

The Shack

By William Paul Young

This is the most powerful, theologically based, and challenging novel I have perhaps ever written. This tear-jerking tale of Mackenzie Phillips's encounter with the Almighty Trinity tore away the theological unexplainable premise of this hard-to-grasp concept involving their unique and complete relationship. The discussions of understanding their emotions allowed an honest look at the freedom we have in our relationship with God.

The tragedy of the story leads Mack to the place of his greatest pain, namely the Shack. He is then enveloped in a world of supernatural having an opportunity to spend a weekend with the Trinity learning about himself, and their possible relationship with him.

God the Father, in the book named "Papa", though taking the female form of a large black woman for most of the story, is an image of hospitality combined with clear honesty.

God the Holy Spirit, in the book named "Sarayu", meaning wind, is an image of a unpredictable, yet comforting Asian woman.

God the Son, namely Jesus, is a comfortable companion. He is someone Mack relates to, confides in, and connects with most readily.

Their conversations with one another are laced with love, and their interaction is presented as 3 best friends who have complete knowledge of the others interactions and emotions. The idea that their relationship sets the example of what we are to strive for in our relationship with God and with others is powerful. Relationships free us from the context of religion. We see in the light-hearted interaction yet with profoundly deep Truth, that this combination is an ideal to strive for.

Their conversation with Mack is such clear logic that it leaves one wondering why we try (or have failed) to understand their unique view. Young eliminates the impossible notion that God is a harsh judge who enjoys punishing his children. He frees us from the absurdity that we have the knowledge to judge others. He opens us to seeing the freedom of complete love throughout the process of life that God desires for us.

Though there are a few elements of this story that I might question for theological premise, I believe the value in this story is that we are free to dive into searching, questioning, and truly loving the whole of God. We are able to release some of the false cultural issues we have been indoctrinated with to see the care and love of the Father for us in a new light. And for me, learning that God is "quite fond of me" brings new excitement as I strive for greater depth in my Walk, Relationship, and daily interaction with Him.