

The Shack  
Week 5: Grace and  
Forgiveness  
Mar. 15-21



**ICEBREAKER:** Our world operates on a performance system. If you perform, you get rewarded with what you've earned. If you don't perform or don't prepare, do you also get what's coming to you? Do you deserve it?? In 2009, is that how we are measuring people?

1. Many of the books of the New Testament begin and end wishing grace and peace on one another. How do you define grace? Can you define it without using your Bible? If you can't define it, can you share a time where you experienced/ricieved grace?
2. On pg 205 of *The Shack*, a conversation occurs between Sarayu and Mack. Young writes, "...if you and I are friends, there is an expectancy that exists within our relationship.....But what if I changed the expectancy into expectation—spoken or unspoken?" How does this redefining affect relationships? Can you remember a relationship that transformed in this way? How did it end?
3. Grace=Relationship, just as Rule-following=Legalism. Why do you think this paradigm changed between the Old and New Testament? Based on what we have recently learned about the Trinity, why is grace the better deal for us?
4. Read **1 Timothy 1:13-16**. How much grace has God given to you? Why did he give you grace?
5. Read **1 John 1:9** and **Hebrews 8:12**. What do these passages tell you about forgiveness and the grace of God? Why is it important to forgive? And why is God's grace important to your faith-walk with Him? Read **Ephesians 1:7** and **Mark 11:25**. Could you worship a God that did not forgive or was not a giver of grace?
6. Is it easier to forgive someone who is close to you or someone you don't know? In 1994, South Africa, a country that saw incredible suffering and abuse between blacks and whites ended years of apartheid. With the end of apartheid came the Truth and Reconciliation Commission as a means to help with the physical, emotional and spiritual abuse felt by all South Africans. Bishop Desmond Tutu wrote,

***"If you asked even the most sober students of South African affairs what they thought was going to happen to South Africa a few years ago, almost universally they predicted that the most ghastly catastrophe would befall us; that as sure as anything, we would be devastated by a comprehensive bloodbath.***

***It did not happen. Instead, the world watched with amazement, indeed awe, at the long lines of South Africans of all races, snaking their way to their polling booths on April 27, 1994. And they thrilled as they witnessed Nelson Mandela being inaugurated as the first democratically***

*elected president of South Africa on May 10, 1994. Nearly everyone described what they were witnessing -- a virtually bloodless, reasonably peaceful transition from injustice and oppression to freedom and democracy -- as a miracle.*

*When the disaster did not overtake us, there were those who said, "Wait until a black-led government takes over. Then these blacks who have suffered so grievously in the past will engage in the most fearful orgy of revenge and retribution against the whites."*

*Well, that prediction too was not fulfilled. Instead the world saw something quite unprecedented. They saw the process of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, when perpetrators of some of the most gruesome atrocities were given amnesty in exchange for a full disclosure of the facts of the offence. Instead of revenge and retribution, this new nation chose to tread the difficult path of confession, forgiveness, and reconciliation.*

*We South Africans have not done too badly...And we have been richly blessed to have had at such a critical time in our history a Nelson Mandela. He was imprisoned for 27 years; most expected that when he emerged, he would be riddled with a lust for retribution. But the world has been amazed; instead of spewing calls for revenge, he urged his own people to work for reconciliation -- and invited his former jailer to attend his presidential inauguration as a VIP guest.*

*Wonderfully, Mr. Mandela has not been the only person committed to forgiveness and reconciliation. Less well-known people (in my theology no one is "ordinary," for each one of us is created in the image of God) are the real heroes and heroines of our struggle."*  
[http://www.sol.com.au/kor/19\\_03.htm](http://www.sol.com.au/kor/19_03.htm)

Why do you think the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was successful? Do you agree with Bishop Tutu that no one is 'ordinary' but that we are all created in the image of God? If we are created in God's image, does that mean that we too have the capacity to forgive as He does and extend grace to those that have hurt us? Read Psalm 32:5 and discuss.

7. Read **Col. 3:12-14**. Which of the clothing described do you need to pull out of the 'spring clothing' box? What were the most difficult trespasses have you faced in your life? Have you been able to forgive the person(s) that offended you? What did it feel like once you let go and forgive the person(s) that hurt you? What advice would you give someone who was struggling with forgiveness?