

ST. MATTHEWS BAPTIST CHURCH
3515 Grandview Avenue
Louisville, Kentucky 40207-3799
502-896-8882 • www.smbclouisville.org

D. Leslie Hollon, Ph.D.
Pastor

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A Biblical Conversation with The Shack led by Pastor Les

Young initially wrote the book for his children, with the hope that it would be distributed to a wider audience His novel is a work of fiction meant to convey a narrative of religious experience guided by the author's imported theology.

Value:

- Highlights the opportunity for anyone to experience God
- God can heal our "Great Sadness"
- Speaks to a readership hungry for spiritual adventure
awakening ► action ► actualization
- Stretches the reader's soul to understand the story and discern biblical theology.
- Stimulates the reader's imagination to look at possibilities of seeing "reality" from different vantage points.
- Invites the reader to look at his/her self in light of God's loving presence.
- Stirs conversation on the Trinity, which I think is the most needed focus in theology.
- Challenges families to be aware of how sorrows & healings connect their lives.

Faults

- God's unity is partialled into 3 modes:
 - Creator – a black female Father called Pa Pa meant to stretch the reader into experiencing God's non-sexual nature.
 - Messiah – Jesus as a Mediterranean carpenter
 - Spirit – Sarayu, a Sanskrit word for wind
- Feeds the reader with the author's cynical view of church, seminary, and theology.
- Superimposes his own faith experience as authority over biblical revelation.
- Should have cast his encounter with God as experienced in a dream but not as a real (in space & time) revelation from God

If as a dream meant to stretch us, The Shack, has value. A dream may represent a real event, the tragic death of Mack's daughter; but not accurately represent God's nature. As a dream, the dreamer may have a religious experience with God, without concluding each element of the dream accurately represents God.

Who is Jesus in the New Testament?

During a pivotal period of Jesus' ministry, he asked the apostles two questions—"Who do people say the Son of Man is?" And, "**Who do you say I am?**" Then was the time and that was the place Jesus chose to call out the faith commitment of those who were ready to give it.

With mounting expectation, Jesus asked, "What about you? You have been with me. You have heard my teachings; seen my miracles; walked with me; asked me questions; calmed your fears by my presence; been shocked, humbled, and bewildered by me. We have prayed and worshiped together. **You need to know that you know who I am!** So give me your best answer."

The best of the rest in that moment was Peter. He spoke with a faith that he knew was true—"You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God." There, it was said. Peter boldly spoke what the others were thinking but were unable or unwilling to say. "You, Jesus," Peter was saying, "are the anointed Messiah and you are doing this as the sign of God's living presence—You are His Son."

Biblical Exams for God ordained mystical experiences

Christ healed the Great Sadness of Thomas John 20

Christ showed the disciples how our great sadness is healed. John 14 & 15

Christ did not heal Paul's thorn in the flesh. II Corinthians 9

The depths to which we will go to be healed or not healed.

Chapter Opening Quotes from - **The Shack** William P. Young

Chapter 1 – A Confluence of Paths

"Two roads diverged in the middle of my life,
I heard a wise man say I took the road less traveled by
And that's made the difference every night and every day."

Larry Norman (*with apologies to Robert Frost*)

Chapter 2 – The Gathering Dark

"Nothing makes us so lonely as our secrets."

Paul Tournier

Chapter 3 – The Tipping Point

"The soul is healed by being with children."

Fyodor Dostoevsky

Chapter 4 – The Great Sadness

“Sadness is a wall between two gardens.”

Kahlil Gibran

Chapter 5 – Guess Who’s Coming To Dinner

“We routinely disqualify testimony that would plead for extenuation. That is, we are so persuaded of the rightness of our judgement as to invalidate evidence that does not confirm us in it. Nothing that deserves to be called truth could ever be arrived at by such means.”

Marilynne Robinson, *The Death of Adam*

Chapter 6 – A Piece of It

“No matter what God’s power may be, the first aspect of God is never that of the absolute Master, the Almighty. It is that of the God who puts himself on our human level and limits himself.”

Jacques Ellul, *Anarchy and Christianity*

Chapter 7 – God on the Dock

“Let’s pray that the human race never escapes Earth to spread its iniquity elsewhere.”

C. S. Lewis

Chapter 8 – A Breakfast of Champions

“Growth means change and change involves risk, stepping from the known to the unknown.”

Author Unknown

Chapter 9 – A Long Time Ago, In a Garden Far, Far Away

“Even should we find another Eden, we would not be fit to enjoy it perfectly nor stay in it forever.”

Henry Van Dyke

Chapter 10 – Wade in the Water

“New world—big horizon Open your eyes and see it’s true
New world – across the frightening Waves of blue.”

David Wilcox

Chapter 11 – Her Come Da Judge

“Whoever undertakes to set himself up as a judge of Truth and Knowledge is shipwrecked by the laughter of the gods.”

Albert Einstein

“On my soul . . . be prepared for him who knows how to ask questions.” T. S. Eliot

Chapter 12 – In the Belly of the Beasts

“Men never do evil so completely and cheerfully as when they do it from a religious conviction.”

Blaise Pascal

“Once abolish the God and the government becomes the God.” G. K. Chesterton

Chapter 13 – A Meeting of Hearts

“Falsehood has an infinity of combinations, but truth has only one mode of being.”
Jean Jacques Rousseau

Chapter 14 – Verbs and Other Freedoms

“God is a Verb.”
Buckminster Fuller

Chapter 15 – A Festival of Friends

“You can kiss your family and friends good-bye and put miles between you, but at the same time you carry them with you in your heart, your mind, your stomach, because you do not just live in a world but a world lives in you.”

Frederick Buechner, *Telling the Truth*

Chapter 16 – A Morning of Sorrows

“An infinite God can give all of Himself to each of His children. He does not distribute Himself that each may have a part, but to each one He gives all of Himself as fully as if there were no others.”
A. W. Tozer

Chapter 17 – Choices of the Heart

“Earth has no sorrows that Heaven cannot heal.” Author Unknown

Chapter 18 – Outbound Ripples

“Faith never knows where it is being led, But it knows and loves the One who is leading.”
Oswald Chambers

Afterwords:

“Earth’s crammed with heaven, And every common bush afire with God,
But only he who sees takes off his shoes; The rest sit round it and pluck blackberries.”
Elizabeth Barrett Browning