



Talking Theology at *The Shack*

Week 7
Chapters 14-15

1



The Presence of the Spirit (begin Ch. 14)

❖ Mack, at peace, takes the canoe out on the lake and is surprised by Sarayu, who appears to him in the boat. He wants to know where she's been and her answer is, "I am always with you."

➤ ***Just because we feel distant from God does not mean that we actually are. God, in the person of the Holy Spirit, is with us at all times and in all things. If we really believed this and acted like we did, how would we change our living?***

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Learning to hear God's voice

- ❖ Sarayu and Mack then talk about learning to hear God's voice.
 - We make mistakes but we will get better as we grow in our relationship with God.

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Emotions

- ❖ Mack admits he is afraid of emotions, asking, “Did you create all of them or only the good ones?” Sarayu says that emotions are the color of the souls: *paradigms (what we believe) power perception and perceptions power emotions*. If your perceptions are false then the emotional response will be too. Check your paradigms and your perceptions.
 - ***Do you agree with this? Do you think this highlights the need to strive to hold truthful paradigms – i.e., belief pyramids that correspond to reality? What if you believe that there is no such thing as “truth”?***

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Rules and right answers

- ❖ But what about Scripture and its “rules,” Mack asks? Sarayu says the Bible isn’t about rules, it is a “picture of Jesus.” Rules are just less messy , easier, than relationships.
 - ***True . . . true . . . true. So often Christians will make the mistake of trying to turn the Bible into a book of rules or a book of good behavior. But it is, instead, a book of stories. When properly understood, the Law is simply what love would do.***
- ❖ Sarayu goes on – it isn’t about having the “right answers,” but coming to embrace and trust the *living answer*.
 - ***Also true . . . we want to have “right answers” and “true paradigms” but unless we are living with and in the living answer, we are nowhere.***

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Looking for God

- ❖ Mack asks if he’ll see Sarayu again. She tells him that she will speak in lots of places and people. Her ability to communicate is limitless.
 - ***In Philippians 4, Paul writes: “Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.”***

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God's Self-sufficiency & "mind-reading"

- ❖ Mack gets back to the shack and heads for the kitchen to eat with the Three. Why do they eat? To be with Mack, not because they need to eat – they don't need anything. They simply like to cook and it tastes good!
 - **God is self-sufficient. Desiring a loving relationship with us is not the same as needing it.**
- ❖ Mack's mind races and then he realizes they know what he has been thinking.
 - **From Romans 8 (The Message): "Meanwhile, the moment we get tired in the waiting, God's Spirit is right alongside helping us along. If we don't know how or what to pray, it doesn't matter. He does our praying in and for us, making prayer out of our wordless sighs, our aching groans."**

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The Fully Fulfilled God

- ❖ "Why do you love us humans," Mack asks? Do they (the Trinity) feel fulfilled, as Mack does by his relationship with this children.
 - No, Papa says. God doesn't need or seek fulfillment. Mack isn't to think that God is human in God's nature, though God is truly human in Jesus. Mack admits the whole thing turns his mind to mush! (**How true for us all.**)
 - **The author again wrestles with describing the Trinity and Jesus' two natures. I think the big point he is making here again is that God is not simply the best version of our selves.**

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But what about the Law?

- ❖ The conversation turns back to the Law. When viewed as a bunch of rules to obey, it is insufficient, it can't get the job done. God asks, "How many do you think lived righteously enough to enter into our good graces?" Mack says, "Not many" . . . but the answer is one: Jesus.
- ❖ Why the Law then? To reveal our filth, our sin. Jesus fulfilled the law (***kept the covenant***) for us. The law becomes a promise to us fulfilled by God.

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Our Representative Messiah

- ❖ ***Jesus is our representative Messiah, his faithfulness to the covenant becomes our own and in this lies our salvation. God's promise to us is that one day, we too will love God and neighbor every day and in every way.***
- ❖ ***This entire section on the Law is good (p. 203). We hold onto the rules because we think they bring us power and control. We are to live in Christ – a life of loving God and neighbor. Grasping this helps us to understand Jesus when he said, "I have come not to abolish the law [what love does], but to fulfill it."***

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God is a verb

- ❖ God is a verb, Sarayu says. God's name, I AM, is based on a verb of being. God is alive, dynamic, ever active.
 - ***It is God who turns the universe from a bunch of dead mass into a place that sustains and creates life. It is God who gives the cosmos its "being." The question for those who deny the existence of a creator is this: "How did the primeval soup take life?"***

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Response and expectancy

- ❖ Sarayu goes on: it isn't about responsibility and expectation, but response and expectancy.
 - Sarayu uses the example of good friends who have an expectancy of the joy that will come from being together. But if the "expecting" turns into expectations, the relationship becomes dead and lifeless.
 - ***I'm not sure I fully grasp the author's point here. But ask yourself this, have you ever found that your relationship with someone was harmed by expectations they laid on you? As Sarayu puts it, expectations turn the living friendship into rules and requirements.***

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Responsibilities and expectations

- ❖ Sarayu says: “Responsibilities and expectations are the basis of guilt, shame, and judgment.”
 - ***What do you think? Can you ever think of a time when you felt like someone, even someone you love, was trying to get you to meet their expectations by using guilt?***
 - ***I think the author is trying paint a portrait here of what a life lived fully and completely with God would be like. I imagine it is like living with God and others as Jesus did. Do you think Jesus ever put expectations on someone? Or responsibilities?***

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The pyramid v. the mobile

- ❖ Sarayu says that God doesn't want to be at the top of our priorities pyramid, for then God is still only a part. Rather, if we conceive of our lives as a swirling mobile, then God wants to be at the center.
 - ***What do you make of this? What do you think the author means by contrasting a pyramid with a mobile?***
- ❖ Finally, Sarayu tells Mack that she is going to give him a gift, to help him see just a bit of what God sees.
 - ***This ought to be good!***

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A Festival of Friends (begin Chapter 15)

- ❖ With this chapter, we begin to leave the “theology topics” behind. When Mack opens his eyes to see a bit as God sees, he is overwhelmed by a blinding, thrilling, swirling, bewildering cacophony of color and light. Children, adults, angels, animal, he sees them all, as well as rainbows of color that connect them. But there is one bit that is “wrong.” One man seems out of harmony – it is Mack’s father, whom Mack races to embrace, pouring out his sorrow and his love. The scene then centers on Jesus.

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The Power of Reconciliation

- ❖ ***How did this scene make you feel? How would you describe it so someone? What about the point made that no two relationships are exactly alike because we are all unique. Do you agree?***
- ❖ ***To me, this is an imaginative depiction of reconciliation. If we remember that the ultimate goal of God’s entire rescue project is about reconciling us to him, then perhaps this scene elevates properly the need for and power of reconciliation.***

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