

The Shack - I Want to Grow Old with People Like Mack & Nan & Willie?

1. WELCOME (30 minutes)

- Start on time; it'll be easier to end on time (something professionals and moms with kids in school will appreciate about your leadership).
- You go first. Who have you been friends with longest? Why has the relationship lasted so long?
- Conclude by asking someone to pray for the group. Pray for God's blessing on your evening together.

2. WORD (45 minutes)

Read (THE FINAL PAGES) of *The Shack*. Take a moment and imagine the end of your life many years from now. Who do you want around the bed as you die? What do you hope they say about you?

Read 1 John 4.7-12. **What part of Ray's message has stuck with you?**

The early church Fathers described the relationship between God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit as a dance . . . a dance in which three persons join together so tightly, move with such unity, dance with such grace that they can actually be said to be in each other—the Father in the Son, the Son in the Father, and the Spirit in both. The church fathers said that all of creation, all of our lives, originated in this eternal dance of self-giving love. Has that metaphor impacted the way you think about God? How?

Verses 7 & 8, John lets us know that "Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love." That's pretty clear. If you love, you are partnering with God. If you don't, you're not. So the question is: how are you doing in your partnership with God? On a scale of 1-10 how would your spouse say you love him/her? How would your children rate you? Your coworkers? Your neighbors? Your friends?

Friendship isn't all fun and laughs. Often we have to sacrifice to love the people around us - even those that we care about the most. John reminds us in verses 9 & 10 that even God had to sacrifice to be our friends. What would your closest friends say was hardest area for you to sacrifice for them (money, time, heart, vulnerability, confrontation etc.)?

What would it take for this home group to grow old together? What would change about the group? What would you personally have to do differently?

Evangelism is scary because it's hard to argue someone into believing that God exists. Everyone has opinions about faith, so its daunting to try to share how your opinion differs from theirs. But John wrote, "No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us." We can actually show people God through love! Do you have anyone close to you that would see God through your love? What would that love look like?

3. WORSHIP (20 minutes)

- CHOOSE SOME SONGS THAT ARE UPBEAT. Prepare two to three consecutive songs from one music CD. Before your group meets. Find songs that are familiar and easily singable. Make up song sheets with lyrics that are at least 11-12 points in size.

- Explain that weekly meetings will include worship, usually with recorded music. Worship helps us turn Godward in our focus. It renews our faith, softens our hearts, and refreshes our vision.
- Invite several people to begin worship by praising God for some of the good things he has done in their lives. When two or three people have prayed, start the music.
- Turn up your CD player, stereo . . . so loud that everyone can sing without hearing their own voice stand out.
- During worship, ask God to give you some prophetic insights into your group members. When worship concludes, share these prophetic words as blessings. Let the group know that in the weeks ahead, you hope that all of them will use the worship time to listen for encouraging, prophetic words they can with fellow group members. You can lead your group into prophetic, Spirit-filled worship!

4. WIND (25 minutes)

- Ask if there is anyone who is sick or in need of physical healing. If there is, take time to pray as a group for them. Use the 5-step Vineyard prayer model. Use this as a time to build one another up. Encourage people to open their eyes and watch for the Holy Spirit and to open their ears to see if Jesus will give them a word of knowledge for the person. This is our practice time!
- Make room for the gifts of the Spirit to flow—prophetic words, mercy, words of wisdom and counsel, exhortations to faith and obedience, serving, and so on. Invite the entire group to participate in ministry—with their eyes open. Model and explain the Vineyard healing prayer model.