



## Finding God in the Shack

*Randal Rauser*

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What would it be like to lose your youngest child to a serial killer? And then to have God invite you out for a conversation at the very shack where the terrible deed took place? And then imagine that the door to that shack of horrors opened . . . and before you knew it you had been swept up in the motherly embrace of a large African American woman? This most unlikely of stories, as told in William Young's *The Shack*, has become a runaway bestseller and it is easy to see why. The book brings us on a redemptive journey through the shacks' of deepest pain and suffering in our lives, guided by the triune God of Christian faith. But even as lives have been transformed through this book, other readers have sternly denounced it as a hodgepodge of serious theological error, even heresy. With one pastor urging his congregation to read it and another forbidding his congregation to, many Christians have simply been left confused. Aware both of the excitement and uncertainty generated by *The Shack*, theologian Randal Rauser takes the reader on a fascinating journey through the pages of the story. In successive chapters he explores many of the book's complex and controversial issues. Thus he explains why God the Father is revealed as an African American woman, he defends the book's theology of the Trinity against charges of heresy and he considers its provocative denial of a Trinitarian hierarchy. But at its heart *The Shack* is a response to evil and so Rauser spends the final three chapters considering the book's explanation for why God allows evil, how the atoning work of Christ offers new hope for a suffering world and ultimately how this hope extends to all of creation. Through these chapters Rauser offers an honest and illuminating discussion which opens up a new depth to the conversation while providing the reader with new opportunities for *Finding God in The Shack*. If you have ever had a conversation on *The Shack*, whether with an enthusiast or a critic, you will want to invite this skilled and accessible theologian into the conversation. Before you have read a dozen pages you will know why we need to keep company with theologians. They help us keep our conversations on God intelligent, informed and irenic. Eugene H. Peterson Professor Emeritus of Spiritual Theology, Regent College, Vancouver, B.C.

## Finding God in the Shack Details

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## From Reader Review Finding God in the Shack for online ebook

### Teresa says

You won't be able to put this book down!

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### Robin Royal says

Ok not as good as The Shack.

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### Célia | Estante de Livros says

É do conhecimento geral que, quando estamos perante grandes sucessos de vendas, surgem normalmente os livros “sucedâneos”, que pretendem analisar com mais detalhe o livro original e (porque não dizê-lo?) aproveitar-se um pouco do seu sucesso.

Este *Encontre Deus na Cabana* centra-se quase em exclusivo na análise da forma “inovadora” que William P. Young escolheu para representar o seu Deus e a Trindade. Compara-a e tenta integrá-la com as noções comuns e mais conservadoras, abordando temas como o modalismo (o facto de Deus, Jesus e o Espírito Santo serem apenas uma entidade), a omnipresença de Deus ou o seu poder evitar o mal.

Face à minha opinião sobre o livro original, não é de estranhar que tenha encarado esta leitura com algum ceticismo, movendo-me principalmente a curiosidade por conhecer (e tentar perceber) perspectivas de encarar o tema quase opostas à minha. A verdade é que o conteúdo do livro acaba por ser mais dirigido a crentes e a pessoas que tenham um conhecimento teológico relativamente aprofundado, apesar de a linguagem ser bastante acessível e de se notar a preocupação do autor em apresentar exemplos para aquilo que tenta explicar. Julgo que aborda alguns aspectos de discussão relevantes para os interessados, incluindo mesmo no final de cada capítulo várias questões para reflexão.

É um livro que recomendo a quem gostou de *A Cabana* e que pretenda aprofundar um pouco mais o que o autor pretendeu transmitir com esta “nova” abordagem ao tema da religião. Para os restantes, não me parece ser uma leitura essencial.

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### Simmonsmry says

Randal Rauser, an associate professor of historical theology at Taylor Seminary in Edmonton, Alberta, explores the religious controversy sparked by William Paul Young's 2007 novel, 'The Shack,' in his latest publication, 'Finding God in The Shack.'

As Rauser states in the Introduction, “theology can enrich our understanding and experience of God. And that includes the experience that many have cherished reading The Shack. The fact is that beneath the surface of this compelling story is an inner structure of equally compelling and beautiful theological themes.” Throughout the seven chapters of the book, Rauser explores these themes, with most chapters ending with a

series of discussion questions, entitled 'Digging Deeper.'

These questions, as well as Rauser's interesting and well-thought-out commentary, add to the conversations and responses that have been generated by the bestseller. In 'Finding God in The Shack,' Rauser discusses the theological issues raised in Young's novel with a knowledgeable voice. In taking the arguments back to the Bible and theology, he reminds Christians of where the answers can truly be found.

Probably one of the most debated aspects of 'The Shack' is its challenge to the traditional perception of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit through the personifications of 'Papa,' a large African-American woman; Jesus, an ordinary-looking Middle Eastern man and Sarayu, an ethereal Asian woman. Rauser states that these depictions are not necessarily heretical since they can be explained by the theological understanding that God shows himself in an easily-comprehended manner. "God accommodates to our limitations by describing himself within the range of human experience, often by speaking as if he were a human." This can be found in biblical descriptions of God as a king, a warrior, or a dragon. God cannot be limited to any of these depictions. He is all of this and more. Rauser goes on to state that the problem is not thinking of God in new and innovative ways that are relatable to our human experience; it occurs when we define God solely based on a limited metaphorical term. Our understanding of God should not be narrow; therefore, 'The Shack' is beneficial in that it presents God in a new, unorthodox manner while maintaining a scriptural basis. The nature of God is complex and has been debated for centuries. 'The Shack' has brought the discussion out of church halls and into the coffee shops. Rauser joins the dialogue on the Trinity, hierarchy within the Godhead, the existence of evil and the after life with intelligence and wit. Those who have read 'The Shack' and found themselves looking for answers will discover that 'Finding God in The Shack' is an informative exploration into these questions.

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### **Aunt Sheila says**

Great side book to read after the Shack. also makes you rethink things in a different light.

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### **Patrick says**

"Finding God in The Shack" is not as comprehensive as it could have been. Rauser says nothing about The Shack's weak Eucharistic scene, for example, most likely because differences in denominational outlook would color any commentary there. More frustrating for me is that even while defending a novel of which he is especially fond, Rauser tends to hedge his bets.

What Randal Rauser has given the rest of us is a study guide. I have stubborn, armor-plated, hairy, ill-tempered problems with some of it, and the book could really use an index that it does not have.

Nevertheless, "Finding God in the Shack" is worthwhile for three reasons: First, Rauser provides an accurate snapshot of the debate over William Young's novel in Christian circles. Second, where necessary, Rauser contrasts what scripture says with what The Shack says. Third, Rauser uses multiple sources, some of them surprising, to examine issues that continue to make The Shack a topic of fruitful discussion for many readers.

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### **Sami says**

Didn't really care for it.

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### **Janice says**

I read this book while leading a group in a discussion of The Shack by William Paul Young. There has been extensive criticism by many more conservative groups and ministers of The Shack, but I found it a very powerful book. In this book Rauser defends The Shack against the shouts of heresy, as well as many other complaints. Rauser examines the major issues of The Shack--the image of God; the mystery of the Trinity; hierarchy in the Trinity; the arguments against an all-powerful, all knowing God in the face of evil; atonement; salvation for all creation. That The Shack has brought on such discussion among so many lay people is incredible to me; I have not had such discussions since my college philosophy courses, and welcomed the clarity and thought provoking analysis offered by Randal Rauser. There are two books with this same title, and I found this one more readable, although both are helpful.

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### **Ed bangs, jr says**

read, on-line, that many conservatives, evangelicals didn't like the shack and why.  
In searching for a positive theological analysis, I came across this Canadian theolgan's work which really helped me to further understand the shack.

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### **Ewa Krzeminska says**

Let's check if it has something to add to the Original.

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### **Jennifer says**

One gentleman's encounter with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit helps him move on from a tragic loss of his daughter.

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### **Indigo says**

Well I admit this story pulls your Heart strings. But I Just couldn't let my imagination go with the "Mother-God" Twist. And No Matter how much I tried to be open minded, and tried to stretch my thoughts around what the Author was trying to convey, I found myself laughing at the story and the slang that his God was speaking in and the Cooking just was too much! Oh well, I did finish it though. Nuff said.

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## **Ed Laundry says**

There is a great deal of controversy about The Shack. This book examines each area of controversy with an even hand. In most the author agrees with the theology of The Shack. There are areas where he does not agree and some areas where he seems to be no way to determine if The Shack is on target or not. I enjoyed Searching almost as much as The Shack itself. If you have questions about some of the basic tenets of Christianity you should read this book, but only after reading The Shack.

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## **Bart Breen says**

A Good Primer for those with Concerns

I approached Rauser's book with a few concerns, but probably not the ones that a typical reader might bring. I've read The Shack several times critically and had come to the conclusion long ago that the concerns expressed by some as to the theology were both overstated and also coming most often from those who lean hyper-Calvinist.

What I was concerned most about was whether this book, in its effort to address the theology, was going to do it some violence by focusing on those elements of the book which are really secondary to what the book is about in the first place. The Shack has many elements of Theology within it, but it was never intended to be a systematic theology. Approaching it in that manner misses a lot. It can be a classic case of missing the forest for the trees.

That said, I was encouraged as I read this book, that the author recognized and addressed this concern from the very start. Further, by addressing the book in broad themes and by recognizing that those themes are better evaluated as a whole as opposed to nit-picking on isolated passages which are wrested from the context of the book by critics who are exercising their own biases.

I did not agree with every element of Rauser's critique but in the end I left feeling that it was fair and would give the reader who was perhaps concerned about The Shack or wrestling with the critiques of others the tools they needed to move beyond the nit-picking and understand where the author of The Shack is coming from.

In view of this, I recommend the book and give it 4 stars.

4 Stars

Bart Breen

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## **Luana Henry says**

Interesting, glad I read it.

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