

The Shack

Session I An Overview of The Shack

1. Invite the participants to reflect quietly for a few moments and thumb through the book. Have them write down the page numbers of quotes/passages/moments that caught their attention.
2. Ask the group members to introduce themselves by sharing a single quote, passage or moment in the book that caught their eye. Someone in the group should be the recorder and list these quotes by key words on newsprint. The recorder should prepare the newsprint by allowing for two columns as shown below.

Memorable Moments	

3. Possible Moments might include:
 - a. Mack's poisoning of his father
 - b. Missy asking Mack why God is "so mean"— letting the princess and Jesus did
 - c. The moment when Mack meets Papa and learns that God is a black woman
 - d. Mack meeting Jesus
 - e. Mack meeting Sarayu
 - f. Papa telling Mack that she is particularly fond of just about everybody
 - g. When Jesus drops the bowl of pasta
 - h. When Papa says she knows what's going to happen before it happens and when Mack hears that there is a plan for the universe
 - i. The meeting with Sophia

The discussion should continue until the group has worked its way through the entire book.

4. The next step asks the group to assign theological questions to what is happening. The group leader may need to assist them since most church communities have not spent a great deal of time thinking theologically...not a failure of the church or its leadership...just an omission. The recorder/leader should pair the theological term with the moment. Your chart now might look similar to the one below:

Memorable Moments	Theological Question
Mack poisons his father	What is justice? What is grace? Is there an unforgiveable sin?
Missy asks Mack why God is so “mean”	Why did Jesus die? What does our church think about the different theories of atonement?
Mack meets Papa and learns she is a black woman	What is the gender of God?
Mack meets Jesus, and he drops the pasta bowl	What does it mean for Jesus to be both fully human and divine?
Mack meets Elouisa	What is the Holy Spirit? What does our church believe about the Trinity?
Does God know the future?	Is God all knowing? All powerful? What is omniscience and omnipotence and what does our church believe about each term?
The daughter prays	What is prayer? Does God answer prayer?
Mack meets Wisdom	What is Wisdom? Is there another part to the Trinity?

5. As you close, invite the group to consider the following: In Edward Scribner Ames’ book, The Divinity of Christ, published in 1911, he writes that too often Disciples have asked the wrong question, i.e., they ask whether we believe Jesus is the son of God, and do we accept him as Lord and Savior. Instead, Ames says, we should ask whether people are willing to “follow Jesus and do the utmost within your power to establish his kingdom of love within the world? If he (she) earnestly said, “Yes”, I would count him (and her) of that splendid company of the elect who venture their lives in a vast moral enterprise, one issue of which may be to prove whether there really is a God in the universe good enough to be

called the Father of Jesus Christ.” During the coming week reflect upon the thought: does my view of Jesus reflect my understanding of God or do I understand God through the teachings and life of Jesus?