever! “When all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, so that God may be all in all” (1 Corinthians 15:28)”

Error on the power of Jesus

- **Papa:** *“Jesus is fully human. Although he is also fully God, he has never drawn upon his nature as God to do anything. He has only lived out of his relationship with me, living in the very same manner that I desire to be in relationship with every human being”* (p. 101). When asked about Jesus healing the blind man, Mack is told *“He did so as a dependent, limited human being trusting in my life and power to be at work within him and through him. Jesus, as a human being, had no power within himself to heal anyone”* (p. 102).
- Jesus’ healing of the blind was prophetic fulfillment that the divine Holy One of Israel was present and that God was appearing (Luke 7:22, compared with Isa. 29:18; 35:5, 6), not simply empowering.

Confusion on the role of Christ

- Jesus: *"I am the best way any human can relate to Papa or Sarayu. To see me is to see them"* (p. 113).
- Compare with John 14:6

Confusion on the punishment of sin

- Given the perfect opportunity to *correct* Mack's view of God that emphasizes God's wrath too much, due to his background, Papa says: "*I don't need to punish people for sin. Sin is its own punishment, devouring you from the inside. It's not my purpose to punish it; it's my joy to cure it*" (p. 124).
- God does need to punish people for sin, or else he fails to be just (Revelation 16:5-7).
- Sin is not its own punishment: "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 3:23).
- One of God's eternal purposes is to punish sin through the person of Jesus Christ, either as the propitiation for the sin of believers (Rom. 3:23-26), or as the executer of justice for the unbelievers (Acts 17:31).

Confusion on who will be saved

- Young's statements within the book are understood by outspoken unitarian-universalists to support the concept of universalism, a heresy that holds to the ultimate salvation of every man. Since the book, Young's co-author have said: *"Paul Young told me he is a "hopeful universalist." He believes that our loving God sent His Son to die for every single sinner without exception. One day God will effectually reconcile every sinner to Himself. Paul uses the term "hopeful" universalism because he understands that the Scriptures speak of judgment, but Paul is "hopeful" that even in judgment, the love of God will eventually bring the sinner being judged to love for Jesus Christ. Paul Young is "hopeful" that the fire of God's love will eventually and effectually persuade every sinner of God's love in Christ"* (Wade Burlson, co-author/publisher of The Shack, <http://wmpaulyoung.com/universal-reconciliation/>).

Confusion on who will be saved

- *“Those who love me have come from every system that exists. They were Buddhists or Mormons, Baptists or Muslims; some are Democrats, some Republicans and many don’t vote or are not part of any Sunday morning or religious institutions. I have followers who were murderers and many who were self-righteous. Some are bankers and bookies, Americans and Iraqis, Jews and Palestinians. I have no desire to make them Christian, but I do want to join them in their transformation into sons and daughters of my Papa, into my brothers and sisters, into my Beloved.” “Does that mean,” said Mack, “that all roads will lead to you?” “Not at all.” Jesus smiled as he reached for the door handle to the shop. “Most roads don’t lead anywhere. What it does mean is that I will travel any road to find you” (pp. 197-198).*
- Papa says, *“Through [Jesus’s] death and resurrection, I am now fully reconciled to the world.”* “The whole world? You mean those who believe in you, right?” “The whole world, Mac” (p. 210).
- Papa says, *“In Jesus, I have forgiven all humans for their sins against me, but only some choose relationship.”* Compare with Acts 10:43; c.f. Acts 8:22.

Summary of issues

- *The Shack* confuses and contradicts the clear teaching of Scripture.
- *The Shack* is meant to portray the love of God; in so doing, there is no mention of any of the holiness of God or wrath of God upon sin.
- The cross of Christ is noticeably downplayed in *The Shack*; the crux of Christianity is barely mentioned.
- In discussing *The Shack* with unbelievers, look to get to them to the point of seeing the wrath and love of God on display in the cross-work of Jesus as found in Scripture.
- In discussing *The Shack* with believers, lovingly point out error, and point to truth, i.e. the Bible.

The Shack: a movie

- **Friday, March 3 - starring Sam Worthington, Octavia Spencer, and Tim McGraw**
- **Problems made bigger**
 - **Unbiblical theology-shaping teaching will be viewed as accurate by millions of unbelievers.**
 - **Untaught or undiscerning believers and professing believers will embrace the theology-shaping teaching, viewing it as a “safe space”**

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The Shack: a movie

- Any physical portrayal of God the Father or God the Holy Spirit does damage to the Trinity.
- Exodus 20:4-6 “You shall not make for yourself a carved image – any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them [worship] nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

The Shack as a Movie

- “We should not look to pictures of God to show us his glory and move us to worship; for his glory is precisely what such pictures can never show us. ... all manmade images of God, whether molten or mental, are really borrowings from the stock-in-trade of a sinful and ungodly world, and are bound therefore to be out of accord with God’s own holy Word. To make an image of God is to take one’s thoughts of him from a human source rather than from God himself; and this is precisely what is wrong with image-making.” - J.I. Packer, *Knowing God*

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