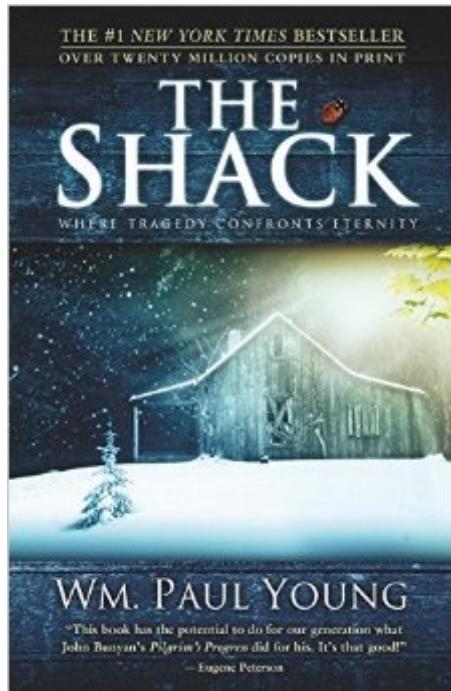


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# The Shack: Where Tragedy Confronts Eternity



## **Synopsis**

Mackenzie Allen Philips' youngest daughter, Missy, has been abducted during a family vacation and evidence that she may have been brutally murdered is found in an abandoned shack deep in the Oregon wilderness. Four years later in the midst of his Great Sadness, Mack receives a suspicious note, apparently from God, inviting him back to that shack for a weekend. Against his better judgment he arrives at the shack on a wintry afternoon and walks back into his darkest nightmare. What he finds there will change Mack's world forever. In a world where religion seems to grow increasingly irrelevant The Shack wrestles with the timeless question, "Where is God in a world so filled with unspeakable pain?" The answers Mack gets will astound you and perhaps transform you as much as it did him. You'll want everyone you know to read this book!

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

I read The Shack as a book discussion group assignment (said group consisting of theologically conservative pastors), and I can understand why the book is upsetting to many--whether because of the subject matter (the murder of a child) or because of some of the book's theological implications. However, I think many are missing the point that the book is a parable, not a doctrinal treatise. I found reading the book to be an incredibly moving experience, and have (cautiously) recommended it to those in my circle of acquaintance whom I think would be able to digest its message. I do find it interesting that so many evangelical Christians have had such a negative visceral reaction to this novel. This is especially remarkable in light of the fact that, by and large, evangelical Christianity has embraced C.S. Lewis' Chronicles of Narnia--this despite the fact that

Lewis wove animism, Greek philosophy, and Roman mythology into his parabolic communication of Christian truth. Not to put too fine a point on it, but is it any more offensive to present God in the form of an African-American woman who cooks scones, than it is to present God's Son as an animal which imparts blessing to children by licking them in the face? (Incidentally, I thoroughly enjoyed the Narnian Chronicles as well.) My recommendation: If you want theology, read the works of theologians. (Watch out for Sproul and other 5-pointers, though.) If you want an emotionally moving parable which hammers home the importance of a personal relationship with God, then buy and read--and be touched by--The Shack.

This is probably the most profound and best book I have ever read in my entire life. It has brought me totally back to God. I have never felt better. I totally identified with Mack and the Great Sadness which has been in my life also. I am a Viet Nam combat vet. In Viet Nam I had forsaken God. I could not believe that God would permit such things to happen on Earth. But as I learned more about WWII and Korea and other World events my lack of disbelief just strengthened. Until about six and one half years ago I felt a need to come back and test the waters. My oldest son was in 9-11 as a paramedic (he went in on his day off) and I was so proud of him, but I felt a need to find my faith, because he had found it. He was a block away from the second tower when it collapsed. He went on to fulfill his lifelong ambition to become a New York Fire Fighter and actually entered into the prestigious Squad One. But oh, what a price for him and his family to pay. So much death to witness, and all of those funerals to attend. I wished I could have protected him from that, but I could not. I failed. I hold myself accountable for this lack of ability to successfully fulfill my mission in life as a father, just like I do the men I sent to their deaths in Viet Nam and the hundreds of people I have killed. I have lived with Viet Nam inside me for over 35 years until recently. These are only some of the crosses I bear. This book has brought me full circle. It has helped me to restore my faith. I have helped several people to purchase this book and I will continue. But I now know what is important and what is not so important. My Step-daughter Lisa recommended I read this book after she read a Christmas message I sent to all of my children, step-children and special friends over and over again. I had sent a picture of Arlington at Christmas that had touched me very close to my heart. So I wanted each of them to see this and understand this was the price of liberty and that there were men and women who were willing to give their lives on foreign soil to guarantee their rights under the constitution of the United States. I penned a personal message to each of the couples or person along with the general message. To John and Lisa, who are House Pastors for a local church, I was sorry I was not stronger for them when Kelsey their newborn went to heaven. Kelsey was born with

a small aorta and Dr. Starr in Portland, OR was going to fix that. He was the best. I felt we were fine, but I had no faith, just my gut instincts that had gotten me out of every other jam before except a couple that resulted in loss of life. I went to the hospital every noon to see Lisa and Kelsey and got to hold Kelsey and she was so innocent.. So the day came, Dr. Starr entered the waiting room with the bad news. Kelsey had not survived. John went to pieces and Lisa was helping him because she seemed stronger at the time. My wife was asking me if I was going to go to John and help him. She said this several times. I was standing up, but I was not there. I was near a river west of Danang trying to get two of my men out of a jam that I had ordered to stay back and lay down fire so we could extract some wounded. The smells, the visual, the noises were all real. My men were dead and so was Kelsey. I never told anyone about that until I wrote that letter. So Lisa read that over and over and recommended I read "The Shack". I am so glad she did too!! I never loan books, so I gave it to a close friend. I purchased the hardbound edition for keeping and rereading. Since reading "The Shack" I have never felt so whole in my entire life. I have redevoted my life to Jesus and I have laughed with him in his presence. Thank you for the Great Book. Thank you Paul for introducing me to Mack. He made me realize I was not alone. Be careful when they make this into a movie. I am not sure how they can do it justice. One more thing. Take your time reading this book. Take time to smell the roses. If you cannot, then read it again. Remember who is writing this review!! As Paul Young told me, live one day at a time and live in the moment. It is the only thing that is real. Enjoy your life!!

In the book world, it's hard to explain "the buzz." What causes word of mouth to start spreading? What turns an unknown author and novel into a surprise bestseller? Even more inexplicable for the book snobs is when a story fails to meet their literary standards and yet touches the masses in an undeniable way. "The Shack" is the buzz book of the past few months. I hadn't even heard of it in November, but by the end of December I'd had relatives, friends, and online pals from across the country telling me I "had" to read this one. I've been burned by such recommendations in the past, particularly in relation to spiritually oriented titles. (Can anyone say "The Prayer of Jabez" and "Left Behind"?), but I was willing to give it a shot. William P. Young's book has an intriguing premise. Years ago, a father named MacKenzie Phillips took his children camping and lost one of them to a man who has kidnapped and killed others. Mack has grieved since then. His marriage has struggled. Understandably, his relationship with God has suffered. Then, one wintry day, he receives a note in his mailbox inviting him back to the woods, to the shack in which his daughter's dress and bloodstains were found. The note, it would seem, is from God. From this simple yet effective premise, Young leads Mack Phillips back to his point of despair and anger. The encounters

he then has with God there in "The Shack" serve as thought-provoking moments for both Mack and the reader. This is not the God of stodgy Sunday school classes. This is not a flannel-graph Jesus. This is not limited to a fluttering dove of the Holy Spirit. The descriptions here are startling, while remaining true to the nature of God's love and grace as portrayed through Scripture. Not only are they startling, they're wise and moving and beautiful. Some might argue that "The Shack" has little theology or accuracy to it, but the very argument is what Young is trying to melt away. I earned a Bachelor's from a Bible college, and the majority of Mack's godly encounters could be wrapped up in biblical theology: redemption, grace, forgiveness, propitiation, etc. Do I agree with every line of the book? Not necessarily. Yet, while never sounding like trite religion (because they're not and never should be!), the words spoken by God in this book are full of vibrancy and life. Is it the best crafted novel ever? No. In many ways, it could be encapsulated in a non-fiction treatise. However, in sharing this remarkable tale in a fictional form, Young has breathed wonder and wisdom into a story that will continue to buzz around for years to come.

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