

THE SHACK

Small Group discussion guide

Week # 1 January 3 & 4 "Missy's Question"
Pastor Bruce Humphrey

Genesis 22:1-2 After these things God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." ² He said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains that I shall show you."

Genesis 50:15-21 ¹⁵ Realizing that their father was dead, Joseph's brothers said, "What if Joseph still bears a grudge against us and pays us back in full for all the wrong that we did to him?" ¹⁶ So they approached Joseph, saying, "Your father gave this instruction before he died, ¹⁷ 'Say to Joseph: I beg you, forgive the crime of your brothers and the wrong they did in harming you.' Now therefore please forgive the crime of the servants of the God of your father." Joseph wept when they spoke to him. ¹⁸ Then his brothers also wept, fell down before him, and said, "We are here as your slaves." ¹⁹ But Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid! Am I in the place of God? ²⁰ Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good, in order to preserve a numerous people, as he is doing today. ²¹ So have no fear; I myself will provide for you and your little ones." In this way he reassured them, speaking kindly to them.

Notes and Thoughts ...

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Facilitator Guide

Group facilitators - Please read this guide before your group meets!

Thank you for engaging in **The Shack** series at RBCPC. The intention is to invite people to meet and love Jesus, not meet and love *The Shack*. Many people have been praying and preparing for this series, as well as using the controversial novel as a platform for discussion. **Due to its content and controversial nature, expect some “knee-jerk” reactions** – slow down, think and talk through it. There may be some very strong emotions displayed – they most likely are not about you, but about something or someone else.

Pray for your group before you meet, and invite the Holy Spirit to be a part of the time you have together.

Discussion Guide design: The message from RBCPC, Discussion Guide, and text fit together and reinforce one another. The Discussion Guide is built on the Scripture texts from the message. It is worth the time to read the Scripture together each time you meet.

The role of the facilitator is to pick the questions that you feel will lead the group into the best discussion and sharing. *The guide is not designed for your group to answer all the questions* - only one or two from each section that your unique group would find the most interesting, challenging, or thought provoking. We encourage you to pick at least one question from each section. However, do not be tempted to rush through the conversation in order to get all the questions asked. Instead, take time in each section to let people think, share, and respond to one another.

Invite everyone to participate in the conversation. Remember that the group is together for more than study. Take time to know and care for each other too.

Begin and end ON TIME as much as possible. Allow time for people in the group to get to know one another recognizing that **relationships** are the core of effective discussion groups. Here is a sample time allotment of how a one-hour discussion group time might work. This is only a sample, as your group may meet longer or shorter. Use the time in a way that best suits your group:

7:00	Arrive, brief fellowship time, open in prayer
7:10	START IT (10 minutes)
7:20	STUDY IT (20 minutes)
7:40	LIVE IT (10 minutes)
7:50	PRAY IT (5 minutes)
7:55	Wrap up and fellowship, done by 8 pm.

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START IT:

- [New groups] Share one tradition you enjoy during your New Year's activities.
- Have you ever been blamed for something you didn't do? Share your story.
- Share one positive, faith growing experience that you've had since your group last met.

STUDY IT:

- Read the Scripture passages aloud. What observations can be made about the ways in which God works?
- Re-read Genesis 50:20. What does Joseph understand about the ways in which God works? Read Genesis 22:10-14. What does Abraham learn about the ways in which God works?

[Read aloud.] "Then how come he's so *mean*?"

"What do you mean Missy?"

"Well, the Great Spirit makes the princess jump off the cliff and makes Jesus die on the cross. That seems pretty mean to me."

Mack was stuck. He wasn't sure how to answer. At six and a half years old, Missy was asking questions that wise people had wrestled with for centuries. *The Shack*, page 31.

- How do you answer Missy's question?
- Do we blame bad things in this world on God? Why? Do you think God is too permissive to allow bad things to happen?
- Often people think the Old Testament characterizes God as "mean" or "hateful." Read these verses for conversation about God's nature: Deuteronomy 7:7-9, Isaiah 63:9, Jeremiah 31:3, Jonah 4:1-2, Joel 2:13.

LIVE IT:

- If someone was examining your life, what would they say you believe is true about God?
- Have you ever experienced a time in your life where what initially seemed terrible turned into something beautiful? What was God's role in that?
- How do you know God loves you? How does that belief affect your daily life?

PRAY IT: Please refer to the weekly bulletin insert for this section.