

## The Shack

### Introduction:

The Shack does not claim to be great literature, and perhaps no one was more surprised by its success than the author, William P. Young. At the same time, Eugene Peterson's quote on the cover may describe its potential impact on Christianity more than adequately, "This book has the potential to do for our generation what John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* did for his. It's that good." What, then, makes The Shack so good? Young allows hardly a single theme in Christian theology to go untouched. Rarely does he pursue any issue long enough or hard enough to edge to the right or the left on major theological themes. In many instances, the reader fills in the gaps....which is why this book offers such potential as a teaching and learning tool. Accordingly, this study guide goes not chapter by chapter but theological theme by theological theme. Pastors and church leaders who want to invite the community into their church could find no better way than to offer study classes on The Shack multiple times per week.

Your subscription will be "chapter by chapter." For each chapter you purchase, at U.S. \$2.50 (two dollars fifty cents) per chapter, you will receive a password which will enable you to download that specific chapter. You may then print and/or copy as many as you need for your class. The total number of chapters is not yet known.

Secondly, when advertising these study groups, make sure that each person understands that no one begins the group unless and until he/she has finished the book. If you have read the book, you know that this is not a book that can be studied chapter by chapter. Each reader deserves to experience the joy in that one element of surprise that happens when Mack and we, too, meet Papa.

Last of all, just for fun, see if you can round up a copy of George Burns in Oh, God!, Yul Brynner and Deborah Kerr in The King and I and, for grins and giggles, Bruce Almighty. A copy of The Sound of Music would also be a great addition to the sessions. Movie clips always add something extra to a class and put theological discussion into the realm of the normal, the every day, person. Oh, God will be used multiple times, and can also be used in many other Sunday School classes!

If you have seen and/or have a copy of the television series, Joan of Arcadia, my friend and advisor on this series, Rev. Kelly Brill tells me that the images of God depicted in the series would make great clips to use in class. She also recommends Sallie McFague's book, Models of God (outer in paperback in 1987).

As a gift to me, if you order any DVDs or books to use in and for this class, please go through the Christian Church in Georgia regional bookstore link -- [www.gadisciples.org/bookstore](http://www.gadisciples.org/bookstore) -- to Amazon. We receive 6.5 to 7% of every order depending upon the number of items purchased every month. These funds are used for the mission and ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Georgia.

One book that may prove especially helpful later in the study is Leslie Weatherhead's The Will of God. Written in the 1940's as a collection of sermons Weatherhead preached in his church in London, this short, seventy-five page, book still sells copies today. Amazon currently only has the book in "Large Print" so specify that when looking.

Additionally, as part of your subscription, we hope to make available copies of Ames' The Divinity of Christ, originally published in 1911 as a collection of sermons preached by Ames, a professor at the University of Chicago, at Hyde Park Christian Church. This document of many pages will be available for you to download at no additional charge.

Gratefully yours,  
Landa Harris Simmons