

# MIDWEEK MEDITATION

November 19

**The Shack by William P. Young**  
*Thoughts of Pastor Stephen Hower*

## Things I Love About "The Shack"

**1. Excellent Descriptive Writing!**

Example: A Description of Winter Storms

Page 15: (First paragraph)

**2. Nan's reference to God as "Papa."**

Page 22: "There it was, Papa was Nan's favorite name for God and it expressed her delight in the intimate friendship she had with Him."

**3. Mac's description of Missy's loss as "The Great Sadness."**

Page 25: The Great Sadness had draped itself around Mack's shoulders like some invisible but almost tangibly heavy quilt. The weight of its presence dulled his eyes and stooped his shoulders. Even his efforts to shake it off were exhausting, as if his arms were sewn into its bleak folds of despair and he had somehow become part of it."

**4. The inadequacy of formal "religion" to answer all the questions about God.**

Pages 65 "Try as he might, Mack could not escape the desperate possibility that the note just might be from God after all, even if the thought of God passing notes did not fit well with his theological training. In seminary he had been taught that God had completely stopped any overt communications with moderns, preferring to have them only listen to and follow sacred Scripture, properly interpreted, of course."

Page 66 "Mack knew he needed some answers. He realized he was stuck, and Sunday prayers and hymns weren't cutting it anymore, if they ever really had. Cloistered spirituality seemed to change nothing in the lives of people he knew, except maybe Nan. But she was special."

Page 195: "You will learn to hear my thoughts in yours, Mackenzie, she assured him. (Mackenzie) "Will it be clear? What if I confuse you with another voice? What if I make mistakes?" Sarayu laughed, the sound of tumbling water, only set to music. "Of course you will make mistakes, but you will begin to better recognize my voice as we continue to grow in our relationship."

**5. A good definition of faith.**

Page 67: "There are times when you choose to believe something that would normally be considered absolutely irrational."

**6. Mack's first encounter with God as an African American woman.**

Pages 82,83

Page 93: "Mackenzie, I am neither male nor female, even though both genders are derived from my nature. If I choose to appear to you as a man or woman it's because I love you."

**7. The value of tears.**

Page 83: "It's okay honey, you can let it all out... I know you've been hurt, and I know you're angry and confused. So, go ahead and let it out. It does a soul good to let the waters run once in a while – the healing waters."

**8. The appearances of The Holy Spirit (Sarayu) and Jesus as an Asian woman and a Jewish handyman.**

Page 84ff.

Page 101: We are not three gods, and we are not talking about one god with three attitudes, like a man who is a husband, father and worker. I am one God and I am three persons and each of the three is fully and entirely the one."

Page 110, 111 For additional insight into each person of the Trinity and their names.

**9. God's taste in music ☺ !**

Page 90,91

**10. The origins of sin.**

Page 99: "But then Adam chose to go it on his own, as we knew he would and everything got messed up. But instead of scrapping the whole Creation, we rolled up our sleeves and entered into the middle of the mess ~ that's what we have done in Jesus."

Pages 135ff. A good description of what happened in the Garden of Eden.

**11. The description of God's creative power.**

Page 113: "I'll never get tired of looking at this. The wonder of it all – the wastefulness of Creation, as one of our brothers have called it. So elegant, so full of longing and beauty even now."

**12. The description of our life as a messy but beautiful garden.**

Chapter 9 and the summation on page 138. "This mess is you!"

**13. The definition of fear.**

Page 142: "So why do I have so much fear in my life?" "Because you don't believe. You don't know that we love you. The person who lives by their fears will not find freedom in my love."

**14. God's description of his feelings towards each person.**

Page 155 (and throughout) "I am especially fond of each one."

**15. The death of a loved one... especially by violence.**

Page 173: "I keep thinking about her, alone in that truck so terrified." Jesus reached over and put his hand on Mack's shoulder and squeezed. Gently he spoke, "Mack, she was never alone. I never left her; we never left her, not for one instant. I could no more abandon her, or you, than I could abandon myself... She may have been only six years old, but Missy and I are friends."

**Things I Thought Could Be Misleading Or Deceptive About "The Shack"!**

**1. Does God judge?**

Page 119ff. "Do you ever get mad at any of them?" "Sho `nuff. What parent doesn't? 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 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."

Page 120: "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."

**2. Re. War and Evil in the world.**

Page 125-127 Summation: "I can't imagine any final outcome that would justify all this." "Mackenzie," Papa rose out of her chair and walked around the table to give him a big squeeze. "We're not justifying it. We are redeeming it."

**3. God and judgment. "Damn him to hell!"**

Pages 160-161: Mackenzie acknowledges his belief that some deserve to be judged, and then when pressed, admits that God is ultimately responsible!

Page 162: "So you suppose, then, that God does this easily, but you cannot? Come now, Mackenzie, "Which three of your five children will you sentence to hell?"

Page 163: "...Please let me go (to hell) for my children, please, I would be happy to.... Please, please I am begging you. Please, please... "Now you sound like Jesus. You have judged well, Mackenzie. I am so proud of you."

Page 169: "Mackenzie, judgment is not about destruction, but about setting things right."

**4. What does heaven look like?**

Page 177: Well Mack, our final destiny is not the picture of heaven that you have stuck in your head – you know, the image of pearly gates and streets of gold. Instead it's a new cleansing of this universe, so it will look a lot like here."

**5. Jesus; On the 3 evils of our time. ☹**

Page 179: "Like I said, I don't create institutions; that's an occupation for those who want to play God. So no, I'm not big on religion," Jesus said a little sarcastically, "and not very fond of politics or economics either." Jesus visage darkened noticeably "And why should I be?" They are the man-created trinity of terrors that ravages the earth and deceives those I care about."

Page 181: "You are free to love without an agenda... Mack was thinking of his friends, church people who had expressed love to him and his family. He knew they loved Jesus, but were also sold out to religious activity and patriotism."

**6. Do you have to be a Christian to be saved?**

Page 182: Read the entire page from The Shack and compare what the author says to the truth of God on the subject of narrow gate, wide gate, one name given on earth whereby we must be saved, and "no one comes to the father except through me..." and countless other passages.

Page 192: "Honey, you asked me what Jesus accomplished on the cross; so now listen to me carefully: through his death and resurrection, I am now fully reconciled to the world." (Mackenzie) "The whole world? You mean those who believe in you, right?" (God) The whole world, Mack. All I am telling you is that reconciliation is a two way street and I have done my part, totally, completely finally. It is not the nature of love to force a relationship but it is the nature of love to open the way."

**7. The author seems to say that all rules and laws fall short of God.**

Page 198: Fourth paragraph. There is a proper place for moral law and obedience. It is true however that love is the fulfilling of the law, but check out Romans 7 when Paul said he would not have known what right and wrong was (re. coveting) without the law.

**8. Mackenzie seems to have been given the opportunity to "heal his father" by love in the afterlife when his father's light sputtered and flashed.**

Page 215: "They exchanged sobbing words of confession and forgiveness, as a love greater than either of one healed them."

**9. Forgiveness is expected by the author when there is no sign of repentance.** This is often confusing for Christians. While God wants us to hold no animosity in our heart, it is His alone to grant forgiveness. It is true, He has given that authority to Christians to those who repent, but He has also commanded us to withhold forgiveness (while holding no animosity –remember) until they repent. Matthew 18 1 Corinthians 5 as a means of bringing them back to God and saving their souls.

Page 224 "Mack, for you to forgive this man is for you to release him to me and allow me to redeem him." (We must help God?) "Redeem him?" Again, Mack felt the fire of anger and hurt. "I don't want you to redeem him! I want you to hurt him, to punish him, to put him in hell..." (God) But he too is my son and I want to redeem him... Forgiveness in no way requires that you trust the one you forgive." Mackenzie, forgiveness does not excuse anything. Believe me, the last thing this man is, is free. And you have no duty or justice in this. I will handle that. And as for Missy, she has already forgiven him."