

The Theology Isn't Perfect, but 'The Shack' Is an Amazing Story of Forgiveness

The Shack was a mega-bestselling book by a first-time author, and now it's a major motion picture. The film scored third-highest at the box office when it opened last weekend, earning \$16.2 million.

I don't go to many movies, unless it's a major one like this. But several months ago, I attended a pre-screening. I understand that the theology of *The Shack* had been questioned—there were even books written attacking it. The main character is grappling with the murder of his little girl by a pedophile and meets God in the shack where she was apparently murdered. God is portrayed as a middle-aged black woman named Papa, while Jesus is played by a Middle Eastern man with a beard and the Holy Spirit by an Asian woman in almost a new age way.

I knew all of this about the book before I read it, and I was determined not to like it. The author, however, tells the story in a way that makes you focus more on the characteristics of God and the questions the character was forced to answer about forgiveness, as well as why bad things happen to good people. While I was not able to justify the theology, I gave the author some latitude on the storytelling techniques. In comparison, while everyone seems to love *The Chronicles of Narnia* series, some of its theology is a bit dicey as well. Jesus may be the Lion of Judah, but He is not literally Aslan as portrayed in those books.

The day *The Shack* debuted, I interviewed Dr. Ted Baehr, the founder and publisher of MOVIEGUIDE®, which has almost single-handedly persuaded Hollywood to produce at least some more

wholesome movies and to weave Christian themes or characters into its productions. MOVIEGUIDE® has enjoyed remarkable success, which you can read about [here](#). To sign up for MOVIEGUIDE's® newsletter, please [click here](#).

Ted is a longtime friend. We've written about him and MOVIEGUIDE® many times, including a cover story years ago. I have the privilege of serving on his advisory board of reference.

I invite you to listen to my podcast with him. From a professional viewpoint, Ted has some concerns with the movie. He believes there are points where the characters should have emoted but didn't. He believes Christians will find it a story of love and forgiveness (as I did) but that unbelievers may misunderstand some things it shows about Christianity, which he calls theodicy. Indeed, the secular Rotten Tomatoes site gave *The Shack* a horrible rating yet also showed that 87 percent of the audience liked it.

In the podcast, I talk about my reaction to the movie. I missed some of the subtleties Ted mentioned. Yet, I was touched by the way the movie encouraged the viewer to deal with issues of forgiveness and also the character of God.

A few days ago, we published a review by Pastor Jonathan Wiggins of in Loveland, Colorado, titled "Get Your Theology From the Bible and Enjoy the Shack." His review is worth reading.

I agree with him. I enjoyed the movie and was deeply moved. I urge you to support *The Shack* by seeing it. I believe it will be 135 minutes well-spent. {eo}