

BOOK REVIEW OF WILLIAM P. YOUNG'S "THE SHACK"

William Young's *The Shack* presents a face-to-face relational spirituality that seeks to address questions related to the problem of evil in weekend long dialog with the Trinity. While the book is fiction it no doubt intends to communicate theological "truths."

The main character Mackenzie Phillips ("Mack") experiences the tragic loss of his six-year old daughter. Three years later Mack receives a note from God inviting him to see Him at the location where his daughter's murder occurred ("the shack"). Mack goes up to the shack and there spends the weekend with the Trinity. The thought of spending the weekend with three people lovingly ministering to you in an environment filled with amazing free-flowing love and affection over wonderful meals in a picturesque Pacific Northwest setting is no doubt undeniably attractive. However, the problem with God, specifically the three persons of the Trinity as presented in *The Shack* is that God the Father or "Papa" appears as a large matronly African-American Woman, named "Elousia" (for all but the last few pages of the book-then he is an older man with a pony tale and a goatee), Jesus is a middle-eastern man in his early thirties with a tool belt and a big nose, and the Holy Spirit is an Asian woman, named Sarayu (Sanskrit for air or wind). Sophia a beautiful Latin woman appears briefly as the personification of Papa's wisdom.

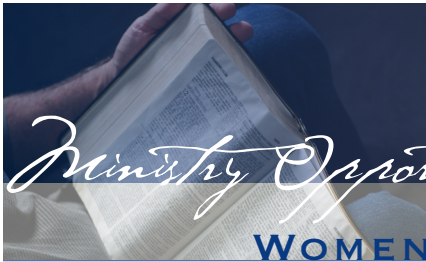
The problems here are numerous, but I will give attention to just three as they relate to the Doctrine of the Trinity. Much more could be said concerning *The Shack's* treatment of the Doctrine of Scripture, Salvation, and the Church just to name a few:

1. Part of *The Shack's* emotional power is rooted in the face-to-face encounter with God (1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 4:14-16). The second commandment in Exodus 20:4-6 and Deuteronomy 5:8-10 forbid the worship of God the Father in the form of something created. Elsewhere John 4:24 speaks of God as spirit who must be worshipped in spirit and truth. Nowhere in Scripture is the invisible God (the Father) presented as any sort of image of any created thing to be worshipped (Romans 1:22, 23).
2. In addition to worshipping the Father as a "graven" image, the Father and the image of the Holy Spirit are women. This is goddess worship! The Lord Jesus taught us to pray to our Father in Heaven (Matthew 6).
3. *The Shack* teaches the Trinity exists "in a circle of relationship" where "hierarchy would make no sense" and even is relegated to the realm of sinful humanity. The Biblical Doctrine of the Trinity teaches that one God exists simultaneously as three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; all three members are indeed God, co-equal, co-eternal, and

worthy of worship, actively involved in the work of creation and redemption (Genesis 1:26; Mathew 28:19; John 14:26; 15:26; Acts 5:3-4; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Ephesians 1:3-14). Yet this same Doctrine of the Trinity teaches "functional" or "economic" subordination of the Son and the Spirit to the Father (Economic subordination is the biblical teaching that the persons of the Trinity have different primary functions in relating to the world in both creation and redemption – Genesis 1:2; Psalm 33:6, 9; 139:7; 1 Corinthians 8:6; 15:28; Galatians 4:4; Ephesians 1:9-10; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:2; 1 Peter 1:2 John 5:19, 30; 6:38; 8:28; John 14:26; 15:26; 1 Cor 11:3; 15:28). This is outright contradicted in *The Shack* blurring the persons of the Trinity's distinctions bordering on the heresy of "Modalism," (still taught in One-ness Pentecostalism and specifically by T.D. Jakes) which teaches that the persons of the Trinity are different "modes" of God (Papa says, "I am truly human in Jesus")

Many Amazon reviewers say the book has given them a new understanding of the Trinity, which I do not doubt since the Trinity depicted in *The Shack* is not revealed in the Bible. Throughout the book numerous backhands are delivered toward the Christian church as irrelevant, cold, ritualistic, lifeless, and filled with judgmental and hypocritical people. This is nothing new and to a certain point well taken. It's likely many of us have known someone like Mack's father, someone who is supposed to be a knowledgeable spiritual leader whose life denied what he claimed to profess. I'll even echo that I've encountered many who have been in Bible teaching churches for a long time who know a lot about what the Bible teaches, but do not know God as well as many who have little understanding as to how to connect the gospel to their lives in a way that produces exhilarating and attractive change. The answer is not a Christian life devoid of truth, but a rich and robust understanding of the Bible's central message, the gospel, that powerfully reveals a person, Jesus Christ, as well as a life lived vitally connected to Him by grace alone through faith alone and this life is anything but dead. For this reason I strongly recommend staying far away from *The Shack*. If you have already read *The Shack* or know others who have read this novel consider using it to start a conversation about the One true God revealed in the Bible. The God who is infinitely powerful, wise, and loving in all that He does. The God who not only knows about our suffering, but entered into our suffering through the death of His Son, the God man Jesus Christ, to redeem and reconcile for Himself a glorious people, the Church, whom He calls, His bride.

-Vince Cuomo



WOMEN'S MINISTRY

Excellent Wife Class

This weekly study based on the book by Martha Peace will be offered again this fall and winter on Wednesday evenings, beginning September 17 at 7:00 p.m. at Barbara Telle's home in Danville. Space is limited to 12 ladies and registration begins Sunday, August 31, at the Women of Grace table in the courtyard.

Titus 2 Study

This monthly study based on Titus 2:3-5 and held at the church will begin Tuesday, October 14, 2008, and go through May 12, 2009. For more details, please pick up a Titus 2 brochure at the

Women of Grace table in the courtyard. Registration is from Sunday, August 31, through Sunday, September 28.

Women of Grace Fall Conference

"Ordinary Women, Crucial Choices" taught by Betty Price is the topic of our Fall Conference on Friday evening and all day Saturday, September 26 and 27, here at the church. The cost is \$35 (mainly for the catered lunch on Saturday) and must be submitted at the time of registration which begins Sunday, August 31, at the Women of Grace table in the courtyard. The last day to sign up is Sunday, September 21.

NEWS & EVENTS

Pictorial Directory

With hundreds of people on the church campus on any given Sunday, it is challenging to place the faces that we see every Sunday with the names we read about in the bulletin, prayer sheet or an old church directory. We need to know WHO we are fellowshiping with each Lord's Day. We need to be able to put a NAME with the FACE we see each week.

During the month of September you will all have an opportunity to register for a photo session with Olan Mills that will be hosted at Grace from October 2nd through October 4th. We would like to encourage EVERYONE who calls Grace Bible Church their "home" to register for an appointment.

On September 7, you will receive information in the church's bulletin that will share how you can register for an appointment.

Hospitality Homes

Hospitality Home Sundays are starting up soon, mark your calendar with these up-coming dates, and watch for the sign-up announcement in the Sunday bulletins. October 5th, November 2nd, December 14th- Progressive Potluck,

February 1st, March 1st, April 5th, May 3rd. If you are interested in hosting one of these dates in your home, please contact Louise Botelho by email at Loubo@comcast.net or call 954-7730.

Grace School of Theology and Ministry.

With the fall comes the opening of another academic year for the Grace School of Theology and Ministry. The school provides a great opportunity for all who want to study biblical doctrine in a classroom setting. Classes begin September 30th. For a list of classes being offered this quarter call the GSTM office at (925) 676-1639.

SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS

- Isaac Becker ~ 1
- John Castro ~ 1
- Rion Shellooe ~ 4
- Samuel Kamp ~ 5
- Sarah Adams ~ 7
- Charles Carrigan ~ 7
- Dustin Menez ~ 7
- Eldon Hawksworth ~ 8
- Tisa Mantle ~ 8
- Andy Senft ~ 9
- Nikolas Marchol ~ 10
- Lois Margenau ~ 11
- Lisa Scott ~ 12
- James Albert ~ 14
- Lauren Botelho ~ 14
- Colin Copland ~ 14
- JoAnn Hedges ~ 14
- Herb Moussa ~ 15
- Fay Johnson ~ 16
- Eric Remedios ~ 17
- Wanda Vought ~ 19
- Ronald Barry ~ 20
- Suzanne Simmons ~ 20
- Jim Castel ~ 21
- Keith Davis ~ 21
- Timothy Knight ~ 21
- Dinnis Upton ~ 21
- Morgan Cooper ~ 23
- Sean Fetterly ~ 28
- Andie Menez ~ 28
- Linda Dodt ~ 29
- Kathleen Runge ~ 29
- Amy Hoye ~ 30
- Evan Sharp ~ 30



SEPTEMBER CALENDAR

- Office Closed:** September 1
- Hospitality Homes:** September 14
- Seniors Lunch:** September 18
- World View Evangelism Conference:** September 19-20
- Women's Conference:** September 26-27

FUTURE DATES TO REMEMBER

- Hospitality Homes:** October 4
- Members Meeting:** October 12
- Reformation Celebration:** October 26
- Hospitality Homes:** November 2

What's going on at Grace?



MISSIONS UPDATE

The adult Sunday School class, Vision for the Nations, has its last two class sessions Sundays, September 7th and 14th at 11:00 am in Fellowship Hall. Our previous class sessions have covered the Biblical, historical, and cultural perspectives on the expansion of Christianity throughout the world.

In the Biblical perspective, we saw that there is a central theme beginning at Genesis 12:1-3 in God's promise to Abraham to bless him and his spiritual descendants so that we could share that blessing with all peoples, Jesus being the fullest form of that blessing. David and Paul wrote about this blessing. Jesus taught and demonstrated it. In Revelation 5:7, we see the culmination with people from every tribe gathered to worship God. In the historical perspective, we saw Christianity spread through the Roman Empire. When the barbarians attacked

Rome, they took Christianity home with them to all of Europe. The Vikings did likewise when they raided Europe. In the last 200 years, missions has brought the gospel to the remainder of the world, and is now focusing on groups of people isolated from the gospel not just by geography, but by language, culture, and social boundaries. The cultural perspective recognized the necessity to share the gospel in a way that is relevant within the receiving culture.

Our final two classes will cover the strategic perspective – how can we as the 21st century church most effectively work to complete this task God has given us that hastens the return of Jesus Christ.

The Missions Ministry

World View Evangelism Conference

How to share the **Gospel** in a Postmodern World
September 19-20, 2008

“The task of confronting the lies of our culture is a holistic one—in other words, every truth we present to the unbeliever must be seen as deriving its meaning and authority from its relation to purpose and character of our all-wise Creator. This is our unified worldview. God gives every fact its meaning. God and His plan for creation constitute ultimate reality.

As those who are to do the work of an evangelist (2 Tim 4:5); we need utter realism regarding the present philosophic climate of our culture. Worldview

Evangelism is a form of training that enables believers to effectively confront the fortresses of error that dominate our world. These fortresses of error effectively 'lock out' the Gospel—by suggesting that the evangel is implausible. As effective evangelists, we can learn how to tear down these strongholds of error that are raised up against the knowledge of God (2 Cor 10:3-6).”
-Jay Wegter

Many of you responded very positively to Jay Wegter's message on August 10, entitled “The Power of Christian Worldview in Today's Evangelism”. The elders have been preparing for an upcoming emphasis on “Missional Living” in the pulpit during the fall. As a “kick-off” for this new emphasis we have invited Jay to return for a weekend conference on “World View Evangelism.” Jay will be expanding upon his topic in both biblical and practical contexts. This will provide our congregation with

a unique opportunity to overcome fears regarding difficult questions and learn how to become more engaging with our culture, neighbors and co-workers.

Further details about this conference will be coming in the days ahead. But in the meantime, please mark your calendars and plan to join us for the weekend.

CONFERENCE SCHEDULE:

Friday Evening:

SESSION ONE: “Sharing the Gospel in a Culture of Truth-suppressors”

Saturday Morning:

SESSION TWO: “Developing Spiritual Weapons to handle erroneous Worldviews”

SESSION THREE: “Learning an evangelistic Methodology which targets the Sinner's Dilemma”

Saturday Afternoon:

Workshop and Q & A – Panel discussion and discussion groups

SESSION FOUR: “Answering the Objections and Questions of Unbelievers”
Q & A

The series will be concluded on Sunday morning with the message, “Recovering the neglected Elements of the biblical Gospel”.

Please register online at: www.gbcph.org

Mailing Address:

140 Gregory Lane, Suite 180
Pleasant Hill, CA 94523

TEL [925] 676-1584

FAX [925] 677-2192

www.gbcph.org

THE COMMITMENTS OF OUR HOME FELLOWSHIP GROUPS (HFG) AT GRACE BIBLE CHURCH (GBC)

The coming of the fall typically marks the beginning of a new cycle and season of life within Grace's Home Fellowship Groups. The elders would like to encourage everyone who calls GBC their church home to plug into one of these small groups that meet throughout the week and throughout our surrounding community.

WHAT IS A HOME FELLOWSHIP GROUP?

Home Fellowship Groups are smaller Christian communities within the larger corporate community that worships together on Sunday morning at GBC. In HFG's small groups of people (about 8-15 adults) draw near to God that they may come to know Him more deeply, experience His presence and power, see community developed and fostered, and people are nurtured and equipped for God's work in the world. Opportunities are provided for transparency, mutual support, practical love and service, deepening our understanding of the Christian faith, and sharing what we see God doing in our midst.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF A HFG?

A Place for Fellowship and Friendship

We can define fellowship as seeking to share what it is that God has made known to you while letting others share with you what they know of Him as a means of finding strength, refreshment and instruction for one's own soul. The over seventy New Testament one another commands instruct us as to how we are to interact in fellowship with one another. We are told to encourage, serve, exhort, rejoice and weep with, correct, instruct, sing to, accept, build up, and love one another. There is no better way as a part of GBC to be in a position to both consistently practice and consistently receive the benefits of these commands being practiced than in a HFG. These groups

also serve the purpose of integrating newer people into the body life at GBC as well as keeping the leadership of the church abreast of the concerns and troubles the members of our church face that might otherwise remain hidden.

A Place Where Gifts are Exercised

HFG's provide a context for our spiritual gifts to be both discovered and exercised within the group as well as the church and our larger communities.

WHERE DO HFGS FIT IN AT GBC IN THE OVERALL SCHEME OF THINGS?

HFGs are the means in which we seek to care for the flock at GBC. In response to God's grace people move toward lives of moral beauty, integrity, others-centeredness, discover and use their gifts for ministry in the group, at GBC, and in the world.

WHAT HAPPENS AT A HOME FELLOWSHIP GROUP AT GBC?

HFGs are considered small groups for the express purpose of Christian nurture; therefore they are balanced between the elements of worship, bible study, the sharing of life (e.g. praises, struggles, victories, confession and repentance of sins, ways the gospel has encouraged us, etc.), and a season of prayer where we set before the Lord the items that were just shared as well as our praises, giving thanks to God, other requests for spiritual strength, and the Lord provision of our needs.

If you have any interest in attending a HFG you can look in the inside jacket of your church bulletin on Sunday mornings for the locations and hosts of these groups, or you can call the church office and someone there would be happy to help you get plugged in.