



The Shack (2007)

By William Paul Young
(Winner, 2018 Great American Read)



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Discussion questions taken from LitLovers

1. How did reading this book affect your faith? Does it change, challenge, strengthen your image of God? Why is God portrayed as a woman, what reasons does God give Mack?
2. Does God answer convincingly the reason for the trinity?
3. Does the idea of God a character in the book, or God's first-person voice, bother you...or does it work within the context of *The Shack's* story?
4. Why did God let Missy die? Do you think *The Shack* answers convincingly the central question of theodicy, the existence of evil—or why, if there is a God, bad things happen to good people?
5. What does *The Shack* say about forgiveness—toward the self or toward those who have wronged you.
6. Young has been criticized for advocating lawlessness (p. 122) ...or universalism (p. 225)? Do you think that is a fair or unfair criticism?
7. Many readers find the first 4 chapters of *The Shack* almost too painful to read. Could they have been written in a way that would be less painful—without changing the book's message?
8. Does the book's ultimate message satisfy you? Is it possible to let go of control and certainty in life? Is it possible to live only in the present?

Author Bio:



- Birth—May 11, 1955
- Where—Grande Prairie, Alberta, Canada
- Reared—West Paupua
- Education—B.A., Warner Pacific College
- Currently—lives in Gresham, Oregon, USA

William P. Young was born a Canadian and raised among a Stone Age tribe by his missionary parents in the highlands of former New Guinea. He suffered great loss as a child and young adult and now enjoys the "wastefulness of grace" with his family in the Pacific Northwest. (From the publisher.)

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William P. Young is an American author, best known for *The Shack*, a Christian novel. Young initially printed just fifteen copies of his book for friends who encouraged him to have it published. Unable to find a publisher, Young published the book himself in 2007; word-of-mouth referrals eventually drove the book to number one on the New York Times trade paperback fiction best-seller list in June 2008.

In an interview with *World Magazine's* Susan Olasky, Young, who is no longer a member of a church, said that the institutional church...doesn't work for those of us who are hurt and those of us who are damaged.... If God is a loving God and there's grace in this world and it doesn't work for those of us who didn't get dealt a very good hand in the deck, then why are we doing this?... Legalism within Christian or religious circles doesn't work very well for people who are good at it. And I wasn't very good at it.

An article in *MacLean's Magazine* in August 2008 indicated that Young, is a...

Canadian raised from birth by his missionary parents in Dutch New Guinea, Young was sexually abused by some of the people his parents preached to, as he was again back home, at a Christian boarding school. Young drifted through life as an adult, buoyed a little by his faith and a lot by his wife, Kim, keeping his secrets and building his shack: "the place we make to hide all our crap," he calls it. Until, at 38, he found himself at the nadir. "I had a three-month affair with one of my wife's best friends. That was it, that just blew my careful little religious world apart. I either had to get on my knees and deal with my wife's pain and anger or kill myself.

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