

# Building Bridges With *The Shack*<sup>1</sup>

by Craig Smith

One of the most effective ways of sharing the Good News of Jesus begins with finding common ground and then proceeds to build a bridge from that common ground to the truth of the Gospel. This is an approach clearly modeled for us in the book of Acts.<sup>2</sup> The popularity of William Young's book *The Shack*, provides an easy way to do this.

If you have friends, family, neighbors or co-workers who have read *The Shack*, try these three simple steps and see how God uses your willingness to step out in faith.

1. Begin with a few simple, open-ended questions: *Did you like The Shack? What did you like about it?*

Now, of course if they answer that they didn't like *The Shack* at all, then you can probably skip the rest of this article and try to find some common ground with your friend elsewhere. But assuming that they did like it, and most non-believers seem to be responding positively, then this may be solid ground for bridge-building.

The important thing when you're asking these open-ended questions is to be genuinely interested in the answers. Don't just ask the questions in order to move on to the next steps. Really listen. A lot of what your friend says here may be important later on, so pay attention. Assuming that you want to find a way to share the good news of Jesus Christ with this person because you genuinely care about them, let that care be obvious. One of the things that has often turned non-believers off about Christians sharing with them is that they often perceive (probably accurately) that the Christians are more interested in the end result than they are in the person they're sharing with. Of course, genuinely caring about the person will necessarily include caring about their eternal destiny but we don't want to give anyone the mistaken impression that we're more interested in just "getting them saved" than we are in caring for them as individuals.

2. Now, look for an appropriate opportunity to extend your bridge by moving out over deeper waters. When it's natural, say something like this: *"The Shack paints an interesting picture of God. What parts of the depiction of God did you like and why?"* Again, listen carefully. You might also ask, *"What parts of the depiction of God did you not like? Why not?"*

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<sup>1</sup> William P. Young, *The Shack: Where Tragedy Confronts Eternity* (Los Angeles: Windblown Media, 2007).

<sup>2</sup> An excellent example is found in Acts 17:16-31.

3. When it's appropriate, say something like this: *"You know, sometimes 'religion' can make God seem distant and unapproachable. I think one of the things that people like about The Shack is that it paints a picture of God that makes Him seem approachable. Actually, it says that God is not just approachable...He's the one taking the initiative to get involved with us. He wants to be intimately involved in our lives. Personally, I love that picture of God, because that's exactly how God describes Himself. Can I show you how I know that?"* Assuming that they're willing, and they probably are at this point, now you can open up the Bible and show them just how much God loves them and longs to be involved in their lives. You might consider using the following verses as a starting point for your re-telling of the Good News: John 3:16-17, Rev. 3:20, Mat. 18:12-14

Of course, any telling of the Good News needs to include the Bad News as well: that we have all turned away from God and that the consequence of our sin is eternal separation from God (Rom. 6:23). But the great thing about using *The Shack* as an anchor for your bridge to the Gospel is that most people, after reading it, will already be open to the idea that even so-called "good" people are often separated from God without even realizing it.