



**GROW
IN
GRACE**
NEWSLETTER

Volume 44, No.10, March 7 , 2017 / Southside Baptist Church & Christian School / P.O. Box 1594 / 1028 South Water Avenue, Gallatin, TN 37066 (615) 452-5951 / The Grow in Grace Newsletter **is a weekly Bible Study**, plus local church news notes— designed first and foremost for members and those attending services at Southside Church; and is sent forth with the desire to aid one and all, (including friends far and wide), in the experience of 2 Peter 3:18. ***"But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our LORD and Saviour JESUS CHRIST. To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen."***

The Shack's Cool god

(Copyright 2013, David Cloud, of Way of Life Literature; Enlarged February 16, 2017 (first published March 3, 2009.... EDITED here for SPACE considerations))

The Shack, authored by William Paul Young, is a novel that explores the issue of why God allows pain and evil. It is a fictional account of a man who is bitter against God for allowing his youngest daughter to be murdered and who returns to the scene of the murder, an old shack in the woods, to have a life-changing encounter with God. **The "God" that he encounters, though, is not the God of the Bible.** Published in 2007, *The Shack* was Number One on the New York Times bestseller list for 50 weeks... [The Shack Movie is now in theaters, and will use emotions, entertainment, and humor to deepen the impact of the deceptions taught in the book.] William Young is not a member of a church and is even reticent to call himself a Christian. He describes himself as "spiritual but not religious" ("After The Shack, a Crossroads: William Paul Young," *Publishers Weekly*, Sept. 21, 2012). Yet the novel has been touted as a helpful Christian book. ***The Shack has been endorsed by*** Pat Robertson's 700 Club, CCM artist Michael W. Smith, Mark Batterson (senior pastor of National Community Church in Washington, D.C.), ***Gloria Gaither (who hosted a reading of The Shack as reported in the New York Times), and Mark Lowry*** (former singer with the Gaithers). The premier issue of Rick Warren's magazine, *The Purpose*

Driven Connection, refers to *The Shack* as a “notable best-selling Christian” book (p. 24). **Eugene Peterson, Regent College professor and author of *The Message***, is profuse in his praise of the book. **[ONE BAPTIST PASTOR reported]**, “... I have questioned several folk on their acceptance of ‘The Shack’ and its false teaching. Their response has been, ‘But it teaches a good truth about how God loves us.’”

William Young was one of the speakers at the February 2009 National Pastor’s Convention in San Diego, sponsored by Zondervan and InterVarsity Fellowship. The 1,500 attendees were pastors and Christian workers.... Young was enthusiastically received.... When Young said, **“I don’t feel responsible for the fact that it [*The Shack*] is tampering with people’s paradigms” or how people think about God, the crowd responded with clapping, cheers, and laughter.**

BIBLE-BELIEVING CHRISTIANITY HURTFUL: In *The Shack*, Young presents traditional Bible-believing Christianity as hypocritical and hurtful. The book’s main character grew up under “rigorous rules,” and his father, who was an elder in the church, was “a closet drinker” and treated his family with cruelty when drunk (p. 7). **[In an interview with the 700 Club in February 2009, Young described a “huge personal failure”** that occurred in his life at age 38. He says, “My life crashed and burned, and I had to go back and deal with some stuff from being a child on the mission field along with other stuff in my life.” He speaks of “secrets” that he kept from his childhood and guilt that he carried... He talks continually of “pain,” “damage,” healing childhood memories, and such.] **Hypocrisy is very injurious to the cause of Christ, but hypocrisy on the part of Christians** [Or professing Christians] **does not disprove the Bible.** Let God be true and every man a liar ([Romans 3:4](#))! ... In my youth I used the inconsistencies that I saw in Baptist churches to excuse my rejection of the church. *The chief problem, though, was not the hypocrisy of others but my own rebellion and love for the world.* When I repented of my wickedness at age 23 and turned to Christ and received the Bible as God’s holy Word, I stopped blaming others and took responsibility for myself before Almighty God...

There is hypocrisy in churches and there are false gospels that are law-based rather than grace-based, and most churches today are corrupt,

just as the Bible warns they will be in the end times (e.g., [2 Timothy 4:3-4](#)), but the solution is not to reject the literal interpretation of Scripture and create a new God! God is amazingly compassionate and loving, and He has proven that on the cross, but God is also holy and just and requires obedience and hates and punishes sin, and that side of God cannot be ignored without creating a false God.

The flesh wearies greatly of the holiness of God! I can testify to that. From time to time in my Christian life I have gotten discouraged at God. It is not a simple thing to reconcile God's love and grace with His awful holiness and justice. **On one hand, the New Testament tells us** that the believer is forgiven, redeemed, justified, accepted in the beloved, blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ, holy and without blame before God, and seated in the heavenlies (Ephesians 1-3).

On the other hand, the same New Testament tells us that the believer must be exceedingly careful about how he lives before God. We are to "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" ([2 Corinthians 7:1](#)), which is the highest conceivable standard. The believer who does not pursue this is in danger of being judged (e.g., [1 Cor. 3:13-17](#); [9:26-27](#); [11:27-32](#); [Hebrews 13:4](#); 2 John 8-11; [Revelation 2:4-5](#), [16](#), [22-23](#); [3:15-16](#)). There is even a sin unto death ([1 John 5:16-17](#); [Acts 5:1-11](#); [1 Corinthians 11:30](#)). Thus, there must be many warnings in the Christian life ([Acts 20:31](#); [Colossians 1:28](#); [2 Timothy 4:2](#); [Titus 1:13](#); [2:15](#)).

These things seem to be contradictory to the fallen flesh and to the natural man, but they are two sides of the same thrice holy God, and to reject either one is to reject the living God for an idol.

REDEFINING GOD: Fundamentally, *The Shack* is about redefining God. Young has said that the book is for those with **"a longing that God is as kind and loving as we wish he was"** (interview with Sherman Hu, Dec. 4, 2007). What he is referring to is the desire on the part of the natural man for a God who loves "unconditionally" and does not require repentance, does not require obedience, does not judge sin, and does not make men feel guilty for what they do. In that same interview, Young stated that a woman wrote to him and said that her 22-year-old daughter came to her after

reading the book and asked, **“IS IT ALL RIGHT IF I DIVORCE THE OLD GOD AND MARRY THE NEW ONE?”** Young therefore admits that the God of *The Shack* is different from the traditional God of Bible-believing Christianity. He says that the God who “watches from a distance and judges sin” is “a Christianized version of Zeus.” This reminds me of the modernist G. Bromley Oxnam, who called the God of the Old Testament “a dirty bully” in his 1944 book “Preaching in a Revolutionary Age.”

Young depicts the triune God as a young Asian woman named **“Sarayu”** * (**supposedly the Holy Spirit**), an oriental carpenter who loves to have a good time (**supposedly Jesus**), and an older black woman named **“Elousia”** (**supposedly God the Father**). God the Father is also depicted as a guy with a ponytail and a goatee. (* The name “Sarayu” is from the Hindu scriptures and represents a mythical river in India on the shores of which the Hindu god Rama was born.)

Young’s god is the god of the emerging church. He is cool, loves rock & roll, is non-judgmental, does not exercise wrath toward sin, does not send unbelievers to an eternal fiery hell, does not require repentance and the new birth, puts no obligations on people, doesn’t like traditional Bible churches, does not accept the Bible as the infallible Word of God, and does not mind if the early chapters of the Bible are interpreted as “myth.” **Note the following quotes from “The Shack” as we contrast The Shack God with the God of Scripture:**

THE SHACK GOD - “Don’t go because you feel obligated. That won’t get you any points around here. Go because it’s what you want to do” (p. 89).

CONTRAST THE BIBLE’S GOD - “Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful” ([1 Corinthians 4:2](#)). [AND when one is BORN OF GOD, there is now a new INDWELLING compelling, to please and obey!]

THE SHACK GOD - “I don’t need to punish people for sin. Sin is its own punishment, devouring you from the inside. It’s not my purpose to punish it...” (p. 120).

CONTRAST THE BIBLE’S GOD - “And I will punish the world for their evil,

and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible” ([Isaiah 13:11](#)).

THE SHACK GOD - “There are lots of people who think it [Eden] was only a myth. Well, their mistake isn’t fatal. Rumors of glory are often hidden inside of what many consider myths and tales” (p. 134). **CONTRAST THE BIBLE’S GOD** - “For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty” ([2 Peter 1:16](#)). [JESUS DID NOT consider Genesis 1-11 to be myth: Matthew 19:4=5]

THE SHACK GOD - “[Your heart] is wild and beautiful and perfectly in process” (p. 138). **CONTRAST THE BIBLE’S GOD** - “For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man” ([Mark 7:21-23](#)).

THE SHACK GOD - “To force my will on you is exactly what love does not do. ... True love never forces” (pp. 145, 190). **CONTRAST THE BIBLE’S GOD** - [GOD DOES ALL of His GOOD PLEASURE! (Eph. 1:5-11) and in the process the redeemed Child of God is given INDWELLING MOTIVATION, THE HOLY SPIRIT, so that we are compelled by love to love and please God; moreover: “For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth” ([Hebrews 12:6](#)). “Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth” ([Revelation 2:16](#)).

THE SHACK GOD - “Our final destiny is not the picture of Heaven that you have stuck in your head-- you know, the image of pearly gates and streets of gold” (p. 177). **CONTRAST THE BIBLE’S GOD** - “And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass” ([Revelation 21:21](#); [Revelation 21:1-27](#); [22:1-5](#)).

THE SHACK GOD - “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 no desire to make them Christian” (p. 182).

CONTRAST THE BIBLE’S GOD - “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” ([Acts 4:12](#)). “Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian. And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds” ([Acts 26:28-29](#)).

THE SHACK GOD - “Through his death and resurrection, I am now fully reconciled to the world ... The whole world. ... In Jesus, **I have forgiven all humans** for their sins against me ... When Jesus forgave those who nailed him to the cross they were no longer in his debt, nor mine” (pp. 192, 225).

CONTRAST THE BIBLE’S GOD - “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” ([John 3:36](#)). “And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead” ([Acts 17:30-31](#)). “He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life” ([1 John 5:12](#)). “And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire” ([Revelation 20:15](#)).

THE SHACK GOD - “The Bible doesn’t teach you to follow rules. ... Enforcing rules, especially in its more subtle expressions like responsibility and expectation, is a vain attempt to create certainty out of uncertainty. ... That is why you won’t find the word responsibility in the Scriptures. ... because I have no expectations, you never disappoint me” (pp. 197, 203, 206). **CONTRAST THE BIBLE’S GOD** - “Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more. For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus” ([1 Thessalonians 4:1-2](#)). **(In Ephesians 4-6 alone there are more than 80 specific rules and obligations that believers are exhorted to keep.)**

THE SHACK GOD - “I don’t do humiliation, or guilt, or condemnation” (p. 223).

CONTRAST THE BIBLE'S GOD - "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil" ([John 3:19](#)). "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God" ([Romans 3:19](#)). "Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord" ([1 Corinthians 11:27](#)). "My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation" ([James 3:1](#)). "And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth" ([Revelation 11:18](#)).

THE SHACK'S GOD IS EMERGENT AND NEW AGE: Not only is *The Shack* god suspiciously similar to the one described in the books of the more liberal branch of the emerging church (e.g., Rob Bell, Donald Miller, Brian McLaren), it also has a strong kinship to the New Age god promoted by John Lennon and Oprah Winfrey. Lennon's extremely popular song "IMAGINE" (1971) proclaims: "Imagine there's no heaven ... No hell below us, above us only sky ... no religion too/ You may say I'm a dreamer, but I'm not the only one/ I hope someday you'll join us, and the world will live as one."

William Young imagines the same thing in "The Shack." If there is a God, he is non-judgmental. There is no hell. God just wants people to do their own thing and be happy. **Oprah preaches the same gospel to millions.** Man is not a sinner; God is not a judge; all is well with the universe; and I just need to surrender to the *flow*. Her message is the celebration of self. She grew up in a traditional Baptist church, but she has reinterpreted the Bible and moved beyond its restrictions. She says, "As I study the New Age movement, it all seems to say exactly what the Bible has said for years, but many of us were brought up with a restricted, limited understanding of what the Bible said" ("The Gospel according to Oprah," *Vantage Point*, July 1998). **Many of the statements in The Shack are out and out New Age philosophy.**

As Gary Gilley observes: "The very essence of God is challenged when Young, quoting from Unitarian-Universalist, Buckminster Fuller, declares God

to be a verb not a noun (pp. 194, 204). In a related statement, Young has Jesus say of the Holy Spirit, 'She is Creativity; she is Action; she is Breathing of Life' (p. 110). Yet the Bible presents God as a person (noun) not an action (verb). When this truth is denied we are moving from the biblical understanding of a personal God to an Eastern understanding of God in everything. Thus, we are not surprised when Mack asks the Holy Spirit if he will see her again he is told, 'Of course, you might see me in a piece of art, or music, or silence, or through people, or in creation, or in your joy and sorrow' (p. 198). This is not biblical teaching. This idea seems repeated in a line from a song Missy creates, 'Come kiss me wind and take my breath till you and I are one' (p. 233). At what point do we become one with creation? Again, this is an Eastern concept, not a biblical one.

"Young reinforces his Eastern leanings with a statement right out of New Age (New Spirituality) teachings: Papa tells Mack, 'Just say it out loud. There is power in what my children declare'"(p. 227). Rhonda Byrne would echo this idea in her book, *The Secret*, but you will not find it in the Bible.

"Further, we are told Jesus 'as a human being, had no power within himself to heal anyone' (p. 100). So how did he do so? By trusting in the Holy Spirit. Jesus, the Spirit says, 'is just the first to do it to the uttermost--the first to absolutely trust my life within him...' (p. 100). There is enough truth here to be confusing but not accurate. Jesus, never ceasing to be fully God, had all Divine power dwelling within Him. That He chose to limit His use of that power and rely on the Holy Spirit while on earth in no way diminishes His essence. While Jesus is our example He is not a guru blazing a trail in which in this life we too can be like God. This idea smacks of New Age teaching, not Scripture. Jesus even tells Mack that 'God, who is the ground of all being, dwells in, around, and through all things--ultimately emerging as the real' (p. 112). This is pure New Age spirituality" (Gilley, "The Shack - A Book Review").

DENYING THE INFALLIBILITY OF THE BIBLE: Another foundational problem with *The Shack* is its denial of the Bible as the absolute and sole authority. **Note the following quote:** "In seminary he [the book's main figure, Mack] had been taught that God had completely stopped any overt communication with moderns, preferring to have them only listen to and follow sacred Scripture, properly interpreted, of course. God's voice had

been reduced to paper, and even that paper had to be moderated and deciphered by the proper authorities and intellects. ... **Nobody wanted God in a box, just in a book.** Especially an expensive one bound in leather with gilt edges, or was that guilt edges?" (pp. 65, 66).

RESPONSE: To believe that the Bible is the infallible Word of God and the sole authority for faith and practice is not to "put God in a box." It is to honor God by receiving the Scripture for what it claims to be and what it has proven itself to be. If a father goes on a journey and leaves behind a written statement of his will for the family during his absence, the family that truly honors the father submits to that written record. **To reject the Bible as the infallible Word of God is to launch out upon the stormy waters of subjective mysticism. It allows man to be his own authority and to live as he pleases,** which is an objective of both the New Age movement and the emerging church.

REDEFINING DOCTRINE: It is typical for false teachers to redefine Bible doctrine in order to hide their heresies from the gullible (**Romans 16:17-18**). **They use Bible terms but interpret them with a heretical dictionary.** That William Paul Young is adapt at this practice was evident in his interview with *Christianity Today* in the context of his new book *Cross Roads* (FaithWords, 2012). When asked, "What does Jesus accomplish on the Cross and in the Resurrection?" **Young replied:** "For me, salvation is fully accomplished in the work of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. **It was God in the hands of angry sinners**—that's the phrase that I would use. **I'm not a penal substitutionary guy.** But I am a substitutionary guy. But I don't see the Father pouring out his wrath on the Son. **I see the human race pouring out their wrath on the Son.** So I see the only hope for the entire cosmos is what the Son chooses to accept, crawling upon the instrument of our greatest wrath. He met us at the deepest, darkest place" ("The Love Shack," *Christianity Today*, March 4, 2013).

RESPONSE: In this mash of mumbo-jumbo, Young uses the term "substitutionary atonement" but gives it a meaning different from the one described in the Bible: "But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed" ([Isa. 53:5](#)) "...AND THE LORD laid on Him the iniquity of us

all!"

(Isaiah

53:6)

When asked, "But the Bible is replete with language of divine wrath, not just the Old Testament but the New as well; what do you make of that?" Young smoothly replied: "I am not opposed to wrath at all, but what's changed for me is this: I grew up inside a paradigm that said wrath was punitive and retributive in nature. I now see it as restorative." Thus, Young uses the term "wrath" but he gives it an entirely different meaning from that which we find in Scripture. [Mr. Young you can 'see' what you please... at present... due to the present mercy of God upon you... HOWEVER, YOU DO NOT GET THE RIGHT TO 'DEFINE' GOD'S WRATH!] "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness" ([Rom. 1:18](#)). "For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience" ([Col. 3:6](#)). "For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" ([Rev. 6:17](#)). "And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" ([Rev. 20:15](#)).

CHANGED LIVES: The author of *The Shack* points to changed lives as evidence of the truth of the book and the grace of God in using it. At the National Pastors' Conference, William Young told Andy Crouch that the book was setting people free from "addictive bondages and doctrinal bondages." He said, "Even people who have been vocally against the book, people in their own family have been healed." Healed of what and healed in what way? **What is happening is that people who don't like Bible Christianity**, don't want to obey the Bible, don't want to feel guilty for their sin, and have rejected the "angry" God of Scripture, are responding enthusiastically to the man-made idol presented in *The Shack*. The following is typical of the postings at Young's MySpace site by readers of the book: **"Your book, *The Shack*,... has changed so many people's idea of what God is really like! It has set some of my friends free!"**

REALITY: Miracles do not prove that something is of God. There is one that the Bible calls "the god of this world" ([2 Corinthians 4:4](#)), and he can do miracles and answer prayers. I saw miracles and experienced answers to prayers when I was the member of a Hindu meditation society before I came to Christ. Miracles are not the proof of the truth; the Bible alone is the proof. The prophet Isaiah said, "To the law and to the testimony:

if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” ([Isaiah 8:20](#)).

CONCLUSION: *The Shack* is another building stone of the end-times Tower of Babel. God’s people must be exceedingly careful in these days of awful apostasy. **The Bible warns:** “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins” ([Hebrews 10:25-26](#)). The willful sin described in this verse points back to the sin referred to in verse 29. It is the sin of counting the blood of salvation an unholy thing. It is the rejection of personal salvation through the blood of Christ, which many in the emerging church are doing. **You can’t be saved if you reject the substitutionary atonement.**

In these days we need to stay in the Bible every day and be in sweet communion with Jesus Christ, confessing our sins and walking in the light. And we need to capture the heart of the next generation and educate them so they will not be taken captive by the wiles of the devil and the guile of false teachers. (*copyright 2013, Way of Life Literature*)

James Bell / www.southsidegallatin.org

SOUTHSIDE NEWS NOTES:

MONDAYS: Jail Ministry— First and Second Monday of each month at 7:30pm. Questions? Contact Mike Munday at 615-681-7533

TUESDAYS: Come and sing every Tuesday night at Gallatin Health Care nursing home. Meet at the front door at 5:30PM. Contact Bradley at 615-804-3054.

WEDNESDAYS: ☐ 6:30pm— Children Ministry/activities; ☐ 6:30pm— Youth Activities and Bible Study— (For both of these... enter via double doors by gym)

☐ 6:30pm— Wednesday CHURCH PRAYER SERVICE... Come in side entrance, iron steps... meet in Ladies Sunday School Room

LADIES BIBLE STUDY— Studies in the Gospel of Luke! ... NEXT MEETING: TUESDAY, *March 14, 2017* @ 11:00am; Cindy Bell teaching. [Front door open at 10:45 till 11:05am; or come in Iron Steps side entrance!]

MEN: EVERY SATURDAY MORNING @ 8am: Men's Fellowship/Bible Study! {*STUDYING the Epistle of First John*} AT THE back of Church building... Come in under the drive-thru awning, walk forward, coffee & biscuits WAITING!

Sunday Services For March: March 12, 19, 26



March 12— 9:30am - Sunday School // 10:45am - Worship Service

Noon Covered Dish meal / 1:00pm Afternoon Service

March 19— 9:30am - Sunday School // 10:45am - Worship Service INCLUDING The LORD'S SUPPER

NO Noon Covered Dish meal / NO 1:00pm Afternoon Service

EVENING HOME GROUPS

March 26— 9:30am - Sunday School // 10:45am - Worship Service

Noon Covered Dish meal /

5:30pm - 7:30pm
FELLOWSHIP/STUDY/EQUIPPING:

FAITHFUL

MEN'S

MONTHLY