

QUESTIONS FROM THE SHACK

SESSION FOUR: GOD, WHAT CAN I DO WITH MY PAIN?

KEY BIBLE PASSAGE

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners. --Isaiah 61:1

THOUGHTS FROM THE SHACK

It was essential for Mack to confront the pain. “The deep sadness” had enveloped him. In *the Shack*, God had been trying to reach Mack for a long time. When Mack asks God why you didn’t act sooner, Mack is assured it wasn’t because of any lack of effort:

“...let’s say that I know it will take you forty-seven situations and events before you actually hear me—that is, before you will hear clearly enough to agree with me and change. So when you don’t hear me the first time, I’m not frustrated or disappointed. I’m thrilled. Only forty-six more times to go.” -- Papa (Chapter 13)

The Shack offers us clues on the path to health and wholeness. Paying attention to our dreams can help bring what is emotionally buried to the light.

“Dreams are sometimes important, you know. They can be a way of openin’ up the window and lettin’ the bad air out.” --Chapter 8.

The message of the shack and the message of the scriptures is that we first can acknowledge our grief and then intentionally seek ways to receive healing.

Any loss needs to be grieved. Losses include death, relationships, roles, jobs, homes, financial, health and any kind of trauma.

People also during biblical times possessed a tear bottle where they would capture their

tears as a perpetual reminder of their pain.

“You have kept count of my tossings; put my tears in your bottle.
Are they not in your record?” --Psalm 56:8

Jesus openly expressed grief rather than keeping it bottled up inside.

“In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayer and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission.” --Hebrews 5:7

Jesus models for us a life of obedience and faithfulness to God’s will even when we would have rather chosen some other path. Grief and pain cannot and are not to be avoided but entrusted to the God we know in Jesus Christ who can sympathize with our human weakness and offers us mercy and grace in our times of need.

As we bring our grief to the Lord, he offers us:

“A garland instead of ashes,
The oil of gladness instead of mourning,
The mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.”
--Isaiah 61: 3

Paul Young has said repeatedly that the events of the shack didn’t happen but are true. What he means by that is that the transformation that happened to Mack happened to him!

In this modern day parable we call the shack, we hear the story of a man whose real life was turned from ashes to beauty. It is the story of what can happen in a person’s life that discovers the Lord who said, “I came to bind up the brokenhearted ... to comfort those who mourn ...”

“Oh child, don’t ever discount the wonder of your tears. They can be healing waters and a stream of joy. Sometimes they are the best words the heart can speak.” --Papa (Chapter 16)

QUESTIONS FROM THE SHACK

Papa says to Mack: “So when you don’t hear me the first time, I’m not frustrated or disappointed. I’m thrilled. Only forty-six more times to go.”

Do you think God has been trying to get through to you for a long time? Is there something you are just beginning to hear?

There are numerous dreams in The Shack (and in the Scriptures). Dreams range from clearing the mind of daily debris to dreams which “open up the windows and let the bad air out.” Have you ever sensed some of your dreams are divinely inspired to heal, provide guidance, etc.?

Do you feel we have devalued the significance of “grieving well” over significant loss? What are some helpful rituals (practices) that are useful in releasing the pain which accompanies loss?

William Paul Young, the author *The Shack*, wrote this modern day parable to express the transformative grace that God worked in his life. How is Young's personal story told in Bob's message instructive of the destructive nature of pain that remains buried?

What is the most important "take away" of Young's transformation for you?

Discuss the wisdom of papa's words to Mack: "O child, don't ever discount the wonder of your tears. They can be healing waters and a stream of joy."

QUESTIONS FROM THE SCRIPTURES

Read Hebrews 4:14 - 5:10

Jesus is our "high priest" (go between) us and God. Why is it important for you to know the one who prays for you experienced human weakness and temptation?

Jesus during the days of his earthly life prayed "with loud cries and tears." How does Jesus model for us the importance of bringing our pain to the same Heavenly Father?

If Jesus learned to practice obedience through the sufferings of his ministry and the cross, how can we also mature in choosing to take up our own cross and follow him?

Read Isaiah 61:1-3

As Jesus declared that these words were fulfilled in him (Luke 4:21), are you willing to take Jesus up on his offer to heal the broken places in your life?

Can you give a personal testimony as to the ways the Lord has transformed the ashes and

pain of your life to hope and praise?