



The Shack by Wm. Paul Young
A problematic wonderful book
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What sets The Shack apart from the rest of the novels on the New York Times Bestseller list? The Difference is that it proposes to not only portray the Creator, the God of the Bible, but also to speak for the Godhead. This is why there has been so much scrutiny and fanfare and warnings about this book.

Another thing is that the character makes statements about his belief and God which are not accurate in the beginning of the book, which many take out of context, before they realize that God ends up correcting his false assumptions later on.

I am proposing a common sense page by page assessment of the Biblical and Creator centered Worldview in contrast with The Shack. I am by no means beyond error myself, but as one learner to the next, here is the Truth of the thing backed by the nature of my Creator.

Summary of the Shack: Mack is an average middle ages man with 4 kids and a loving wife. He is religious, even having seminary training and a wife specially connected to God. She calls him Papa. Their world is turned upside down when on a family outing with just Mack and the kids; his youngest daughter is kidnapped and murdered. All clues lead to a beat up shack high in the mountains, but her body is never found. A deep sadness and despondency seeps into Mack until one day he finds a note from Papa, asking him to meet him at the shack. What follows is a meeting with God, where Mack's preconceptions and misunderstandings are challenged. He comes face to face with the godhead in surprising new ways and his objections, accusations and questions are answered by the Creator and Mack finds out what God wants from him as the deep sadness in his hart is exorcised and he is brought back into relationship with the lover of all.

1-31 the first pages up till p31 set up character, situation and plot. They are going on vacation in the woods.



31 the story is told of a princess who gives her life to save her people- it is compared to Christ's death saving us, but it was not just his death, but his resurrection that saves us. Not a good comparison.



33 God and the great spirit of the Indians are not the same, as Mack tells his daughter they are.

33b Christ/ God did not just save us from just a sickness as in the princess story but death – our choice against God.

34 “Will God ask you to give up your life to save others” his daughter asks, Mack says no. but in truth God may ask us to do that.



67-68 Mack has some wrong ideas from Seminary, but the book makes it sound even worse, like the Bible is the problem or part of the problem. “the note just might be from God after all, even if the thought of God's passing notes did not fit well with his theological training. In seminary he had been taught that God had completely stopped any overt communication with moderns, preferring to have them only listen to and follow sacred Scripture, properly interpreted, of Course. God's voice has been reduced to

paper, and even that paper had to be moderated and deciphered by the proper authorities and intellects. It seemed that direct communication with God was something exclusively for the ancients and uncivilized, while educated Westerners' access to God was mediated and controlled by the intelligentsia, Nobody wanted god in a box, just in a book." This whole section disses the Bible, though making a good point. The Bible teaches that God still speaks to us, and that the Bible is his revelation to us of Himself and a manual on our nature. I now the author is talking about legalism here, but at what cost to Scripture. Any new revelations or word from God is subject to Scripture, but in no ways does the Bible teach that God is done speaking to us.

73 Mack doesn't understand God or his Judgment or love.
Mack makes his way into the mountains, and to the shack to meet with whoever sent the note

80 Why did you let this happen? He thinks God is cruel to allow evil and choices to affect us? "Why? Why did you let this happen? Why did you bring me here? Of all the places to meet you – why where? Wasn't it enough to kill my baby? Do you have to toy with me too?" He is affected by The Great Sadness and contemplates suicide. He starts to leave the shack.
Death is the ultimate evil? -- No
God is not there for me? – True we are here for Him (it,) life is not about us

Positive. When we are done with God, God is not done with us

85 face to face with God – A big black woman Positive. Disrupts our perceptions of God Goddess? The God character explains that God is a spirit, but he is choosing to come to him in this form to get around his preconceptions and barriers, to a "father" figure. At the end God does take the form of a father.

"Not ready?" (to breakdown and cry) she responded, "We'll do things on your terms and time" – Does this imply an accommodating God, that is unbiblical? - Not necessarily but it is dangerous ground.

86-89 Mack doesn't know who she is. He is introduced to the three figures of the godhead –

The big African woman "You may call me Elouisa... ; It's just a name I am rather fond of and has particular meaning to me...you can call me what Nan(his wife) does Papa" This plays a little lose with names of God. It does matter – the name of God Allah, Vishnu, and Yahweh are not names of the same god – DANGER.
P112 Jesus speaking, "El is my name as Creator God, but Ousia is 'being' or 'that which is truly real,' so the name means 'the Creator God who is truly real and the ground of all being.'"

The Asian woman, an ethereal wind called Sarayu – "keeper of the gardens, among other things."
P112 Jesus speaking, "she is creativity; she is action; she is the breathing of life; she is much more. She is my spirit." Her name means, "Wind, a common wind" but doesn't say which language

A Middle Eastern carpenter/ laborer –Jesus who also says he has been known by Joshua – Yeshua – Jessie

"Since there were three of them, maybe this was a Trinity sort of thing. But two women and a man and none of them white? "Which one of you is God?" "I am" said all three in unison."



90-91 This chapter starts with a quote, leaving me with warning questions. "No matter what God's power may be, the first aspect of God is never that of the absolute Master, the Almighty. It is that of the God who puts himself on our human level and limits himself." – Jacques Ellul, Anarchy and

Christianity

After Mack meets them, he asks. "So now what am I supposed to do?" Jesus responds "You're not supposed to do anything. You're free to do whatever you like." Free to do whatever? Don't do because you feel Obligated – do things because you want to. Jesus tells him - in regards to who to hang out with.



93 God loves all our expressions? From the heart – an evil heart/ nature So here "Papa" is listening to a funk band, and she says she listens to everything- true God listens to us, she calls these angry rockers "Just some of my kids, showin' and spoutin' off. I am especially fond of those boys, you know." Interesting to think about this and the nature of God- how does he view humans, believers and non- believers?

94 Papa and Mack talk about why she appeared to him as a woman, and his broken view and relationship with his father. "if you let me Mack, Ill be the papa you never had." Mack responds "If you couldn't take care of Missy (his murdered little girl), how can I trust you to take care of me?" The question – what does it really mean? She responds, "That's why you're here, Mack, I want to heal the wound that has grown inside you and between us....I have no easy answer that will take your pain away... Life takes a bit of time and a lot of relationship." But later on God does present a good answer to why Pain and Death.

95 God is, no man or woman On the gender thing, Papa responds, "I am neither male nor female, even though both genders are derived from my nature. If I chose to appear to you as a man or a woman, it's because I love you. For me to appear to you as a woman and suggest that you call me 'Papa' is simply to mix metaphors, to help you keep from falling so easily back in your religious conditioning." Is this religious conditioning/ stereotypes bad or good? God- very white, very male.?

96-97 "Somehow, the way she had approached him and skirted his resistance to her love. It was strange and painful and maybe even a little bit wonderful. "but then...why is there such an emphasis on you being a Father? I mean, is seems to be the way you most reveal yourself." "Well, responded Papa, ...there are many reasons for that, and some of them go very deep. Let me say for now that we knew once the creation was broken, true fathering would be much more lacking than mothering. Don't misunderstand me, both are needed – but an emphasis on father in is necessary because of the enormity of its absence."

Next they talk about free will Papa says," I'm not interested in prisoners." She touches on the nature of freedom, and "the intrusion of your soul's sickness that inhibits and binds you... etc.Only I can set you free, Mackenzie, but freedom can never be forced."

"Freedom is an incremental process." –Papa "Mackenzie, the truth shall set you free and the truth has a name; he's over in the woodshop right now covered in sawdust. Everything is about him. And freedom is a process that happens inside a relationship with him. Then all that stuff you feel churnin' around inside will start to work its way out."



Papa shows Mack the scars on her wrists from the cross. "Don't ever think that what my Son chose to do didn't cost us dearly. Love always leaves a significant mark, "she stated slowly, and gently. "We were there together."

Mack was surprised. "At the cross? Now wait, I thought you left him—you know—'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?'" it was a Scripture that had often haunted Mack in *The Great Sadness*.

"you misunderstand the mystery there. Regardless of what he felt in that moment, I never left him." "How can you say that? You abandoned him just like you abandoned me!"

“Mackenzie, I never left him, and I haven't ever left you.” ... “when all you can see is your pain, perhaps the you lose sight of me?” ... “Don't forget, the story didn't end in his sense of forsakenness. He found his way through it to put himself completely into my hands. Oh, what a moment that was!”

Doctrine: [so was the Godhead all on the Cross?](#) [Did Father ever turn away from Jesus?](#)



99 *“You...were created to be loved.”* [Created to love – or to be loved?](#) *“Living unloved is like clipping a bird's wings and removing its ability to fly. Not something I want for you.”*

[Pain causes us to feel unloved? – Not necessarily](#)

[Pain gets us out of ourselves](#)

[us vs. God view](#)

[not sure this is all Biblical?](#)

“I am God. I am who I am. And unlike you, my wings can't be clipped.”

100 [this leaves you,](#) *“Smack-dab in the center of my love!”*

The nature of God addressed. “I am what some say ‘holy, and wholly other than you. The problem is that many folks try to grasp some sense of who I am by taking the best version of themselves, projecting that to the nth degree...then calling that God...seems noble... the truth is that it falls pitifully short of who I really am, I am ..above and beyond all that you can ask or think.”

“By nature I am completely un-inhibited, without bounds. I have always known fullness. I live in a state of perpetual satisfaction as my normal state of existence...”

101 *“we created you to share in that. But then Adam chose to go it on his own, as we know he would, and everything got messed up. But instead of scrapping the whole creation, we rolled up our sleeves and entering into the middle of the mess – that's what we have done in Jesus.”* *“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 ([what does this mean?](#)), we now became flesh and blood. It would be like this bird, whose nature it is to fly, choosing only to walk and remain grounded. He doesn't stop being a bird, but it does alter his experience of life significantly.”* *“Although by nature he is fully God, Jesus is fully human and lives a such. While never losing the innate ability to fly, he chose moment-by-moment to remain grounded. That is why his name is Immanuel, ‘God with us,’ or ‘God with you,’ to be more precise.”*

“But what about all the Miracles? The healings? Raising people from the dead? Don't those prove that Jesus was God- you know, more than human?” –Mack

“No, it proves that Jesus is truly human.”

“What” –Mack

“Mackenzie, I can fly, but humans can't. 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. He is just the first to do it to the uttermost –the first to absolutely trust my life within him, the first to believe in my love and my goodness without regard for appearance or consequence.”

“So when he healed the blind?” –Mack

“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, has no power within himself to heal anyone.”

“a shock to Mack's religious system” [P102 is really interesting as God continues to explain that Jesus was living as He had designed true humans to live- out of his life.](#)

“I have only been limited in Jesus; I have never been limited in myself.”

103 *“To begin with, that you can't grasp the wonder of my nature is rather a good thing. Who wants to worship a God who can be fully comprehended, eh?”* [The Nature of God expanded on this page.](#)

“I am one God and I am three persons, and each of the three is fully and entirely the one.” “if I were simply one God and only one person, then” ...you and I would be without...” Love and relationship. All love and relationship is possible for you only because it already exists within me, within God myself...”

Seems really scripturally accurate.

creation – entered in Israel, Jesus etc

Godhead fully human in Jesus?

God through Jesus healed –miracles what it means to be truly human

Jesus never drew upon his “God” nature ?

102 Jesus – no power – but gods fully human, fully in Gods will “you will do greater than me” Jesus

Every human designed to live out of god's life created in my image?

God is never limited – but in incarnation –Jesus

103 it's good we can't comprehend God fully 3in 1 god = love relationship, honor submission, is their nature.

1 god = love a part of their nature, but so is hate, evil etc. – human like Greek gods and Allah of Islam and the evolving gods of Mormonism.

104a A key summary on the nature of God. A “god (who) could possibly act without love, and that would be a disaster. And is surly not me.”

108 God limits him (themselves) out of respect and love for us? Is this biblical? Relationship

“Relationships are never about power, and one way to avoid the will to hold power over another is to choose to limit ones self – to serve...”

109 Family devotions- Not a good experience for Mack. The Godhead interacting – fun praising each other = holiness in action - interesting

111 God sees life as God, but also as human



112 Jesus says “I am the best way any human can relate to Papa or Sarayu. To see me is to see them...” We can relate through creation, conscience, others, and Bible. Problem: This statement is not close enough to – “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father but through me.

113 the names used for God explained



114 “That is why Elousia is such a wonderful name. God, who is the ground of all being, dwells in, around, and through all things – ultimately emerging as the real—and any appearances that mask that reality will fall away.” God dwells in, around, through all things – hum, This is dangerous! Pantheism

(nature as God)

114b incarnation – fully man- god – yes

Being with God is the answer to all of life's questions, joys and pains

“My purpose from the beginning was to live in you and you in me.” –Jesus “I choose to live moment by moment fully human. I am fully God, but I am human to the core. Like I said, it's Papa's miracle.”

116 God's truth supersedes your feelings

121b **God's anger - out of love** *"There is a lot to be mad about in the mess my kids have made and in the mess they're in... I don't like a lot of the choices they make, but that anger—especially for me—is an expression of love all the same. I love the ones I am angry with just as much as those I'm not"* **judgment?**
"But if you are God, aren't you the One spilling out great bowls of wrath and throwing people into a burning lake of fire" –Mack asks



122a *A deep sadness sin her eyes, "I am not who you think I am, Mackenzie. I don't need to punish people for their 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."*

"Sin is its own punishment ..." “?”

Choice consequence sin judgment cure What is Biblical?

123b-124 **Mack asks - "Isn't one of you more the boss than the other two?"** **chain of command - hierarchy?**
In the godhead final authority vs. unity rolls - submission

"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... We don't need power over the other because we are always looking out for the best. Hierarchy would make no sense among us. Actually this is your problem, not ours."... *"Humans are so lost and damaged that to you it is almost incomprehensible that people could work or live together without someone being in charge."*... *"It's one reason why experiencing true relationship is so difficult for you,"* Jesus added. **Hierarchy – rules to protect and administer- law-enforcement of rules- chain of command- destroys relationship rather than promotes it.**

125 *"When you chose independence over relationship, you become a danger to one another. Others become objects to be manipulated or managed for your own happiness. Authority, as you usually think of it, is merely the excuse that strong one uses to make others conform to what they want."*

We're not equals – relationship is dependence giving over of will

"We carefully respect your choices, so we work within your systems even while we seek to free you from them, Sarayu continued. "Creation has been taken down a very different path than we desired."

126 *"the will to power and independence... it is the human paradigm, ... so prevalent that it goes unseen and unquestioned. It is the matrix; a diabolical scheme in which you are hopelessly trapped even while completely unaware of its existence."*

True deference / submission destroys Hierarchy are relationship and hierarchy opposites?



126b **creation's purpose** *"We want to share with you the love and joy and freedom and light that we already know within ourselves. We created you, the human, to be in face- to-face relationship with us, to join our circle of love. As difficult as it will be for you to understand, everything that has taken place is occurring exactly according to this purpose, without violating choice or will."*

127 **evil – choice addressed. Too long to quote. God allows all kinds of evil and sufferings, not stopping them.** *"your choices are also not stronger than my purposes, and I will use every choice you make for the ultimate good and the most loving outcome."* **Humans center their lives around what they see as good- independence- allowing choice and its consequences God is after his purposes without the violation of one human will. Is it worth the cost? Yes, God replies. Humans' perspective is an incomplete picture of reality.**

128 pain and death not ultimate evils relationship - love and trust that God is good and allows choice, etc out of goodness “You see pain and death as ultimate evils and God as the ultimate betrayer, or perhaps, at best, as fundamentally untrustworthy. You dictate the terms and judge my (Gods) actions and find me guilty.” Your flaw is that you don’t think God is good. And that all in your life and the world is covered by my goodness. But you don’t trust me. Trust comes by relationship and that by knowing you’re truly loved. That is God’s work in us. We can’t do it alone. And God does love you.

129 “we’re not justifying it. (pain, death, choice) We are redeeming it”

133-134 human’s part in the fall and creation Mack “then why has so much of the ‘good’ gone ‘bad’?” You humans, so little in your own eyes. You are truly blind to your own place in the creation. Having chosen the ravaged path of independence, you don’t even comprehend that you are dragging the entire creation along with you.”

134b “autonomy is lunacy. Freedom involves trust and obedience inside a relationship of love”

136-137 human concept of good and evil, We base good on our comfort/ security and happiness/ makes us feel good, and evil on what causes pain or costs us what we want. us – determining messed up/ subjective relativity attacked “Then it is you who determines good and evil. You become the judge.” – making a mess and wars, etc. “And if there is no reality of good that is absolute, then you have lost any basis for judging. It is just language, and one might as well exchange the word good for the word evil.” ... “the choice to eat of that tree tore the universe apart, divorcing the spiritual from the physical. They died, expelling the breath of their choice the very breath of God. I would say that is a problem!”

138 give up your right to decide good and evil on your own terms – Let God decide, chose to live only in me you play God in your independence. (Really Good) life, death good, evil darkness, light the absence “Light and Good actually exist. So, removing yourself from me will plunge you into darkness. Declaring independence will result in evil because apart from me, you can draw only upon yourself. That is death because you have separated yourself from me: Life.”

139 giving up your rights live in the wonder and adventure of God. We have no rights, but we are loved

If you feel ticked off- you think your rights have been violated

139b the gospel = said wonderfully Jesus’ example

143 God is with us in the present, where do we spend our time, in our mind? Past future?

144 belief and love erase fear and future looking fear – security, control fear driven, but do we see God there?

147 God cares deeply about creation and grieves our misuse of it. “So why don’t you fix it?” Mack asked – the earth- “because we gave it to you.”

“Can’t you take it back?”

“Of course we could, but then the story would end before it was consummated.”

submission - god head to us? *“To force my will on you,” Jesus replied, “is exactly what love does not do. Genuine relationships are marked by submission even when your choices are not helpful or healthy... submission is all about relationships of love and respect. In fact, we are submitted to you in the same way.”*

“Why would the God of the Universe want to be submitted to me?”
“Because we want you to join us in our circle of relationship. I don’t want slaves to my will; I want brothers and sisters who will share life with me.” And love each other this way.

148-149 return to God from independence to abandonment, more on submission and Men and Women relationships. You were not made to be her identity, security, and her understanding of good and evil – that should be only in Father.

150 roles and relationship? Men and women Complementary empowering the other- a fully equal and powerful counterpart

151 God living through us. Jesus- *“Mack, just like love, submission is not something that you can do, especially not on your own. Apart from my life inside you, you can’t submit to Nan, or your children, or anyone else in your life, including Papa.” ... “Seriously, my life was not meant to be an example to copy. Being my follower is not trying to ‘be like Jesus,’ it means your independence is killed. I came to give you life, real life, my life. We will come and live our life inside you, so that you begin to see with our eyes, and hear with our ears, and touch with our hands, and think like we do. But we will never force the union on you. If you want to do your thing, have at it. Time is on our side.”*

“This must be the dying daily that Sarayu was talking about,” said Mack

156-158 Love and judgment *“love is just the skin of knowing.” Is God truly loving and does he love his children well?*

160-162 When we become the judge. Judging others and God

On what criteria do we base our judgments? “Judging requires that you think your self superior over the one you judge.” ... “How dare he judge anyone else? His judgment had been superficial...”

“Isn’t that your just complaint, Mackenzie? That God has failed you, that he failed Missy? That before the creation, God knew that one day your Missy would be brutalized, and still he created?...Isn’t God to blame?”



164-167 If we could not send our child to hell, how does God? Torture for eternity? Mackenzie asks that he go in the place of his children.

“No, She(God) didn’t (stop Missy’s death) She doesn’t stop a lot of things that cause her pain. Your world is severely broken. You demand your independence and your you are anger with the One who loved you enough to give it to you. Nothing is as it should be, as Papa desires it to be, and as it will be one day. Your world is lost in darkness and chaos and horrible things happen to those she is especially fond of” God has done something about it in Christ. Do you want mercy or justice?

“What happened to Missy was the work of evil, and no one in your world is immune from it.”

Is there a better way? Yes return from your independence, Embrace God’s love in the midst of your pain. Trust Papa with his help.

God gives Mack a chance to see Missy

180 **the church** “relationship and simplicity sharing life “ a living breathing community”...”being open and available to others around us. My church is all about people, and life is all about relationships.”
Heaven – life all life redeemed and restored with Christ

181 **institutions – not of God? Relationships only?** Institutions are Not his original plan. Religion, politics and economics are tools that many use to prop up their illusions of security and control. Only God provides security.

182 **false security and certainty**

183 **our faith – walk with God** the simplicity and purity of enjoying a growing friendship. Freedom to overcome any system of power and live beyond it. Free to live and love without any agenda.



184 **all roads lead to God? No** Jesus- “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 murders and many who were self-righteous. Some are bankers and bookies, Americans and Iraqis, Jews and Palestinians. I have no desire to make them Christians, but I do want to join them in their transformations into sons and daughters of my Papa, into my brothers and sisters into my Beloved.”

“Does this mean,” Said Mack, “that all roads will lead to you?”

“Not at all.” Jesus smiled...”most roads don’t lead anywhere. What it does mean is that I will travel any road to find you.”

187 “Mack, Just because I work incredible good out of unspeakable tragedies doesn’t mean I orchestrate the tragedies. Don’t ever assume that my using something means I caused it or that I needed it to accomplish my purposes. That will only lead to false notions about me. Grace doesn’t depend on suffering to exist, but where there is suffering you will find grace in many facets and colors.”

190 **lies and the security we find in them**



192b “All evil flows from independence and independence is your choice If I were to simply revoke all the choices of independence, the world as you know it would cease to exist and love would have no meaning. This world is not a playground where I keep all my children free from evil. Evil is the chaos of this age that you brought to me. But it will not have the final say. Now it touches everyone I love, those who follow me and those who don’t. If I take away the consequences of people’s choices, I destroy the possibility of love. Love that is force is no love at all.”

love gives birth to choice

193a “every choice matters” ...”you demand independence, but then complain that I actually love you enough to give it to you.” ... “Mackenzie, my purposes are not for my comfort, or yours. My purpose are always and only an expression of love.” **life out of death, freedom out of brokenness, darkness to light** “What you see as chaos, I see as a fractal.”

193b **purpose – love?**

194 **reconciled to the world what did Jesus accomplish? God-** “Like I said, everything is about him, Creation and history are all about Jesus. He is the very center of our purpose, and in him we are fully human, so our

purpose and your destiny are forever linked. You might say that we have put all our eggs in the one human basket. There is no plan B.” ... “Through his death and resurrection I am now fully reconciled to the world.” ... “the whole world” ... “reconciliation is a two way street, and I have done my part, totally, completely, finally.”

199 living and feeling out of truth trust God before any feelings

200 rules and relationship

200a “life and living are in him “Jesus” /god and in no other

200b we can see God in art, music, silence, people in creation joy and sorrow, his ability to communicate is limitless. Look for relationship in the Bible

202b you can add nothing or take away from who God is - no performance

204b righteousness – rules show sin and independence

205 rules, responsibility and expectation

207 relationship vs. rules verb – noun?

208 expectations God knows everything about us past and future and has no expectations of us to control our behavior. We don't disappoint Him.

209 center and lived out “never disappointed



212- 217 Mack's eyes are opened and he sees as God sees, colors – eyes open- Biblical? Human interaction in the spiritual realm and Mack meets his dad and forgives him.

226-227 forgiveness of others - relationship- apart from forgiveness He does a really good job of explaining how one should forgive, but it doesn't mean relationship is restored until the other person repents, and you seek God's power to forgive and restore. Forgiveness does not equal reconciliation true nature of forgiveness

228 forgiveness does not excuse Mack faces forgiving Missy's killer

237 does what I do matter? Yes, because you are important to God, what you do is important, every time you forgive the universe changes. When you act out of love everything changes and the world will never be the same again.

Mack leaves the shack, and on the way home gets in a car accident. He is badly injured, but survives. His family comes and he reconnects and tells his wife his experience. Because God showed him where Missy was buried he leads authorities there and the clues they find help others find their daughters too.

The book ends with the author talking about how Mack's story affected him.

By the way, I looked it up and Mack, the little lady killer and all is fictional. The author was amazed at how many people thought it was real and wanted to write Mack or know where the real shack was.

Heard from news radio – objections

Fractal is it satanic. Not in this book, it is talking about the mathematical fractal

Creation- capitalized creation is god like pantheist new age No, creation is not usually capitalized in the book. Nowhere is the idea directly given that God is creation or creation is God.

I spent about a week studying and writing almost exclusively on this topic. I wrote a post on my blog back in April with all of my findings and convictions. You can read it here: [Brian Marrow – a good friend](http://www.true2pixel.com/blog/2009/04/the-shack-a-serious-problem.html)
<http://www.true2pixel.com/blog/2009/04/the-shack-a-serious-problem.html>

The Shack: A Serious Problem

By [Bryan Marrow](#) on April 29, 2009 8:17 AM | [No Comments](#)

This issue falls very close to my heart, since it deeply involves family and close friends. I'm deeply saddened when people I love, including every brother and sister in Christ, get caught up in things that lead them away from Christ, instead of closer.

This issue is very, very serious. The importance and significance cannot be overstated. Please do not downplay it or attribute it to personal style or opinion, because it's not. With that said, I am writing this out of my love for all of you. I want you to know the truth and not be caught up in lies.

I'm going to warn you, though; I'm not going to candy-coat the truth. I'm going to tell it like Jesus told it. Like Paul told it. Like Timothy told it and like John, and James and all the rest told it. These are not my opinions, but truth from the inspired Word of God. I use Scripture as my foundation and everything I say is rooted in the Word of God.

The Shack is a problematic, heresy-ridden work of fiction that spreads fallacy and plants seeds of destruction. The god of The Shack is not the God of the Bible. It is not Yahweh, the Sovereign Creator of the Earth, the Alpha and the Omega. The claims and ideas in The Shack do not agree with Scripture and they cannot agree, no matter how you slice it.

My sincere hope is that everyone reading this will open their minds to the truth, which is God's Word. You must ask yourself some questions; do I believe the Bible is the inspired Word of God and it is our absolute guide for Truth? Am I willing to compare everything with Scripture and agree with God's Word, even if it's not what I previously thought or expected? If both of your answers are "yes", then read on! If any of them are "no", truth does not matter to you, so don't waste your time. Jesus said "everyone on the side of truth listens to me." ([John 18:37](#)). Jesus is the Word ([John 1:1](#)), so everyone on the side of truth listens to God's Word.

The heresies

The Shack is full of heresies, whether you know it or not. Almost every major point the book makes goes directly against Scripture. For some reason, many Christians aren't able to discern the problems, so I believe I should point them out before we go any further. I'm not claiming to know anything special or that I have some great revelation. All it takes is opening God's Word and comparing the two. As you'll see, the contrast is stark.

JESUS IS THE "BEST" WAY

The "Jesus" of The Shack says:

I am the best way any human can relate to Papa or Sarayu.

The Shack, Page 225

Had Young worded it slightly different, it would have been truth. But, I believe his Christian Universalist beliefs are oozing out in this statement. The use of the word "best" is what ruins this statement completely.

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

John 14:6 (NIV)

A dear brother in Christ said it perfectly, "All truth claims are absolute, narrow, and exclusive." Jesus' statement is certainly exclusive. He is *THE* way, and by that He means *the only* way. I believe the way Jesus said it is significant. In the original Greek He doesn't say "I am the way, truth and life." He says "I am *the* way and *the* truth and *the* life." He specifically uses "the" before each one of His "truth claims." The use of the definite article before each specific claim, I believe, emphasizes His point that they are true and exclusive statements.

The word "best" implies that there are multiple ways, which is simply not true.

JESUS' DEATH SAVED ALL, REGARDLESS OF THEIR ACCEPTANCE

"Papa", the god of The Shack, says:

Forgiveness does not establish relationship. In Jesus, I have forgiven all humans for their sins against me, but only some choose relationship. ... When Jesus forgave those who nailed him to the cross they were no longer in his debt, nor mine. In my relationship with those men, I will never bring up what they did, or shame them, or embarrass them.

The Shack, Page 225

Jesus' gift on the cross gave the world the opportunity to accept Christ, but it did not automatically guarantee their acceptance into the Kingdom regardless of their faith.

⁸For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith -- and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God

Ephesians 2:8 (NIV)

*⁸But the cowardly, **the unbelieving**, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars--their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death."*

Revelation 21:8 (NIV, emphasis added)

¹⁶Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

Mark 16:16 (NIV)

The grace that we have been given is only through our faith. Faith is the gateway in which we enter into that grace. If you omit "through faith," the verse means something entirely different. But it wasn't omitted, because it's the truth. We must have faith and belief in Christ if we are going to be saved by grace. Read the first 5 chapters of John to see the connection between unbelief and condemnation and also the connection between belief, faith and redemption.

We must accept Christ as the Anointed One, and by doing so, we accept God. If we do not accept Christ, we do not accept God and we can have no fellowship with either of them.

²⁰I tell you the truth, whoever accepts anyone I send accepts me; and whoever accepts me accepts the one who sent me."

John 13:20 (NIV)

Without a relationship with Christ, we cannot know God. We must have a relationship with Christ, know God and obey the gospel. The relationship is not an optional add-on.

⁸He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

2 Thessalonians 1:8 (NIV)

Someday, we will all stand before God, and after we have all confessed that He is the Lord, we must give account for our actions. So when Young claims "I (God) will never bring up what they did," it's just plain false.

¹³Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

Hebrews 4:13 (NIV)

²³I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that I am he who searches hearts and minds, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds.

Revelation 2:23 (NIV)

NO PUNISHMENT, JUDGMENT FOR SIN

This one goes hand-in-hand with the previous one. If you believe that all are forgiven regardless of acceptance, then there cannot be any judgment or punishment for sin. However, since the previous claim by The Shack was obviously false, so is this one.

"Papa", the god of The Shack, again 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

The Shack, Page 120

²³For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 6:23 (NIV)

As we learned previously, the gift of God must be accepted. If it is not accepted, we do not receive eternal life but death.

Many believe that if God was truly a loving God, justice and punishment could not take place. This could not be more distant from the truth. Love by its very nature requires choice. If God forced us to love Him, it really wouldn't be love

at all, since we didn't choose to love. Therefore, God has given us a choice: live with Him forever or live without Him forever. We have the right to choose for ourselves, because Love has given us that choice.

Those who refuse to believe that punishment and judgment are real do not understand love.

¹⁶For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

John 3:16 (NIV)

God understand love and He understands punishment and justice and that it has to happen. That is why He gave His Son! We are powerless to attain eternal life on our own and were condemned to perish! He knew this, so He gave us a gift which, if accepted, would give us eternal life through His Son.

God gave us a way out, we only need to accept it!

GOD SUBMITS TO US

The "Jesus" of The Shack says,

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.

The Shack, page 145

Huh? Are you serious? Not only is this blasphemy, it's down right ridiculous! I'm not sure what dictionary Young is using, because his definition of submission doesn't even remotely resemble the real definition, either by a dictionary or the Bible. Submission is defined as "The act of submitting or surrendering to the power of another." Synonyms include obedience, humility, surrender and yielding.

God does not submit to our wishes. Not only is that prideful to believe that He does, it's almost humanistic. We are to think soberly of ourselves:

⁷For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.

Romans 12:3 (NIV)

Not even Christ regarded himself as an equal to God, but made himself a servant:

⁷Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: ⁸Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, ⁹but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

Philippians 2:5-7 (NIV)

*Now as the **church submits to Christ**, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.*

Romans 12:3 (NIV, emphasis added)

While submission can be out of love, it's not "all about relationships of love and respect." Submission is also out of reverent fear of the Most High God who is unchanging and everlasting.

¹Do not be stiff-necked, as your fathers were; submit to the LORD. Come to the sanctuary, which he has consecrated forever. Serve the LORD your God, so that his fierce anger will turn away from you.

2 Chronicles 30:8 (NIV)

Regardless of why we submit to God, we are commanded to submit to Him. There is no compromise.

Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

James 4:7 (NIV)

As double-minded and sinful as I can be, I sure don't want my God to submit to me. What a weak and purposeless god that would be! I pity those whose faith is in a god that submits to them.

RULES AND PRINCIPALS ARE OBSOLETE

"Sarayu", The Shack's version of the Holy Spirit, says:

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...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.

The Shack, page 198

Don't look for rules or principles? Has Young ever actually read the Bible? Not my Bible, evidently. Now, I'm a little unsure of where this type of thinking comes from. Either it comes from the fear of accountability or fear of legalism. Neither unaccountability nor legalism get you to heaven.

Faith without deeds is useless ([James 2:26](#)), and deeds without faith is also useless. The belief that following the law to the letter *alone* would get you to heaven is what the Pharisees were caught up in. The law does not save us, grace through faith does ([Ephesians 2:8](#)). However, the law was not abolished when Jesus came ([Matthew 5:17](#)), it was fulfilled.

¹³For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous.

Romans 2:13 (NIV)

²¹"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

Matthew 7:21 (NIV)

²³Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror ²⁴and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like.

James 1:23-24 (NIV)

Deeds by themselves do not and cannot save us. But deeds are the fruit of our faith. When we truly commit our life to Christ, our entire world view changes and we suddenly desire to do the will of the Father in heaven. If our faith is not producing fruitful deeds, we know that our faith is dead and dead faith is no faith at all.

¹⁰The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

Matthew 3:10 (NIV)

¹⁷Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. ¹⁹Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.

Matthew 7:17-19 (NIV)

If we are not desiring God's perfect will in our life and we are not striving to be holy as He is holy ([1 Peter 1:16](#)) and if we are not trying to uphold God's perfect law in our life then it's obvious that our faith is dead, since it isn't producing fruit.

Because of this knowledge, we are to seek God's pure law so that we may be presented as a pure bride for Christ ([2 Corinthians 11:2](#)). Read Psalm 119 and carefully watch how many times the author asks God to "teach me your decrees" and for the same reason, he says "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you." If we are to walk uprightly, we must study and know His ways.

THE BIBLE ISN'T TRUE, SINCE GOD CAN'T BE CONTAINED

I'm going to re-use a quote. Pay particular attention to the first two sentences. "Sarayu", The Shack's version of the Holy Spirit, says:

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...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.

The Shack, page 198

Previously, Mack thought to himself:

God's voice had been reduced to paper, and even that paper had to be moderated and deciphered by the proper authorities and intellects.

The Shack, page 65

Mack later goes on to question Sarayu on page 134 about how some people think the Garden of Eden was a myth. Her response, "Well, their mistake isn't fatal. Rumors of glory are often hidden inside what many consider myths and tales."

At best it's underemphasis of God-breathed Scripture, at worst it's just plain disregard for it. The Shack clearly questions to reliability of the Scriptures.

Of all the heresies in The Shack, I believe this one is the most dangerous and destructive. Once you believe that the Bible isn't truth or that it isn't the "whole truth", the foundation of your faith has been completely eroded. You have

absolutely no sense of direction whatsoever. At that point, anything that comes along might as well be truth, there is no way to tell.

I'm not going to get into why Scripture as our only guide is so important, because I got into that in a previous post. I'm also not going to go into the history of the canonization of the Bible or fulfilled prophecies and the mathematical improbabilities of that. I'm hoping that if you're reading this, there is still at least a sliver of belief left in the validity and truth of the Holy Scriptures and Christ. After all, it can speak for itself:

¹²*For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.*

Hebrews 4:12 (NIV)

First of all, if you can believe the first four words of the Bible you should be able to believe that God is powerful enough to speak His words through men and that it can remain pure and intact for eternity. God is not bound by the decay of stone tablets or parchment and He is not subject to the interpretations or fallacy of men. He Is Who He Is (**Exodus 3:14**), and He will have happen what He wants to happen.

Secondly, Jesus is by His very nature truth. The definition of Jesus is equal to the definition of truth, as Scripture confirms it:

⁶*Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*

John 14:6 (NIV)

Jesus is also the Word and He was in the beginning with God.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

John 1:1 (NIV)

If Jesus is truth and Jesus is the Word, then truth is also the Word and the Word is also truth. They are mutually inclusive and flawlessly everlasting (**Isaiah 40:8**, **Mark 13:31**, **Proverbs 30:5**).

Scripture also flat-out tells us that God's Word is truth.

¹⁷*Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.*

John 17:17 (NIV)

The truth in God's word is not only living and active, but it is also thoroughly equipping. It is all we need to be equipped to every good work.

¹⁶*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, "so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

2 Timothy 3:16 (NIV)

Since God has given us everything we need within His Word, there is no need for us to seek anything from outside sources - not that we'll find truth externally anyway. As I have said before, the truth in wisdom and knowledge of God and doctrine is different than truth of facts and statistics. There is no need, for example, to record the total number of molecules in the universe or the total number of stars. While that would proclaim the awesomeness of God, it is irrelevant for the equipping of God's people.

The only things that are left out are matters which only the Father knows, and not even the Son, such as the return of Christ (**Matthew 24:36**, **Mark 13:32**).

GOD'S UNBIBLICAL PORTRAYAL

The god of The Shack, Papa, is portrayed as a large African-American woman and most people either love it or hate it. I hate it. Now let me be clear; it's not because she is an African-American. I say this so that any rumors which may be started will have no foundation. I hate it because it brings the Father down to our level as a lowly human.

I think most people who love this representation of God love it because it helps them identify with God on a personal level. People have trouble (for whatever reason) connecting with God who is unseen. But guess what, God already came in the flesh, and His name is Jesus. But for many, it's clear that's not good enough - they *want* more.

It's apparent that there is a disturbing lack of reverence for the Most High God. God is not our buddy, He is not our chum, He is not some dude, He is not some woman in the kitchen making pancakes. He is YHWH, I AM WHO I AM. He is so magnificent, that those who see Him die:

²⁰*But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live."*

Exodus 33:20 (NIV)

¹⁸No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known.

John 1:18 (NIV)

⁴⁶No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father.

John 6:46 (NIV)

The LORD is power and majesty and glory, and even the representation of Himself in the burning bush made Moses fear to the point that he hid his face!

⁵"Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." ⁶Then he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob." At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.

Exodus 3:5-6 (NIV)

Another thing to notice is that Moses was required to remove his shoes, because the ground was holy. Even the ground becomes holy where God is. This level of holiness and purity and majesty is almost too hard for us to comprehend.

Even many of those who have saw an angel of the Lord, and not the Lord Himself, are seized with fear.

²²"We are doomed to die!" he said to his wife. "We have seen God!"

Judges 13:22 (NIV)

He actually only saw an angel, but it was so magnificent, he thought it was God.

⁹An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.

Luke 2:9 (NIV)

Consider this; Uzzah, out of pure motives touched the ark of God to keep it from falling (as if God needed his help). But even the ark of God was too pure for man to touch.

⁷When they came to the threshing floor of Nacon, Uzzah reached out and took hold of the ark of God, because the oxen stumbled. ⁷The LORD's anger burned against Uzzah because of his irreverent act; therefore God struck him down and he died there beside the ark of God.

2 Samuel 6:6-7 (NIV)

Now this might seem harsh, but it clearly reveals the power and holiness of God while contrasting the unworthiness of man to be in His presence. This verse uses the phrase "the LORD's anger burned," which only occurs 7 other times in the NIV, all in the Old Testament. Every single time it is used, it's because of mans irreverence, disregard or unfaithfulness for YHWH.

³¹It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Hebrews 10:31 (NIV)

And God is the same yesterday, today and forever (**Malachi 3:6**, **Hebrews 13:8**). He is still as powerful and as holy and majestic today, requiring the same amount of reverence and respect.

But the Father has given us the Son so that we may approach the Father, having been cleansed of our sins and presented as a "pure virgin". But to understand the importance and the meaning of this gift, we must first understand the wrath of God. How can we appreciate that which we do not understand?

Now contrast the God of Bible with the god of The Shack. There is no comparison. There is no likeness or similarity. The god of The Shack is weak, powerless and common. We have anything but a common God.

We cannot approach God the Father like Mack flippantly approaches Papa. It is irreverent. It is disgusting and sickening.

THERE YOU HAVE IT

As you can see, the heresies in The Shack are real. It's not up for interpretation, since it is clearly written and explained. It's not a matter of semantics, but a real and serious problem. There are no two ways about it; either you believe The Shack or you believe Scripture - you cannot believe both. You can't even like or enjoy both, which I'll explain later.

Also, the argument of "what he really meant is..." is not valid. If you believe Young is intelligent enough to write a book describing the nature of God, then you must also believe that he is articulate enough to accurately portray his beliefs in a way that aren't available for interpretation.

This is just a start to the heresies, there are plenty more. I could literally write an entire book devoted to the heresies, doctrinal inaccuracies and blasphemies in The Shack but they are just too numerous for this blog. Dr. Michael Yousef did a great sermon on [The 13 Heresies of the Shack](#), so I suggest you read it and send it to everyone you know who likes this book.

The bottom line is this; if you can't trust everything in the book, you can't trust anything in the book.

Falsehood has no place in the Body of Christ

Now that we have firmly established that heresies and false doctrine are clearly strewn through the book, it's important to understand how big of a deal falsehood really is. It's not something that we should sweep under the rug. I talked a lot about falsehood in my previous posts [Truth, Part 1 - What is truth?](#) and [Truth, Part 2 - False Truth, False Teachers](#), but I'll discuss it here in this context as well, since I believe it's so important.

Many Christians and, sadly enough, many pastors, have taken the stance of "let's focus on the positives" or "don't scrutinize it or you'll miss the point." Not only is this counter-productive, it's outright destructive. Scripture is extremely clear when it comes to false teaching and false teachers.

FIRST, SCRUTINIZE EVERYTHING

If more scrutiny were present, this wouldn't be an issue in the first place. Even elementary scrutiny would reveal that this book should be thrown out. The Scriptures clearly command us to scrutinize and test everything.

²¹Test everything. Hold on to the good.

[1 Thessalonians 5:21 \(NIV\)](#)

¹¹Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.

[Acts 17:11 \(NIV\)](#)

Notice that Acts specifically mentions that the Bereans were better at examining the Scriptures than the Thessalonians (to whom 1 Thessalonians was written), and they were more noble because of it. It's apparent that the Thessalonians didn't really get it and Paul's warning went unheeded. That's probably why Paul had to write them two letters.

Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

[2 Corinthians 4:2 \(NIV\)](#)

We must be testing everything with Scripture. The degree of which we test and scrutinize the information we are presented with is a measure of our character and spiritual maturity. If we don't scrutinize everything, we will be led astray without even knowing it - like so many are.

¹⁴Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming.

[Ephesians 4:14 \(NIV\)](#)

I strongly suggest the reading of [Ephesians 4:1-16](#).

AVOID, PURGE FALSE DOCTRINE

Scripture is also very clear about doctrinal differences. It's so serious that teachers will be judged more strictly than everyone else ([James 3:1](#)). If God wasn't concerned with false truth and inaccurate doctrine being taught, why would teachers be judged more strictly?

³If anyone teaches false doctrines and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching, ⁴he is conceited and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions ⁵and constant friction between men of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain.

[1 Timothy 6:3-5 \(NIV\)](#)

³I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel-- which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. ⁴But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! ⁵As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!

[Galatians 1:6-9](#)

Obviously, it's not something to be taken lightly. Not only are teachers commanded not to teach false doctrines, but the Body is not to put up with it.

¹⁷I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them.

Romans 16:17 (NIV)

We're not just commanded to not listen, we're commanded to "keep away" from the false teachers. That also includes fiction books, movies, TV and anything else that teaches or consents to false teaching. We're not even to welcome them into our house:

¹⁰If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not take him into your house or welcome him. ¹¹Anyone who welcomes him shares in his wicked work.

2 John 1:10-11 (NIV)

This is serious business! This is not something to be taken lightly. I, for one, don't want to be one that shares in the "wicked work" of these deceivers. **If you have this book in your house, throw it out!** If you do not get rid of it, you will be sharing and welcoming this wicked work which is contrary to the "teaching" John is talking about, which is the True Gospel. I suggest you read all of 2 John, it's pretty short.

Am I some crazy fanatic who supports "book burnings" and censorship? Absolutely, Scripture commands it. However, I believe it's the responsibility of the individual Christian to discern and take action, not the responsibility of some religious dictator to make decisions for us.

Read the letters to the Seven Churches in Revelations. Christ was very clear about the seriousness of the false doctrines that had permeated the teachings, especially in Pergamum and Thyatira.

"It's just fiction!"

I'm sure by now some of you are screaming on the inside, "But it's just fiction!" Technically, yes, it is labeled as fiction. However, it has been embraced by Eugene Petersen, and other so-called "theologians", pastors and worship leaders, and compared with John Bunyan's work, so in a sense, it has been elevated outside of the realm of fiction. In addition, most Christians are not taking it as fiction and simply leaving it at that.

I have heard quotes such as "It has changed my life", "It's better than the Bible", "it has changed my view of the Trinity" and so forth. That doesn't sound like the fruit of fiction to me. So whether or not it is designed to only come across as fiction, it is being marketed and received in a way that is not the product of fiction but of truth.

Because of this, I am going to address both sides of the issue.

FOR THE "IT'S JUST FICTION" CROWD

I hear it all the time from many people; it's just fiction, it's not our source of truth, what's the harm in it? I guess the better question is, what is the place of fiction in the Christian's life and faith?

God has certainly given us the gift of creativity. After all, we are created in God's image ([Genesis 1:27](#)) and it's obvious how incredibly creative He is. However, that does not give us license create, embrace or promote things which run counter to God's truth ([Proverbs 12:22](#)). Whether we want to be or not, we are witnesses to God's truth, both to our brothers and sisters in Christ and also to the world. We therefore have a responsibility to make sure everything we do and read and say and embrace falls within the boundaries of truth - even fiction.

¹⁷A truthful witness gives honest testimony, but a false witness tells lies.

Proverbs 12:17 (NIV)

You might say, "the book is not designed to be testimony!" Perhaps not, but Christians who "enjoy" the book or who recommend it are giving false testimony to those on the outside looking in. If we enjoy and embrace anti-truth, how can we also embrace truth? As Jesus said, a house and kingdom divided against itself cannot stand ([Mark 3:24-25](#)).

While enjoying fiction as a pastime can be great, it *must not* run counter to God's truth, no matter what. At the same time, fiction has *absolutely no place* in our teaching, preaching or learning - especially from the "pulpit".

²As I urged you when I went into Macedonia, stay there in Ephesus so that you may command certain men not to teach false doctrines any longer nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies. These promote controversies rather than God's work--which is by faith. ⁵The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. ⁶Some have wandered away from these and turned to meaningless talk. ⁷They want to be teachers of the law, but they do not know what they are talking about or what they so confidently affirm.

1 Timothy 1:3-7 (NIV)

Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales; rather, train yourself to be godly.

1 Timothy 4:7 (NIV)

Myth is defined as "any invented story, idea, or concept" or "an imaginary or fictitious thing or person." The Shack is an invented story about fictitious people and events and according to **1 Timothy 1:3-7** it has no place being taught or believed. The first part of **Hebrews 13:9** says "Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings."

Fiction, first of all, has no place in teaching or preaching. Secondly, the fiction we choose to read *must*, under all circumstances, be true, noble, right, pure, lovely and admirable if we are to think about it (**Philippians 4:8**). Those things cannot be said of The Shack.

FOR THE "IT CHANGED MY LIFE" CROWD

Let me start with a simple statement: There is absolutely nothing you can gain from The Shack that Scripture has not already made plain. This is what puzzles me so greatly about the enthusiasm for this book! For those of you who don't agree with me, study your Bibles - don't just read it, *study* it.

Nothing but the sovereign and unbreakable Word of God should change the way you see God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, the Trinity or anything else concerning our faith and eternity.

¹⁶All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NIV)

God promises that everything we need is found in the Scriptures. We have no reason to seek anything outside of the Word. The key, though, is actually studying the Word. We can't expect to be equipped if we don't even know what the equipment is.

Many people think they have found this enlightenment, this new revelation about God which was previously undiscovered. Not only is there nothing new under the sun (**Ecclesiastes 1:9**), but this "light" that is found in The Shack is actually darkness. The reason we are called to scrutinize everything is because when we blindly follow something that we think is truth we tune out everything else. We think we have found the truth, so why keep searching?

³³No one lights a lamp and puts it in a place where it will be hidden, or under a bowl. Instead he puts it on its stand, so that those who come in may see the light. ³⁴Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eyes are good, your whole body also is full of light. But when they are bad, your body also is full of darkness. ³⁵See to it, then, that the light within you is not darkness. ³⁶Therefore, if your whole body is full of light, and no part of it dark, it will be completely lighted, as when the light of a lamp shines on you."

Luke 11:33-36 (NIV)

We need to evaluate and reevaluate over and over. It's not a one-time thing, it's constant and consistent.

So many people believe The Shack has increased their understanding of God and their faith in Him. The problem is, it hasn't. It has actually eroded their foundation and caused doubt to creep in because of the inconsistencies with Scripture.

¹⁷Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.

Romans 10:17 (NIV)

¹⁰The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

Proverbs 9:10 (NIV)

If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.

James 1:5 (NIV)

Do you want your faith to increase and gain understanding of the Holy One? Then read and study God's Word and fill yourself with the truthful knowledge of Him. Don't read, study or "discuss" fictitious stories and elaborate tales; there is nothing to gain and everything to lose.

We're called to purity

As I mentioned above, we are called to think about pure things. Things that are true and noble and trustworthy (**Philippians 4:8**). And the opposite is also true: if something is not pure and trustworthy and true, do not think about those things!

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--think about such things.

[Philippians 4:8 \(NIV\)](#)

²²*Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, and do not share in the sins of others. Keep yourself pure.*

[1 Timothy 5:22 \(NIV\)](#)

When the Body of Christ seeks and embraces things which are not pure, it commits spiritual adultery. Anyone who recommends or condones books like *The Shack* cause others to sin as well. I do not believe this illustration is a stretch, though some think it's a harsh accusation.

I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him.

[2 Corinthians 11:2 \(NIV\)](#)

Paul is writing to the Corinthians to battle the false teachings that is eroding their foundation. The need for purity is illustrated in the direct context of false teaching. He goes on to say:

But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ.

[2 Corinthians 11:3 \(NIV\)](#)

The adultery of the truth is a serious problem with severe consequences. Even God's chosen people were adulterous and forsook God to worship idols. In fact, an entire book of the Old Testament is devoted to the illustration between falsehood and adultery: Hosea. It paints a contrasting picture of the sinfulness of Israel (and us, individually), punishment for this adultery and God's unfailing love for His people.

However, because of God's love, he rebukes and disciplines us ([Revelation 3:19](#)). Proverbs is full of warnings about adultery and avoiding the "adulterous woman", especially Proverbs 5, 6 and 7. We should take those warnings in the context of false doctrine as well.

³²*But a man who commits adultery lacks judgment; whoever does so destroys himself.*

[Proverbs 6:32 \(NIV\)](#)

Rather than giving in to the sinful nature and adulterating our souls to false truth, we should be transformed into a holy sacrifice for God's perfect and pleasing will.

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.

[Romans 12:1-2 \(NIV\)](#)

God's will does not include us being involved in things which are false, since they are contrary to the very nature of God. But instead, we are to be holy because God is holy ([1 Peter 1:13-25](#)). If we are impure or embrace and promote things which are impure and deceitful, our names will not be written in the book of life, since there is no fellowship between light and darkness ([2 Corinthians 6:14](#)).

²⁷*Nothing impure will ever enter it (the Holy City), nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.*

[Revelation 21:27 \(NIV\)](#)

And no one wants to be excluded from the book of life ([Revelation 20:15](#)).

What about the non-believer?

Of all of the arguments for this book, this one holds the most merit in my opinion: What about the non-believer who reads this book and becomes interested in God? While the motive is right, the implementation is not. First, I believe there is a fundamental misunderstanding at the core of this issue.

A GREAT MISUNDERSTANDING

The misunderstanding, I believe, is this: God *needs* our help to accomplish His will, that He isn't relevant or lovey enough by Himself to attract people to Him. Because of this, pastors, authors, theologians and Christians attempt to spice Him up or dumb Him down to make Him attractive to the people around us.

The truth has been watered down to make it palatable, since the real truth about God's wrath and justice is too potent to be appealing (not to mention politically incorrect). You can see this everywhere; books, churches, TV, modern world-views, etc. But, guess what, God doesn't need our help. He doesn't need us to paint nicer pictures of Him, or repackage and re-brand His image for people to be drawn to Him.

In fact, we are powerless to convict or convince:

⁴⁴"No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day."

John 6:44 (NIV)

In stead of trying to convince with human arguments and man-made stories, we are to "preach the Word" (**2 Timothy 4:2**). And it's not just about preaching the love and joy and peace of Christ. It's also about preaching the judgment and wrath of God. Look at how Jesus preached, and John the Baptist, and the apostles. It was not just of love but of repentance as well.

¹⁷From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."

Matthew 4:17 (NIV)

³⁵Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness.

Matthew 9:35 (NIV)

⁷As you go, preach this message: 'The kingdom of heaven is near.'

Matthew 10:7 (NIV)

⁴And so John came, baptizing in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

Mark 1:4 (NIV)

Do you see the pattern here? It's about preaching the Good News and repentance, love and wrath. It's about preaching the full, unchanged, unadulterated Word of God which is living and active and sharper than any double-edged sword (**Hebrews 4:12**).

THE CLASSIC "BAIT AND SWITCH"

The second reason why this is dangerous for non-believers is because it's false advertising! Preaching and proclaiming the god of The Shack is really no god at all, and certainly isn't the God of the Bible.

When you, as a Christian, tell a non-Christian to read this book, you are sending them extremely mixed and confusing signals about God. Let's say they read it, and they become interested in God (which is certainly possible, since God will use for good what Satan intends for evil). Now they come to church and start reading the Bible. Then, they are struck with the truth that the god they became interested in is not God. How confused they will be! Hopefully they won't feel deceived or cheated by the "Christians" who are supposed to be speaking God's truth and love. Not only that, but what a terrible and insecure foundation they will have built on half-truths and false-truths.

But if our unrighteousness brings out God's righteousness more clearly, what shall we say? That God is unjust in bringing his wrath on us? (I am using a human argument.) Certainly not! If that were so, how could God judge the world? Someone might argue, "If my falsehood enhances God's truthfulness and so increases his glory, why am I still condemned as a sinner?" Why not say--as we are being slanderously reported as saying and as some claim that we say--"Let us do evil that good may result"? Their condemnation is deserved.

Romans 3:5-8 (NIV)

Should we preach a false god or false gospel so that some might become interested and eventually find Christ? "Certainly not!" Not only because it's a sin, but we don't even need to! We have everything we need in God's Word to be equipped (**2 Timothy 3:16-17**).

FALSE FAITH, CRUMBLING FOUNDATIONS

Some argue that this book increases their faith or that non-believers may see the love of God and have faith. That is simply not true.

¹⁷Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.

Romans 10:17 (NIV)

Faith cannot result from other sources, but only through hearing the Word of Christ. Any other faith is false and of the worldly flesh, not the Spirit.

In addition, any foundation that was laid on such faith is also false and unstable. Because this faith is not founded in the Word of God, but on false truth, it has no root or foundation, but only a false hope.

Then he told them many things in parables, saying: "A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered

because they had no root. *Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop--a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown."*

Matthew 13:3-8 (NIV, emphasis added)

Then Jesus explains it:

¹⁹*When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the seed sown along the path.* ²⁰**The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy.** ²¹**But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away.** ²²*The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful.* ²³*But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown."*

Matthew 13:19-23 (NIV, emphasis added)

Notice that the man with no root even received it with joy! But the joy itself was not enough to sustain him. The root is required - it is the foundation on which our entire faith is built. Notice also that it was the "message about the kingdom" that was preached and not even a false, watered down version. If real truth with no foundation isn't enough, how much more useless is false truth with no foundation!

The fact of the matter is, God doesn't need to be changed for people to accept Him. He will draw people to Himself. We are required to preach the truth, the Good News about His kingdom, and not false, foundation-less claims which mislead and confuse people.

Counsel from others

It's important that we do not rely solely on the opinions of others for our conclusions and beliefs. We must "be still and know" that He is God and let His Holy Spirit guide our lives through a sound foundation built on the Word and careful comparison with the Scriptures. However, Scripture is also very clear about the need for counsel and teaching from others who know more than we do.

¹⁷*As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.*

Proverbs 27:17 (NIV)

And:

²²*Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.*

Proverbs 15:22 (NIV)

For this same reason, elders and deacons were assigned to direct and oversee the church (see 1 Timothy, Titus). The position and importance of elders is also clear all throughout Acts.

With this in mind, we should see what other Scripturally-founded Christian leaders and teachers are saying about this book.

Dr. Glenn R. Kreider did a review, which Charles R. Swindoll agrees with and [posted on his site](#), Insight for Living. Neither Dr. Kreider nor Mr. Swindoll recommend this book. [Dr. Youseef obviously disagrees](#) with the book and is very passionate about it. Focus on the Family refers you to [Dr. Kreider's review](#) (and doesn't recommend the book), but they also have some [additional resources here](#). Chuck Colson [did a critique](#) and does not recommend it, which I found on Pastor Ed Taylor's [Calvary Chapel Aurora website](#). None of the people mentioned so far like or recommend the book. Neither does [Pastor Geno Geraci](#), [Pastor Jason Van Divier](#) or any other pastor, teacher or follower of Christ who believes and follows the Word of God.

I also strongly suggest that you read [this review by the Christian Apologetics & Research Ministry](#).

I may not agree completely with every single thing that each of these people have said, however, the fact that *all* of them agree on this point is striking. I have yet to find a Scripturally-founded, truth-seeking teacher or pastor who believes The Shack is good or acceptable. Probably because it's impossible.

Conclusion, final thoughts

We must decide on which side of the fence we stand. Do we stand on the side of absolute truth, which is the Word of God? Or do we stand on something else, which is false and leads to death? There is no crossover and no fence-riding when it comes to eternity. There is no "finding the positives in false truth" or even slightest tolerance of falsehood, lest we be lukewarm.

¹⁵I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! ¹⁶So, because you are lukewarm--neither hot nor cold--I am about to spit you out of my mouth.

Revelation 3:15-16 (NIV)

Be one or the other! Either deny that the Bible is truth, or embrace truth and rid yourselves of falsehood. If you side with truth, than you must "put off falsehood and speak truthfully" (**Ephesians 4:25**) and "put aside the deeds of darkness" (**Romans 13:12**), because falsehood has no place in your life. You cannot be a member of the Body of Christ and have falsehood be a part of your life, since there is nothing false in Christ.

This is not something to take lightly, as I have said before. We are talking about eternity, and every precaution should be taken to make sure that we are found pure and pleasing to God on Judgment Day. While only the gift of grace through faith is what saves us, and not by works (**Ephesians 2:8-9**), we should prove our repentance by our deeds (**Acts 26:20**) since we will be rewarded according to them (**Jeremiah 17:10**, **Revelation 2:23**) and faith without deeds is useless and dead (**James 2:14-26**).

I pray that this has either opened your eyes to the truth or strengthened what you already knew. If you disagree with me, please let me know. I am open to correction, since I am on the side of truth. However, please do it with Scripture, since if it's not founded in Scripture it is meaningless to me. You're welcome to discuss and disagree in the comments below. If you are uncomfortable discussing it publicly, you can email me at bryan@true2pixel.com.

I do not claim any word or knowledge as my own, but only what the Holy Spirit gives me when He wills it to accomplish the work of the Father for the glory of His Kingdom.

May God bless and enrich your lives and may your lives glorify the Father.

In Christ with sincerity and love,
Bryan