

THE SHACK

Small Group Discussion Guide

Week #8 February 21 & 22 "A Festival of Friends"
Pastor Bruce Humphrey

Philippians 1:21-26 ²¹For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain. ²²If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which I prefer. ²³I am hard pressed between the two: my desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better; ²⁴but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you. ²⁵Since I am convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for your progress and joy in faith, ²⁶so that I may share abundantly in your boasting in Christ Jesus when I come to you again.

Revelation 21:15-21 ¹⁵The angel who talked to me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city and its gates and walls. ¹⁶The city lies foursquare, its length the same as its width; and he measured the city with his rod, fifteen hundred miles; its length and width and height are equal. ¹⁷He also measured its wall, one hundred forty-four cubits by human measurement, which the angel was using. ¹⁸The wall is built of jasper, while the city is pure gold, clear as glass. ¹⁹The foundations of the wall of the city are adorned with every jewel; the first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, ²⁰the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst. ²¹And the twelve gates are twelve pearls, each of the gates is a single pearl, and the street of the city is pure gold, transparent as glass.

Notes and Thoughts ...

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Facilitator Guide

Just because *The Shack* study series is almost over, the relationships established don't need to be! Please encourage individuals to stay connected, form new groups, or attend a class or social event together. The purpose in offering on-campus groups for *The Shack* was not only to provide a forum for discussion, but also to provide an environment where small groups might be created, enriched, and encouraged.

Next step suggestion: Plan to attend as a group **Ash Wednesday Service**, Feb. 25th, 7:00 p.m., in the Sanctuary, the final sermon in *The Shack* series, will be on the subject of Forgiveness. Optional add on: enjoy the fellowship and great food at Wednesday Supper, 5:30 p.m., then join us for the service!

Begin some conversation Faith in Action '09: March 21 & 22, 2009. Instead of regular Saturday and Sunday worship services, the church body will engage in a weekend of service *outside* the church. Your group is encouraged to "self-select" a project, organization, or mission that motivates your particular group members. The project does not need to be managed or approved by RBCPC – we are trusting that all groups will approach this prayerfully and with great consideration for the recipients. Participating together in this act of service will be a great opportunity for bonding, spiritual growth, and sharing the love of Jesus.

The next study series, ***Transforming Relationships***, will begin with the sermon on February 28/March 1. This is an intentional follow-on series to *The Shack*, as it deals with healing relationships. We will continue to provide discussion guides each week, based on the scripture and sermon content. For those groups interested in including additional reading material in their discussions, please contact the Small Group Ministry Team for recommendations.

There will be at least 4 groups continuing to meet on campus for the next series, these are **open** to new members:

1. Tuesday evenings, 3/3 – 4/14, 7:00 – 8:00 p.m., Upper Fireside, Facilitators: Sharon Brower and Rochelle Castillo
2. Wednesday mornings, 3/4 - 4/15, 9:30 – 10:30 a.m., Upper Fireside, Facilitator: Pastor Ray Sparling
3. Wednesday evenings, ongoing, 6:30 – 8:00 p.m., Room 254, *Small Group for Young Families*
4. Thursday mornings, ongoing, 6:00 – 7:30 a.m., Fellowship Center, *Men's Ministry*

Please feel free to contact Rochelle Castillo at (858) 487-0811, ext. 213, with questions or for other small group assistance.

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START IT:

- [New groups] Share a recent experience when you felt like you were in “heaven on earth.”
- Share a precious gift you have received that has no monetary value. Why is it precious to you?
- What’s your concept of heaven? What happens there?

STUDY IT:

- Read Philippians 1:21-26. What sticks out to you from this passage?
- What is Paul’s struggle? What seems to be important to him? Why did he choose to “remain in the flesh?”
- Read Revelation 21:15-21. How does this passage compare to your visual image of what heaven looks like?

“Mack realized also that he felt no pain, not even in his usually aching joints. In fact, he had never felt this well, this whole...Delirious and delicious joy welled up inside of him...” THE SHACK, page 211.

- What pains in your life do you hope will be relieved in heaven? (Consider: physical, emotional, relational, etc.)
- In the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus teaches us to pray: “Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” How might this prayer influence what we hope for and what we expect to happen on earth?

LIVE IT:

- Pray the Lord’s Prayer together. Share the circumstances in your life to which you need a little bit more heaven on earth.
- To which person or people might God want you to invest in spiritually, for their “progress and joy in faith,” as Paul does with the Philippians? How might you bless them this week?
- Paul saw the connection between serving here on earth and the joys of heaven. Discuss ways you and/or your group might increase your heavenly joy through service to others.

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