

The Shack

Reviewed by Michael J. Barnard

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People are talking and many are raving about William Paul Young's popular book "The Shack" published by *Windblown Media – Copyright © 2007*. Well known Christians have made such comments as:

"When the imagination of a writer and the passion of a theologian cross-fertilize the result is a novel on the order of The Shack. The book has the potential to do for our generation what John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress did for his. It's that good! ~ Eugene Peterson – Professor Emeritus of Spiritual Theology, Regent College, Vancouver, B.C., author of "The Message"

"The Shack is the most absorbing work of fiction I've read in many years. My wife and I laughed, cried and repented of our own lack of faith along the way. The Shack will leave you craving for the presence of God." ~ Michael W. Smith, Recording Artist

"Riveting, with twists that defy your expectations while teaching powerful theological lessons without patronizing. ~ Gayle E. Erwin, author of The Jesus Style

Others are raving mad about the book and say "The Shack" consists of outright heresy. How should we as Christians respond to this book that is sweeping the church, our nation and the world? Here are my thoughts in reviewing the book:

"The Shack" is a captivating book that hooks the reader right from the start. The story is about a man, "Mackenzie Allen Phillips" who was raised by an abusive, alcoholic father. His early childhood experiences were terrible, including those experiences in the church. As a result he had no desire for any relationship with God. This will be resolved before the end of the book.

Paul Young is a skillful writer and constantly puts unexpected twists into the story line keeping the readers sitting on the edge of their seats. The description of his home state of Oregon has such vivid detail that one can almost visualize being at the very spots he is describing.

Particularly touching to me were the first sixty-six pages of the book describing a camping trip to Eastern Oregon and the loss of Mack's six year old daughter "Missy" to a serial killer of children. The loss of his daughter put Mackenzie into what the book refers to as "The Great Sadness".

The story changes with the arrival of a mysterious letter signed by "Papa" inviting Mack to meet him at "The Shack", the dreadful place where evidence of "Missy's" murder was found, blood stains still on the floor. Mack wonders, "Who sent this letter?" "Is it possible this letter could really be from God?" "Could this be an attempt by Missy's killer to get at him now?" "Or could the murderer be fiendishly trying to lure Mack away from his family to leave them unprotected?" While Mack's family is out of town on a trip, he decides to go back to the shack in Eastern Oregon to investigate.

At this point the book enters deeply into the realm of the imagination, and at times the bizarre. It does have some good points, particularly in the areas of “love for family”, “coping with the pain of losing a child” and “forgiving others who have hurt us deeply”.

I often hear people say, “The Shack is just a novel”, or “The book is just fiction” in an attempt to defend some of the more questionable content of the book. My question is this: “Does the author use the stirring format of this book to plant false doctrine into the minds of his readers, or at best questionable doctrine?” Throughout the book, Paul Young walks the fence between heresy and orthodoxy. Time and time again he stomps his foot firmly on the side of heresy only to follow up in the next sentence or paragraph with a statement that seems to slide his big toe back on to the side of orthodoxy. In doing so he muddies the water leaving people to wonder what he actually meant? It’s been my experience that most Christians who have read the book give Young the benefit of the doubt.

Let’s explore some of the more controversial statements in the book:

God the Father is an overweight black woman named Papa:

Page 82 ~ “...and he was looking directly into the face of a large beaming African-American woman.”

Page 83 ~ “Mack, look at you!” she fairly exploded. “here you are, and so grown up. I have really been looking forward to seeing you face to face. It is so wonderful to have you here with us. My, my, my how I do love you! And with that she wrapped herself around him again.”

Page 91 ~ “You must know,’ he offered, ‘calling you Papa is a bit of a stretch for me.’ ‘Oh, really?’ She looked at him in mock surprise. ‘Of course I know. I always know.’ She chuckled. ‘But tell me, why do you think it’s hard for you? *Is it because it’s too familiar for you, or maybe because I am showing myself as a woman, a mother, or...*” ‘No small issue there,’ Mack interrupted with an awkward chuckle. ‘Or, maybe it’s because of the failures of your own papa?’

Page 93 ~ “She picked up the wooden spoon again, dripping with some sort of batter. ‘Mackenzie, I am neither male nor female, even though both genders are derived from my nature. If I choose to appear to you as a man or a woman, it’s because I love you. *For me to appear to you as a woman and suggest that you call me Papa is simply to mix metaphors, to help you keep from falling so easily back into you religious conditioning.*”

Note: When God has chosen to portray Himself in scripture using the masculine gender, what gives William P. Young (or anyone else for that matter) the right to change that gender?

The Biblical Doctrine of God the Father:

We believe that God the Father is one in essence (being) with the Son and the Holy Spirit ([Deut. 6:4](#)), yet different in role ([John 10:29](#); [1 Thess 4:8](#)). The Father is the sovereign ruler ([Ps. 71:16](#)) of the universe, creator ([Gen. 1:1](#)), sustainer of all things by means of His Son Jesus Christ ([Col. 1:17](#)) and by the power

of His Holy Spirit ([Gen. 1:2](#)). We believe that God the Father concerns Himself perfectly in the affairs of humanity ([2 Cor. 1:3,4](#)), demonstrating His fatherly affection for His children Israel ([2 Cor. 6:18](#)) and for those adopted in Christ ([Eph. 1:5](#)). The Father is gracious and extends His common grace to both the righteous and unrighteous ([Matt. 5:45](#)).

The Holy Spirit is portrayed as an Asian woman named Sarayu:

Page 85 ~ “Just as she [God the Father] turned to enter the cabin, a small, distinctively Asian woman emerged from behind her...But strangely, he [Mack] still had a difficult time focusing on her; she seemed almost to shimmer in the light and her hair blew in all directions even though there was hardly a breeze.”

NOTE: The Holy Spirit is always portrayed in the masculine gender in scripture. Why would anyone change what God has ordained?

The Biblical Doctrine of the Holy Spirit:

We believe the Holy Spirit is one in essence with the Father and Son ([Deut. 6:4](#)), yet different in role. We believe the Holy Spirit was sent by the Father and the Son ([John 14:26;16:7](#)) to convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment ([John 16:8-11](#)). He is called the Spirit of Christ ([Rom.8:9; 1 Pet. 1:11](#)) and also the Spirit of truth ([John 16:13](#)). The Holy Spirit has been active in creation ([Gen. 1:2](#)), revelation ([Is. 61:1-3](#)) empowerment ([Ex. 31:2-6](#)), and inward renewal ([Ps. 51:10-12](#)). The Spirit regenerates ([John 3:5-8](#)), baptizes ([1 Cor. 12:13](#)), enlightens ([Eph. 1:17,18](#)), teaches ([John 14:26](#)), sanctifies ([Gal. 5:16-18](#)), seals ([Eph. 1:13,14](#)), counsels ([John 16:7](#)), and transforms the lives of believers into Christ-likeness ([Gal. 5:22,23](#)). The work of the Holy Spirit is to glorify Jesus by showing His disciples who He is ([John 17:7-15](#)). We believe the Holy Spirit empowers each believer for ministry ([Acts 1:7,8](#)) and is the giver of spiritual gifts ([Rom. 12:6-8;1 Cor. 12:7-11; 1 Pet. 4:10,11](#)). The Holy Spirit is the Comforter ([John 14:16 KJV](#)) who helps us in our weaknesses by interceding for us when we are too weak and discouraged to pray ([Rom. 8:26,27](#)).

Jesus is portrayed as a happy go lucky carpenter – almost to the point of silliness

Page 84 ~ “a third person had emerged from the cabin, this one a man. He appeared Middle Eastern and was dressed like a laborer, complete with tool belt and gloves.”

NOTE: Jesus is “the second person” of the Trinity, not the third. Throughout the book Jesus is seen as laughing and acting silly. Not that Jesus never smiled or laughed, but I couldn’t help but feel there was the lack of reverence for Christ in Young’s writings.

Biblical Christology (The Doctrine of Christ)

We believe that Jesus Christ is fully God ([John 1:1](#)) and fully man ([Phil. 2:6-8](#)). We believe that He is one in essence with the Father and the Holy Spirit ([Deut. 6:4](#)), but different in role. We believe in the virgin birth of Christ ([Luke 1:34-37](#)), His sinless life ([2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15; 1 Pet. 2:22; 1 John 3:5](#)), His substitutional death on the cross for our sins ([Eph. 2:16](#)), His burial and resurrection on the third day ([Matt. 28:5,6](#)). We believe that Christ ascended into heaven ([Acts 1:9-11](#)) and sits at the right hand of God the Father ([Acts 2:32,33](#)) in the position of power and authority, from where He shall come again to judge the living and the dead. We believe Christ's death on the cross atoned for our sin ([Rom. 3:25](#)) and satisfied the demands of a righteous and holy God. Jesus is the sacrificial Lamb of God ([John 1:29](#)), the Lion of Judah ([Rev. 5:5](#)), the Messiah of Israel (Is. 53; Ps. 2) the Mediator between God and man ([1 Tim. 2:5](#)). He is the Prophet ([Acts 3:22](#)), Priest ([Heb. 4:14-16](#)), and King ([John 1:49](#)); the Head of the church ([Col. 1:18](#)), the Savior ([2 Tim. 1:10](#)) and Redeemer of His people ([Titus 2:14](#)). He is our Reconciler with God ([Col. 1:19-20](#)) the Heir of all things ([Heb. 1:1,2](#)), the Judge of all the world ([2 Tim. 4:1](#)); and the exact representation of God the Father ([Col. 2:9](#)). We believe that Jesus Christ will come again to set up His kingdom ([Rev. 22:20](#)). All the Bible points to Christ and our need for Him. History is "His story." [Acts 4:12](#) says: "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by

which we must be saved." Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." ([John 14:6 NKJV](#))

God the Father shakes her hips to funk music?

Page 90-91 ~ "Papa was working on something with her back to him, flour flying as she swayed to the music of whatever she was listening to. The song obviously came to an end, *marked by a couple of last shoulder and hip shakes*...He inquired, 'May I ask what you are listening to?' 'You really wanna know?' 'Sure.' Now Mack was curious. 'West Coast Juice'...'West Coast Juice, huh? It doesn't sound very religious.' 'Oh, trust me, it's not.'

Biblical Response: God is a holy God, not a hip swinging woman. He is to be worshipped!

Exodus 33:20 ~ "But He said, 'You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live.'

Psalm 99:9 ~ "Exalt the LORD our God, and worship at His holy hill; for the LORD our God is holy."

Isaiah 6:1-5 ~ "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple. Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one cried to another and said: Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!' And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke. So I said: 'Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, The LORD of hosts.'

Revelation 4:8-11 ~ "The four living creatures, each having six wings were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying: 'Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!' Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying: 'You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created.'"

God the Father has a questionable sense of humor

Page 88,89 ~ Mack says, "Am I supposed to believe that God is a big black woman with a questionable sense of humor?" Jesus laughed. 'She's a riot! You can always count on her to throw you a curve or two.'

Biblical Response: Not only is God holy, He commands us to be holy as well.

1 Peter 1:13-16 ~ "Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, 'Be holy, for I am holy.'"

Ephesians 5:3,4 ~ “But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, for foolish talking, nor coarse jesting [joking], which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.”

Romans 12:2 ~ “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”

The Father was on the cross

Page 95 ~ “Papa didn’t answer, only looked down at their hands. His gaze followed hers [God the Father] and for the first time Mack noticed the scars in her wrists, like those he now assumed Jesus also had on his. She allowed him to tenderly touch the scars, outlines of a deep piercing, and he finally looked up again into her eyes. Tears were slowly making their way down her face...”

Page 102 ~ “Nodding agreement, he looked up and noticed again the scars on her wrists.”

Page 103 ~ “Mack struggled for the words to tell her what was in his heart. ‘I’m so sorry that you, that Jesus, had to die.’ She walked around the table and gave Mack another big hug. “I know you are, and thank you. But you need to know that we aren’t sorry at all. It was worth it. Isn’t that right son?”

Page 222 ~ “There was no way to create freedom without a cost, as you know.’ Papa looked down, scars visible and indelibly written into his [now a man -God the Father’s] wrist.

Biblical Response: Christ alone died on the cross.

John 19:23 ~ “Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus...”

John 19:25 ~ “Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.”

Romans 5:8,9 ~ “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.”

Romans 6:8 ~ “Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him.”

1 Corinthians 15:3 ~ “For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.”

William P. Young uses 2 Corinthians 5:18,19 in an interview to argue that the Father was on the cross with Christ (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vf5hTL1Oe68>):

2 Corinthians 5:18,19 ~ “Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.”

NOTE: That God was in Christ reconciling the world does not mean that He was on the cross with Him, but that the Father worked through His Son's substitutional death on the cross for our sins to reconcile believers from all over the world to Him.

God never forsook Christ while on the cross

Page 96 ~ "We were there together.' Mack was surprised, 'At the cross? Now wait, I thought you left him – you know – 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' It was a scripture that had often haunted Mack in The Great Sadness. 'You misunderstand the mystery there. Regardless of what he felt at that moment, I never left him."

Check out the following interview on You Tube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vf5hTL1Oe68>

When William P. Young was interviewed by Kendall Adams and asked if he believes in the wrath of God? His response was: "The wrath of God is not against any man – it's against everything that is damaging them and causing them to sin." When asked, "Do you believe Christ was punished for our sin?" He responded, "Why would the father punish the Son?" When Adams challenged Young, "You wouldn't agree that the cross is a place of punishment for our sin?" Young replied strongly, "No!" "I am not a penal substitution, reformation [inaudible]." (*Meaning he doesn't believe Christ died on the cross to pay "our" penalty for sin.*)

Biblical Response: The full fury of God's wrath fell on Jesus while on the cross.

Psalm 22:1 ~ "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from helping Me, and from the words of My groaning?"

Matthew 27:45,46 ~ "Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, 'Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?' that is, 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?'

John 1:29 ~ "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

NOTE: Christ redeemed the Christian's penalty for sin by becoming our sin bearer. Christ bore the full fury of the wrath of God while on the cross, redeeming us by His ransom sacrifice. He was our substitute. That redemption price was paid to God the Father in full.

2 Corinthians 5:21 ~ "For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

Modalistic Monarchianism (the heresy of God simply changing of form)

Page 99 ~ "When we three spoke our self into human existence as the Son of God, we [all three members of the Trinity] became fully human. We also chose to embrace all the limitations that this entailed. Even though we have always been present in this created universe, we now became flesh and blood."

Biblical Response: We believe in One God revealed in three distinct persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, not a God who simply changes form.

John 1:14 ~ “And the Word [Jesus] became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

Philippians 2:5-11 ~ “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

John 4:24 ~ “God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

No need to punish sin?

Page 120 ~ [God The Father] “I don’t need to punish people for sin. Sin is its own punishment, devouring you from the inside.”

Biblical Response: The wrath of God is very real, that’s why Christ had to die on the cross.

Isaiah 53:4,5 ~ “Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him.”

Romans 2:5-9 ~ “But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who ‘will render to each one according to his deeds’: eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness – indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, the Jew first and also of the Greek...”

Hebrews 9:27,28 ~ “And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.”

Revelation 19:11-16 ~ “Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.”

No specific order of roles within the Trinity?

Page 121 ~ “Isn’t one of you more the boss than the other two?” The three looked at one another as if they had never thought of such a question. ‘I mean,’ Mack hurried on, ‘I have always thought of God the Father as sort of being the boss and Jesus as the one following orders, you know, being obedient. I’m not sure how the Holy Spirit fits in

exactly He...I mean, she... uh...' Mack tried not to look at Sarayu as he stumbled for words. "...Whatever – the Spirit always seemed kind of a ... uh...' 'A free Spirit?' offered Papa. 'Exactly – a free Spirit, but still under the direction of the Father. Does that make sense?' *Jesus looked over at Papa, obviously trying with some difficulty to maintain the perception of a very serious exterior. 'Does that make sense to you Abba? Frankly, I haven't a clue what this man is talking about.* Papa scrunched her face up as if exerting great concentration. 'Nope, I have been trying to make head or tail out of it, but sorry, he's got me lost.'

Biblical Response: The three members of the Trinity are equally God, One in essence, but different in role.

Mark 13:31,32 ~ *"Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away. But of the day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."*

John 8:28 ~ *"Then Jesus said to them, 'when you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things."*

John 10:17,18 ~ *"Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father."*

John 14:28 ~ *"You have heard Me say to you, 'I am going away and coming back to you.' If you loved Me, you would rejoice because I said, 'I am going to the Father,' for My Father is greater than I."*

John 15:15 ~ *"No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made know to you."*

Revelation 2:27 ~ *"He shall rule them with a rod of iron; they shall be dashed to pieces like the potter's vessels' – as I also have received from My Father..."*

1 Corinthians 15:23-28 ~ *"But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming. Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till he has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death. For 'He has put all things under His feet.' But when He says 'all things are put under Him,' it is evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted. Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all."*

John 14:26 ~ *"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit whom the father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you."*

Romans 8:9 ~ *"But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His."*

Nicene Creed ~ “And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life; who proceeds from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets.”

Is God submitted to us?

Page 145 ~ “[Jesus speaking] That’s the beauty you see in my relationship with Abba [The Father] and Sarayu [The Holy Spirit]. We are indeed submitted to one another and have always been so and always will be. Papa is as much submitted to me as I to him, or Sarayu to me, or Papa to her. Submission is not about authority and it is not obedience; it is all about relationships of love and respect. *In fact, we are submitted to you in the same way.*” Mack was surprised. ‘How can that be? Why would the God of the universe want to be submitted to me?’ ‘Because we want you to join us in our circle of relationship.’”

Biblical Response: We are to submit to God.

James 4:6-8 ~ “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.’ Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.”

Acts 17:30-31 ~ “Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.”

Psalms 29:2 ~ “Give unto the LORD the glory due to His name; Worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.”

Psalms 95:6,7 ~ “Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD our Maker. For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand.”

Psalms 99:5 ~ “Exalt the LORD our God, and worship at His footstool – He is holy.”

The author has a low view of Christianity

Page 179 ~ “You’re [Jesus] not too fond of religion and institutions?’ Mack said, not sure if he was asking a question or making an observation. ‘I don’t create institutions – never have, never will.’ ‘What about the institution of marriage?’ ‘Marriage is not an institution. It’s a relationship.’ Jesus paused, his voice steady and patient. ‘Like I said, I don’t create institutions; that’s an occupation for those who want to play God. So no, I’m not too big on religion,’ Jesus said a little sarcastically...Put simply, these terrors [religion, politics and economics] are tools that many use to prop up their illusions of security and control. People are afraid of uncertainty, afraid of the future. These institutions, these structures and ideologies, are all a vain effort to create some sense of certainty and security where there isn’t any. It’s all false! Systems cannot provide you security, only I can.”

Page 205 ~ “Religion must use law to empower itself and control the people who they need in order to survive.”

NOTE: William P. Young demonstrates a very low view of the Church throughout this book and in his public appearances, perhaps because of his experiences growing up. From a biblical perspective, the Church is the beloved bride of Christ. To attack the Church as Young so often does is to attack the beloved of Christ!

To get more of a feel for the author's view on the Church and other issues, go to <http://www.marinerschurch.org/pages/weekendvideofull.html> and listen to the 11:00am service.

The Biblical Doctrine of the Church

We believe the New Testament church (Gk - *ekklesia* ~ "the assembly" or "the called out ones") to be made up of believers in Jesus Christ, called out of the world and bought by the blood of Christ ([Acts 20:28](#)). We believe the church is the body of Christ ([1 Cor. 12:27](#)), a living organism with Christ Himself as the Head ([Eph. 5:23](#)). The church is also called: the bride of Christ ([Rev. 21:9](#)), the family of God ([1 Pet. 4:17](#)), the elect ([2 Tim. 2:10](#)), the company of the redeemed ([Gal. 3:14](#)) and the people of God ([1 Pet. 2:10](#)). Though fragmented by denominations, the believer in Christ is united by "one Spirit into one body" ([1 Cor. 12:13](#); [Eph. 4:4-6](#)). We believe that the local church is autonomous and retains authority for its own affairs. We believe in the priesthood of all believers ([1 Pet. 2:9](#)), meaning that each believer has equal access to God through Christ ([1 Pet. 2:5](#)). We believe the church body is to encourage one another ([Heb. 10:25](#)), help the poor ([Gal. 2:10](#)), build one another up ([Eph. 4:11-13](#)), assemble regularly in worship, hold each other accountable in the biblical faith ([1 Cor. 16:13](#); [1 Pet. 5:8,9](#)), and to engage in local ([Acts 1:8](#)) and world evangelism ([Mark 16:15](#); [Matt. 28:18-20](#)). We believe Christ commanded His church to practice the two ordinances of believer's baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Christ would not want people to become Christians?

Page 182 ~ "Is that what it means to be a Christian?" It sounded kind of stupid as Mack said it, but it was how he was trying to sum everything up in his mind. 'Who said anything about being a Christian? I'm not a Christian.' The idea struck Mack as odd and unexpected and he couldn't keep himself from grinning. 'No, I suppose you aren't.' They arrived at the door of the workshop. Again Jesus stopped. 'Those who love me come from every system that exists. They were Buddhists or Mormons, Baptists or Muslims, Democrats, Republicans and many who don't vote or are not part of any Sunday morning or religious institutions. I have followers who were murderers and many who were self-righteous. Some are bankers and bookies, Americans and Iraqis, Jews and Palestinians. **I have no desire to make them Christian**, but I do want to join them in their transformation into sons and daughters of my Papa, into my brothers and sisters, into my Beloved.' 'Does that mean,' asked Mack, 'that all roads will lead to you?' 'Not at all,' smiled Jesus as he reached for the door handle to the shop, 'Most roads don't lead anywhere.' [*What about hell?*] 'What it does mean is I will travel any road to find you.'

Biblical Response: The author toys with universalism in his book and in his public talks. To be a Christian simply means to be a follower of Jesus Christ. It is inconceivable to me that Christ would not want people of all faiths to become Christians, "followers of Him".

The Great Commission from "the real Jesus" teaches the exact opposite:

Matthew 28:18-20 ~ “And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’” Amen.

Paul Young may have written this book for his children with no intent of ever publishing it, but he did get it published with the help of some friends who formed their own publishing company. The book has already sold some 7-8 million copies in English alone, not to mention sales in the twenty other languages “The Shack” has been published in. The best intentions don’t justify teaching false doctrine.

Anyone in their right mind would never drink a cup of cold water with drops of cyanide in it as it would kill them. Why would we as Christians want to put the poison of false doctrine into our minds? Even if “*The Shack*” is widely regarded within the Christian community as “a good book”, *if it teaches false doctrine, it is not good!*

All Bible verses quoted from:

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