

THE SHACK

Small Group discussion guide

Week # 4 January 24 & 25 "Faith and Imagination"
Pastor Bruce Humphrey

John 10:11-21 ¹¹ "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. ¹² The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. ¹³ The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. ¹⁴ "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me-- ¹⁵ just as the Father knows me and I know the Father-- and I lay down my life for the sheep. ¹⁶ I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. ¹⁷ The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life-- only to take it up again. ¹⁸ No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father." ¹⁹ At these words the Jews were again divided. ²⁰ Many of them said, "He is demon-possessed and raving mad. Why listen to him?" ²¹ But others said, "These are not the sayings of a man possessed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?"

Psalms 98:7-9 ⁷ Let the sea resound, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it. ⁸ Let the rivers clap their hands, let the mountains sing together for joy; ⁹ let them sing before the LORD, for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples with equity.

Notes and Thoughts ...

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Facilitator Guide

Please read this guide before your group meets!

Did you know? The same Discussion Questions included in this packet are printed as a bulletin insert every week in all the worship services.

Did you know? There is a link on our website, <http://www.rbcpc.org/theshack/>, where you may download the sermon text as well as the small group discussion guide at the same time without having to search around the website!

Even with this convenient service available, we have been printing four times the number of sermon text copies, sermon CD's, and Discussion Guide packets, ever since *The Shack* series started. We still want to share with our friends and neighbors, so please, continue to pass the hard copies on as a blessing to others! And, understanding that there will always be some individuals unable to download the documents from the internet, we still want to provide this service. However, if you are able, we ask that you please consider downloading your own personal copy and help us be good stewards of our office resources. Thank you!

Your group is now **four weeks** into *The Shack* study series. Hopefully you have been blessed by the conversation, prayer, and relationships. Here are a few suggestions to keep your group interesting and motivated:

1. Now may be a good time to **stretch/ challenge/ encourage** your group members in new ways. Consider how this group can be a safe place for each member to stretch and grow in faith.
2. Perhaps you could use some variety in the ways you pray together.
3. Maybe someone different is ready to facilitate. Offer to someone the opportunity to facilitate by allowing them to pick a question from one of the sections.
4. Especially for established groups: now might be a good time to plan a social gathering for variety, or change meeting locations.

Remember to maintain consistency on start and end times as much as possible. One of the best ways we can respect one another is to **honor each others time**. If you are having trouble starting or ending on time, raise the issue with the group about how it could be resolved in a meaningful, honoring way.

Pray for discernment as you **choose the questions** for discussion this week!

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START IT:

- [New groups] What is your favorite fiction book or movie?
- What was the last thing you did that was "creative"?
- Pick one of the Trinity (Father, Son, Holy Spirit) and share what you visualize in your imagination.

STUDY IT:

- Read the John passage aloud. What observations can be made about Jesus?
- Read the Psalm passage aloud. Reflecting on both Scriptures, what can we observe about the use of creative and imaginative language used in the Bible?
- How do you discern if the Bible is to be interpreted as "literal" or "allegory/ analogy"? For example, Jesus is called the "Lamb of God" (John 1:29, 36). Is Jesus a lamb or a man? Jesus is also said to have died by crucifixion (John 19). Did he die or pass out?

In his 1989 book *Against the Night*, Colson wrote a chapter titled "The Moral Imagination." He argued that Christians needed to harness the realm of the arts and imagination since following Christ is more than a rational decision. He used the old argument that the pen is mightier than the sword when he quoted Napoleon as saying, "Imagination rules the world." Colson suggested that Christian writers such as C. S. Lewis and G. K. Chesterton were the key to helping future generations encounter Jesus. He wrote back then about this kind of imaginative Christian writing, "Such men and women did not merely engage in controversy... they presented a new perspective, they told a new story... they presented a compelling vision of the good."

Bruce Humphrey, "Faith and Imagination," January 24 & 25

- Is this what author William Paul Young has done in *The Shack*? Discuss.

LIVE IT:

- How do you use imagination in your faith? In your prayer life? In your understanding of God?
- How might creativity and imagination stimulate existing relationships in your life now?
- Commit to making or participating in at least one thing creative(ly) this week. Be prepared to report back to your group next week.

PRAY IT: (this part will be done by our Prayer Ministry team for this series)