



# Talking Theology at *The Shack*

Week I  
Course Introduction  
*The Great Sadness*  
Chapters 1-5

1



## ***Introduction to this course***

- ❖ The course structure
  - Course description
  - Course information
  - How we'll approach this class
- ❖ The book outline
- ❖ The weekly handouts – copies of the overheads
- ❖ The index cards
- ❖ The website – [www.thebibleacademy.com](http://www.thebibleacademy.com)

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## **Meeting Mack and His Family**

- ❖ Mack's history – Mackenzie Allen Phillips
  - Abusive father
  - When 13, Mack confided to a youth minister at his church. The minister told Mack's father, who tied him to a tree and beat him for two days.
  - Mack ran away and sent money home to Mom when he could
- ❖ Married Nannette Samuelson (Nan)
  - They've been married 33 years
    - R.N. -- works with terminal cancer patients
  - Five children
    - Jon – out of house
    - Tyler – recent college grad
    - Josh – attends community college (now)
    - Kate – attends community college (now)
    - Missy

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## **Mack, the man**

- ❖ Thinker and doer – not talker
  - 56 now
    - 7 years since Missy was taken
    - 3 years since the accident and hospitalization
  - Slightly overweight, balding, short, white guy
  - Smart
  - Likes to talk about God (now) with people – interested in why people believe what they do
  - Dislikes “religion”
- ❖ The Great Sadness – 7 years ago

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## ***The Note – Chapter 1***

- ❖ Ice storm
- ❖ Mack makes his way to mailbox
- ❖ Finds a note from “Papa” about meeting him the next weekend at “the shack”
  - Mailman did not deliver it
  - Note uses Mack’s full name: Mackenzie
  - “Papa” is Nan’s favorite name for God, expressing her intimate relationship with God

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## ***Labor Day & the Indian Princess (ch. 2)***

- ❖ Labor Day weekend camping trip
  - Mack with Josh, Kate, and Missy
  - Lake Wallowa in northeastern Oregon (“Little Switzerland”)
  - Mack reflects on just how much he really has in his family
- ❖ Tale of the Indian Princess
  - A chief marries his daughter to a young warrior chief.
  - Before the wedding feast can begin, a plague strikes the tribes, killing all the men.
    - The plague can only be stopped if a pure and innocent daughter of a chief would voluntarily throw herself off a cliff.
    - A dozen girls are suggested, but the chiefs decide it is too high a price.
  - But the engaged princess sneaks off and throws herself off the cliff, bringing salvation to the tribe.

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## **The Atonement**

- ❖ For the apostle Paul, Jesus' death on the cross is inexhaustibly significant. Here are three key implications.
- ❖ The cross reveals God's love and faithfulness.
- ❖ Jesus died as the obedient representative of Israel, and, hence, the world. He is a second Adam, who undoes Adam's tragic choice. Adam was the way of death. Jesus is the way of life.
  - Jesus is the one faithful Jew who does for the people of God what they were unable to do and be for themselves.
  - If you give up Jesus' genuine humanity, you give up his representation of humanity.
- ❖ Jesus' death is the event that reconciles us with God. In it we find our liberation from sin, the forgiveness of our sins, and our righteousness.

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## **The Turning Point (Ch. 3)**

- ❖ Mack and the kids meet two families, the Ducettes and the Madisons
- ❖ Over dinner, Mack reveals that he can't call God "Papa" because of his own father
- ❖ Mack goes to sleep that night with prayers of thanksgiving in his head
- ❖ The canoe accident
  - Josh and Kate are canoeing. Kate causes the canoe to flip. Mack dives in to save them.
  - Josh, though nearly drowning, is saved.

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## ***The Great Sadness (Ch. 4)***

- ❖ Missy is missing
- ❖ She has been taken by the “Ladykiller”
  - A serial killer known to the FBI
  - Mack worries, prays, and bargains with God
- ❖ They find the shack where she was taken.
  - They find her torn dress and a large blood stain.
- ❖ Could we imagine anything worse?
  - Probably not
  - Why does the author use such a powerful plot device?

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## ***The Shack (Ch. 5)***

- ❖ Mack decides to go to the shack.
- ❖ There, he is overwhelmed by his great sadness and his anger at God.
- ❖ In a moment of profound transformation, everything seems to be changed.
  - The shack is now a beautiful cabin on a pristine lake.
  - Mack meets the trinitarian God.
    - Papa, the large, black woman – also likes the name Elousia (Greek for “tenderness”)
    - Jesus – the middle-eastern man who likes to work with his hands
    - Sarayu – the Asian woman, who is the Spirit (the name is Indian for “sacred river”)
    - When Mack asks “Who is God?,” the response in unison: I AM.

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