

THE SHACK

Small Group discussion guide

Week # 2, January 10 & 11, "Papa and the Trinity"
Pastor Neal Nybo

Genesis 1:1-2, 26-27 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ² Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." ²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

Luke 3:21-22 ²¹ Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, ²² and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

Matthew 28:16-20 ¹⁶ Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. ¹⁷ When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. ¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Ephesians 1:13-14 ¹³ And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession-- to the praise of his glory.

Notes and Thoughts ...

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Facilitator Guide

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

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

Hopefully at this point, most people will understand that *The Shack* is a work of fiction, not doctrine, and some of the emotional reactions will be tempered by this realization.

Many people have already finished reading the entire book and you may find they may want to jump ahead to another topic, ie, if Papa is a black woman, what about Jesus in jeans? Remind them that we will get to each of these topics during the 8 week series. Here is the breakdown for the rest of the series:

Jan. 17/18	The Great Sadness
Jan. 24/25	Faith and Imagination
Jan. 31/Feb.1	The Garden
Feb.7/8	Jesus in Jeans
Feb. 14/15	Kate and Nan
Feb. 21/22	Festival of Friends
Feb. 28/Mar.1	Healing Relationship

The discussion still may bring up strong emotional reactions as it relates to individual sadness and tragedies. **You are not expected to have all the answers**, or even the all of the referral resources. That is what the Pastoral Staff and Small Group Ministry Teams are here for! Please do not feel that you have to take on theological or emotional issues yourself – we are available to you and your group at any time – feel free to refer a group member to one of us for comfort, counseling, and/or further discussion.

Invite everyone to participate in the conversation. For some of the larger discussion groups, it may be necessary to break into smaller groups for some of the sections, such as during the “live it” or “pray it.” This may be a helpful tool for small groups as well – consider breaking into groups of 2 or 3. Some people are more comfortable sharing in a smaller, more intimate environment.

Begin and end ON TIME as much as possible – be respectful of individual time commitments.

The most helpful hint of all: Begin and end with prayer!

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START IT:

- [New groups] - How do you know if someone loves you?
- Recall as much as you know (maybe way back to middle school and high school science!) about the properties of light? [If you have internet access, check wikipedia.org for information about light, its properties, and how it is measured.] What insight might this give us about the properties, or characteristics, of God?
- What makes someone human? What are the different parts that form a whole person?

STUDY IT:

- Individually, in pairs, or as a group, read all four Scripture passages and identify the persons of the Trinity (Father {God}, Son {Jesus}, Holy Spirit {Spirit of God})?
- How do you understand the nature of the Trinity? How do you see God's perfect love within the Trinity?

Finally, Willie asked, "So, are you telling me that he was there? God I mean?"

And now Mack was laughing and crying. 'Willie, he was there! Oh was he there. Mack stopped, lost in his memories for a moment. "Oh yeah," he said at last. "He told me to tell you something."

"What? Me?" Mack watched as concern and doubt traded places on Willies face. "So, what did he say?"

Mack paused, grasping for the words. "He said, Tell Willie that I'm especially fond of him." The Shack, pg. 242

- The Triune God created us in the image of God. (Genesis 1) The Triune God is "especially fond of us." (John 3:16-17) What does this tell us about God, and about us?
- In ***The Shack***, God appears to Mack as Papa, Jesus, and Sarayu - (Father, Son, & Holy Spirit). What is your reaction to each of these images of God as portrayed by the author?

LIVE IT:

- What images of God do you hold in your minds that inspire your faith? Do you hold any images that might be restricting your faith?
- What form of the trinity has meant or means the most to your spiritual growth? How do you interact with that form?
- Why is it important to know what you believe about God? How does what you believe shape you and your actions?
- Where do you go to find answers about God?

For further reading on *The Shack* controversy:

- Is the Shack Heresy? By Wayne Jacobsen
<http://www.windblownmedia.com/shackresponse.html>
- The Shack: Harmless Allegory or Deadly Heresy by Tim Morrison
http://igniteuk.net/2008/04/29/the-shack-harmless-allegory-or-deadly-heresy/?referer=sphere_related_content/