

Week 1 - Concept of this study - as you read the book, please highlight and bring parts of the book for discussion that touch you. Just because I bring it up, someone else may have other points as equally revealing and important.

When you look at a picture of God or Jesus, how well do you know them? Not the description of the picture, of their bodies, that is just the vessel. How do we get to know the being, the essence? Perhaps the answer is by study, by discussion, by sharing and by seeking. When you define someone, do you describe the body OR the soul? The soul is the self - the inner being, the part of us that is unseen at first. The soul is the self, or self conscious; that part of God within each of us. I hope that this study, and the following discussions, allow us, as believers, to grow and to develop a deeper relationship with our Creator, not as an image but rather as a spirit!

Foreward, page 7-8: As with Mack and his father, how much of who we are and who we develop to be is based upon or influenced by our upbringing? How can we overcome this strong initial influence? Do you think Mack's concept of God was based upon his father and the reaction of his own early "turning to God"? How much of his teen years were influenced by the burden of sin and the guilt he had to carry knowing that, first, he didn't help his mother, and second, that he killed his own father?

Page 31: Is it natural for any one during our faith journey to sometimes think that God is mean? Is there a specific time that you thought God was mean? Was this your first interpretation of God?

Page 37-38: Here we find further insight to the influence of Mack's childhood and father-son relationship - even at his adult age. We are all at different levels of relationship with God. Are there times that you've been uncomfortable with religion and God? Or perhaps of someone else's relationship with God?

Page 40-42: Have any of us experienced a quick life changing event such as Josh and Missy's?

Looking back/ Looking ahead: For Mack and his family, the shack was a symbol of pain and anguish, of hurts too deep to overcome; it was a crevice of bitterness so deep that prevented Mack from building a deeper relationship with The Trinity. While it may not be a physical building such as a shack, what events do each of us hold on to that prevents us from developing a stronger relationship with Divine? Perhaps, this walk together to the shack, will help us to get to know God just a little better.

The Shack, week 2.

Page 44-46: Is it because of our faith OR our selfishness that we find it easier to turn to God in a time of crisis? How do you think that God thinks of it?

Page 65: How would we respond if we received a note from God? And how do we become better at listening for His/Her voice to talk to us? Do some people have an easier time hearing?

Page 67: How fast are we to ignore something that doesn't fit into our sense of reality? Does it test our faith OR do we use our faith to explain the unexplainable?

Page 69: How would you prepare to meet God for a weekend? And what would your reaction be if HE/She was nothing like you expected?

Page 74: Why do we tend to hold onto our miseries - our hurts- our shacks- our own Great Sadness? Would we dismiss them easier if God were standing right here with us? Isn't He/She? By holding onto these hurts, are we not limiting our potential? And is this not a conflict with our faith? Letting go is a big step of faith!

Page 78-79: How often do we doubt God's presence in our lives when it doesn't fit into our timing or our requests/prayers?

Page 88-89: Is this how you feel free will or free mindedness should be like? Do we do what we want or what is expected of us? Which is more correct?

Page 93: What religious conditioning are we holding on to ... and why? Do we have a right and responsibility to question things?

Page 98: How does Papa's own definition of who He/She is fit into our definition?

P99-100: Is this the ultimate pinnacle of growth in developing a relationship with God? Is this our life purpose?

P101: How deep have you ever thought about the Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit? How would you define the purpose of each? And did you ever think that a single God would make a relationship much more impossible? Is our faith the channel that connects us to God and into a relationship with the Trinity? If the answer is yes, as I believe we would say, then why do we work so cautiously at developing our relationship? Is it all about giving up our independence?

The Shack - week 3

Page 104-105: Is this degree of love possible on Earth - or is this a glimpse of Heaven?

Page 107: Do you ever ponder what conversations might take place between Jesus and God?

Page 112: If you could, would you want to have a one on one conversation with Jesus? Would you be afraid of asking questions? Would you be afraid of what he might ask you? Would it make life easier if we had all the answers...or could ask all the right questions? Or would that defeat the purpose of living? What do you think Jesus purpose was? What has our religion educated us that it was?

Page 118-120: "I love the ones I'm angry with just as much as those I'm not". Can you ever say that? Do you struggle with the concept of God as a loving Father or as a punishing Father? Which best fits your belief? How would you explain this concept to a struggling young Christian?

Page 124-125: The burning question that we all have pondered at one time or another...why does God allow such hurt and bad to occur in our lives? Why can't or won't He stop it?

Page 126: What is trust based upon? Do you have to earn it? Can we truly trust and obey?

Page 133: Will we ever outgrow our need to judge? The superiority of the human mind...we prejudge and think that we have all the answers. The truth is that we MAY have an answer, but does that knowledge mean that other answers might not also exist? Are you always open minded to the ideas of others? How do we improve that trait?

Page 134-135: the ageless battle of good vs. evil How do you define each? What does the church's teachings define as good and evil? Give some examples. Is it all judgemental, limited to each of us according to our own minds and experiences?

Page 136: Is this achievable? Can we grow in our faith strong enough to live this way? Do you know anyone?

Page 136-137: If you are asked to give something up, do you look at it as a loss or as a gain? Think of Lent. Can something bad really be something good?

The Shack - week 4

Page 141: Have you ever been in a situation where your imagination leads you to believing that things are much worse than they are? If we use our imagination to emphasize the negative, why can't we use the same imagination to emphasize the positive? Why do you suppose that the mind races to the negative response so quickly? Shouldn't the positive be easier?

Page 142: Can a strong faith really eliminate our fears? If we trust God and Jesus will be with us, why do we fear and worry?

Page 143: What impossibilities do we all allow to control us that would melt away with Jesus at our side. We say that with God all things are possible but do we apply this to our daily lives?

Page 149: I have always thought that a perfect Christian would be just like Jesus; but in this paragraph, he says not so. Are we not to try to copy Him?

Page 154-155: Often we ask how God could or should love the bad people in this world; when put into these terms, is it not easier to see why He can love everyone and also to understand the potential He sees in all of His children ... just as any parent does. If we can see a glimpse of this same potential, then why are we so judgmental?

Page 162-163: Does this passage move you to see more clearly the essence of God's love for us and what the sacrifice of Jesus was on our behalf? Does this help you to understand the depth of God's love for us? I'm not sure if I ever thought of it as clearly as in the terms of having to choose one of your own children.

Page 164-165: This entire chapter on judging and being judged, stirred up so much emotion for me. While these are just the author's writings, doesn't it strike at home for so many of us? What purpose do we achieve in judging others? What satisfaction?

Page 177: What do you suspect Heaven to be like? And where do you think it exists?

Page 179: If Jesus were to come into our churches today, would He be pleased? If you were having a one on one conversation with Jesus and He said these words to you, would it rock your boat?

Page 182: What does it mean to you to be a Christian? What are your thoughts on this statement?

The Shack - week 5

Page 185: So often we ask, why did God allow this tragedy to occur? Do you believe that He causes tragedies or, like this statement, just shines through them?

Page 188-189: Why do we allow our fears to limit our potential? In this paragraph lies hope for us - that we can work through our fears and lies - and that faith develops and deepens.

Page 191: Is this one way of defining the end of earth? Of Christ's second coming? Or some other time? What do you see as God's purpose?

Page 191: Q: What exactly did Jesus accomplish by dying?

A: found on page 192

Page 197: Agree or disagree? Are our emotions responses to our perception? If so, do we all truly have a different sense of reality. No wonder relationships are so difficult and hard to maintain by ourselves!

Page 198: What is more important - knowing and answer or working toward discovering the answer?

Page 202-203: What do the 10 Commandments mean to you? What have we been taught to think of them as? As rules to follow? Have you ever thought of them as a reflection of our sins? Does this passage make you feel the same way?

Page 204: Are you a noun or a verb? Is it the relationship that we develop with The Trinity that allows us to be a living verb?

Page 207: Do you think that this is God's deepest desire? Is this what every walk of faith is about? Is it even possible? Do you know anyone like this?

Page 213: What does the world, our homes, school system, church, teach young (and old) about relationships? Building them, maintaining them? If this principle can be taught to young ones, and if adopted, what would happen to our world?

Page 214-215: Do or did you think that Mack's father was in heaven? Do you agree that we are all a light?

Page 216-217: Do you think that this might be what Heaven is like?

Shack - week 6:

Page 225-226: How well do you forgive? And when you forgive, do you always do so at 100%? Forgiveness, how powerful, yet so hard to sometimes do...why?

Page 235: The Good News!!! Why is this such a challenge to accept into our hearts and minds daily?

As you were reading the book, did you see the accident coming? Any thoughts or discussion on how the book ended?

Where there any parts of the book that you would change? Did you feel like this was more than just a story? Did you find it relatable to you or did you find yourself struggling through it?

Final thoughts and THANKS!