

The Shack
Week 1: Introduction
Feb. 15-21



Icebreaker: How far have you read? What do you think so far? Have you ever received a letter that was painful?

Our three main characters so far are Willie, Mack and Nan:

Willie—Devout friend who is helping his friend through some personal struggles

Mack—Knows religion, but keeps his guard up so that he's not personal with God

Nan—Loving wife who is the mortar of their family; has a deep relationship with God

Who can you most identify with and why?

Mack simply goes through the motions at church. He has many surface Christian relationships, primarily from the scars of his earlier years. Has there been a time when you've withdrawn from relationships with your friends/church family? Why? Did that help you cope? How did you reconnect with people again? Did you have to find/make new friends?

We often like to do as much as humanly possible, and then ask for God's help when we get completely overwhelmed. In what ways do you put God in a box?

Read Isaiah 55:8-9. Aren't you glad that His ways are higher than man's?

We learn that Mack has lost a loved one and *The Great Sadness* now drains the color out of every aspect his life. It is like a lead-filled coat that he wears constantly. Most people internalize their own burdens, and this causes stress and damages their relationships.

Read Romans 6:1-11. Are you holding onto a burden that is currently weighing you down?

Read Psalm 103:8-13. Take comfort that God wants to remove your sin and that He loves you. No matter how far you are from God, just turn...and God is there.

Read Matthew 11:28-30. Jesus wants to take your burdens. His yoke is light. Will you trust that Jesus wants to remove your guilt and allow you to walk freely?

Read Galatians 6:2. As the hands and feet of Christ, we are to carry each other's burdens. Do you need someone's help with a heavy burden? How can you help someone in need?

PRAYER: Pray as a group that God will open your hearts to the burdens that are all around Raleigh. Will you be available for God to use? Who is God laying on your heart right now to reach out to and love?