

DREAM CHASERS

BECOMING RESILIENT
IN THE FACE OF HARDSHIP

UTA SCHMIDT



CONTENTS

Endorsements		v
Foreword		vii
Foreword to this Edition		ix
Introduction	What Stands Between You and Your Dream?	
	A New Perspective on Obstacles	xi
Chapter 1	Prisoners of Destiny	1
	A Training for Reigning <i>Nelson Mandela, Moses, Joseph</i>	
Chapter 2	Winning the Battle of the Mind	18
	Defeating the Giant of Toxic Thinking <i>Les Brown</i>	
Chapter 3	Camped at the Gates of Hell	35
	The Test of Perseverance <i>Rolland & Heidi Baker</i>	
Chapter 4	The X Factors	57
	The Test of Unreserved Surrender <i>Loren Cunningham</i>	

Chapter 5	Enduring Faith	79
	Facing Loss and Disappointment <i>Bill Johnson</i>	
Chapter 6	Against All Odds	97
	Breaking Through Fear and Rejection <i>Dr. Sandra Kennedy</i>	
Chapter 7	Faith Under Fire	119
	Torn between Agony and Ecstasy <i>Canon Andrew White, Vicar Emeritus of Baghdad</i>	
Chapter 8	Inside The Shack	144
	Dealing with the Wounds of the Soul <i>Wm Paul Young</i>	
Chapter 9	Wounded Healers	170
	Choosing Forgiveness and Reconciliation <i>Desmond Tutu, Archbishop Emeritus of Cape Town</i>	
Chapter 10	Greatness in the Making	197
	Understanding the Process of a Transformation	
	Happily Ever After?	211
	Acknowledgments	216
	References	218

ENDORSEMENTS

Every human being *IS* a story. *Dream Chasers* is an exploration of raw human experience; invitations to look through the eyes of another's story and back at our own. Such self-reflection is essential to transformation and there is no place safer than inside the holy ground of another person's story.

William Paul Young
Author of *The Shack*

Dream Chasers is a beautiful project that gets to the heart of the challenge of the Christian life: navigating through seasons of pain and contradiction by trusting God, who is always good. You can't help but be inspired as you read the stories of trials and victories of some of my personal heroes. I'm sure you will find hope and courage to follow through on your own journey as you pursue your destiny and fulfill your God-given dreams.

Bill Johnson
Bethel Church – Redding, CA
Author of *When Heaven Invades Earth* and *God is Good*

Dream Chasers is an encouraging book with testimonies of several of us, but all of you that are reading this book have a dream, and it started with a dream from the heart of God. As you chase the dream in your life and overcome the challenges and obstacles on your way, you will be fulfilled and you will see God working through you!

Loren Cunningham

Founder of *Youth With A Mission (YWAM)* and author of *Is it really You, God?*

Dream Chasers is a book that encourages the reader to pursue the fullness of his calling and destiny. This is a book about getting up when life knocks you down. It is about taking risks and seeing the glory of God's kingdom come in all its fullness. It is about how love changes everything. It is a book that must be read.

Canon Andrew White

Vicar Emeritus of Baghdad

Author of *Faith Under Fire* and *The Vicar of Baghdad*

8

INSIDE THE SHACK DEALING WITH THE WOUNDS OF THE SOUL

*Success is becoming a truly authentic person.
True success is the overflow of authenticity, or else
it's not success. Else it's just another façade.*

William Paul Young

It was a dreary, rainy afternoon in Portland, Oregon. Paul traveled down the highway in dense traffic on the way to his office. Dark clouds released a torrent of thick, heavy raindrops, which deluged his windshield. The wipers, working at top speed, could not keep up with the relentless downpour. The onslaught of water blurred the glass and his vision. The road became slippery, and he had to slow down.

He reflected that this was a perfect illustration of his life. No matter how hard he worked, no matter how much he tried to wipe away the residue of his past and get a grip on his life, a dark cloud of shame and sadness followed him, dousing him in a downpour that

overwhelmed him and blurred his vision. He felt weary, disillusioned, exhausted, and completely lost.

A few minutes earlier, as he was sitting with a friend at lunch, his phone rang. It was Kim, his wife. When her name appeared on his mobile phone and the familiar ring sounded, he did what he usually did: he pulled himself together and played the game he calls, “Let’s pretend everything is fine and under control.”

“What’s up?” he asked, clueless about the storm that was about to hit him.

“I am waiting for you in your office! And I KNOW!!!” an explosion of fury blasted through the phone. It made his head spin and his ears tingle. Click. She was gone.

Paul froze. He knew exactly what she *knew*. A rush of thoughts swirled through his mind, “How could she have found out? How am I going to explain...?” But there was no way to explain this, no excuse that could save him. He had already told too many lies, and this time, he had been caught. This was it – he was finished. “I have to leave,” he told his friend, hurried to his car and took off. He didn’t even know where he was going – he just needed to get away.

Now, as the rain doused his windshield and made it impossible to see, he decided to pull off the road. He turned off the wipers and sat frozen in his car, staring into the forlorn nothingness of a deluge of rain. “The best thing is just to kill myself. There is no way out of *this*...” he reasoned.

He picked up his phone and called *her*. “Let’s run!” she suggested. The thought had already crossed his mind, but he knew that it was what he’d always done. Run. And he was tired of it. “No. I can’t do this anymore,” Paul said in a numb voice. “I’ve been running all my life. I’m done running. I have to face this.” He hung up. Then he

realized that with the last five words he had just ruled out another of his options: to kill himself. That, after all, would be the ultimate way to run – and never to return.

Robotically, Paul started his car and pulled back onto the highway. Everything was still a blur. He didn't know how he made it there, but finally he found himself in front of his office. His heart was racing, his chest tight, and he felt the blood pulsing through his veins as he walked up to the door. Grabbing the knob, he hesitated. "Am I really going to do this? Killing myself is the easier way out." Once more he weighed his options. But he opened the door and walked into his office.

Kim had torn it apart. Papers and books were on the floor, drawers emptied and spread across the room. As she came toward him, he prepared for the fury that would assail him without mercy. "You hypocrite, you liar! How could you do this to me?" she ranted, pounding his chest with her fists. "How could you betray me with my best friend?!" she shouted. "I trusted you! What other secrets are you hiding from me?!"

She had no idea... But somehow, this time Paul knew that he would have to tell her EVERYTHING.

THE JUNGLE KID

It all started in the jungle of Irian Jaya – or even before that – with his parents. The young married couple, still in their early twenties, were sent out as missionaries by conservative evangelical denomination. They traveled to their mission field: an unreached, stone-age cannibalistic tribe in the highlands of West Papua, once Netherlands, New Guinea. With little training or preparation for the assignment

ahead, the Youngs ventured out with their ten-month-old son Paul and began their work in the middle of a hostile jungle environment.

From the beginning, the ministry was overwhelming, and Paul's parents were immediately consumed by work. Left to play outside, he grew up among the tribe, which became his family and practically raised him. Because the tribe was more friendly to the child than to the parents, Paul also grew up as a kind of go-between between them and the *white men*. In addition, his father was a very angry and harsh man, so Paul understood from an early age that “home” and “father” were not safe to be around.

Paul's parents belonged to a generation that didn't know they were carrying any emotional baggage, and if they had known, they wouldn't have known what to do with it. The teachings of their fundamental evangelical denomination, which encouraged a detachment from emotions, along with the sacrificing of everything on God's altar, reinforced a stoic and emotionless approach to life. In addition, Paul's father had come from a broken background and carried a lot of unresolved anger. Paul learned from his example to run and hide from his own fear and pain.

By the age of four, Paul was fluent in both the *Dani* dialect and English. With those skills, he was soon working as an assistant for a Wycliffe Bible translator who was studying the language in order to translate the New Testament. As such, he was a valuable “instrument” for the “work of God”—but he paid a high price for that.

DARK RITUALS

For young Paul, becoming a part of the tribe was a way to belong, and also to be away from his father. The tribe taught him how to

hunt, how to survive in the jungle, and how to carve and shoot arrows. In his mind, he was a *Dani* and a member of the family tribe. Present when tribal members discussed whether to kill his parents, the *ghost people*, Paul felt no fear. He wasn't even conscious that he himself was white. His identity and sense of belonging were rooted in the tribal culture of the *Dani* people.

But from his *Dani* family, Paul learned not only useful skills like surviving in the jungle and speaking the tribal dialect. The tribal culture was highly sexualized, and he was introduced to the darkness of childhood sexual abuse at the age of four. He would hide this secret for years to come.

The abuse happened frequently, and sometimes only ten or fifteen feet away from his parents, who were busy and preoccupied with the mission work. Paul himself hid the abuse from them, because he knew that something was *wrong* and he believed it was *his fault*. He didn't understand what was happening to him, but over time, an overwhelming sense of shame filled him, and it affected his life for almost four decades.

A SOUL DISMANTLED

At six years old, Paul was sent away to a Christian Missions boarding school. Suddenly removed from his familiar tribal environment, he was deposited in a world he did not know. It was only then that he realized that he was not a real *Dani*, but actually one of the *ghost people*. His sense of identity with the *Dani* tribe was stripped away. In one moment, he lost everything: his home, his tribe, his family, his sense of belonging. Only one dark reality remained: sexual abuse. Late at night at boarding school, the big boys came and molested

the little boys.

“Nothing dismantles the human soul like sexual abuse does,” Paul explains. “As children, we don’t have the ability to process things like this, so we think that when things go wrong, it is our fault. And as we grow up, we develop all kinds of survival mechanisms and coping skills, and we have addictions that show up inside our brokenness, because we have to have something that eases the pain and fills the emptiness.” Paul continues, “You learn from an early age that nothing and nobody is safe, so you develop all kinds of survival skills to adapt and to protect yourself.”

Unfortunately, many who are broken become breakers, and so did Paul. His responses to the brokenness of his childhood included an addiction to pornography and the inability to sustain relationships. Over the years, he also learned to live behind a façade of perfectionism and performance, in an attempt to hide the pain and shame of his brokenness. Pretending was also a way to silence his unanswered questions about God’s apparent absence – both during his abuse as a child and now.

Paul wrote his best-selling book, *The Shack*, after his long and difficult healing process, and he now speaks of a *shack* as a metaphor for the human soul. “It’s the house on the inside that people helped us build, and for a lot of us it’s a place where we hide our addictions and store all of our secrets,” Paul explains. “For me, it was a place of shame, so I took large pieces of plywood and dragged them out a hundred feet around the shack of my heart and built a façade, because I didn’t want anybody to come near the place of my shame and secrets and see me for who I really was.”

As part of this façade, Paul based his worth on performance and trying to win the approval of everyone around him. And this had a

very destructive effect on him. “When you are a child, everything revolves around winning the approval and affection of those around you, and when you come from a religious background, that includes God as well,” Paul explains. “You’re constantly trying to figure out what people want so you can be that. And then God has a whole list of things you were told he requires of you to win *his* approval, and then everything in your life becomes performance.”

THE SHACK CAME CRASHING DOWN

Paul became very good at performing. He went to Bible school and even worked for a church, constantly striving to win God’s and people’s approval. Deep within, he held onto the hope that if he could maintain a perfect performance for long enough, the fake Paul might become a real boy, a real person. “But at some point, the façades you build around you have to come down,” Paul says. “And I wish I could say that I finally realized that I was pretty broken and sought help, but I didn’t. A lot of times when we are broken, we have to get caught – and finally I was caught.”

That happened in January of 1994, with that one-sentence phone call from his wife, Kim. “I’m waiting in your office, and I KNOW.” What Kim knew was that Paul had been involved for three months in an affair with one of her best friends. Paul describes the confrontation, “At that point I had to make a decision whether to face Kim or kill myself. I had become a master in spinning conversations, finding excuses, and covering up escape mechanisms with religious language. But I knew my wife’s fury and her healthier black-and-white ways of seeing things wouldn’t let me get away anymore with being ‘fifty shades of grey.’”

He continues, “I don’t know how, but I guess it was by the grace of God that I got to the office. Kim took me apart for four hours. And finally, I said to her, ‘If we are going face each other and work through this, I need to tell you *every secret* I have, because secrets have been killing me my whole life.’ And naively, she said, ‘Bring it on.’ It took me the next four days to tell Kim *all* my secrets that she didn’t know. She was completely shattered. When I finished, she said, ‘I will never ever believe another word that comes out of your mouth for the rest of your life!’”

And Paul couldn’t blame her. He knew he had broken her heart, her trust, and their relationship. He knew he had also broken the trust of friends and family members involved. But despite the betrayals, Kim decided to let Paul continue to live in their house, because she did not want their children to grow up without a father. “And the other reason was that she knew I had hit rock bottom,” Paul says. “She could tell, because I *owned* what I had done. I didn’t point fingers or blame my childhood, my abuse, or other people. And I also hit rock bottom by not killing myself. Killing yourself is the last chance to run.”

THE SHAME FACTOR

Paul now owned all of his choices, even though he could have blamed shame for them, as the underlying force that entangled him in a cobweb of hiding, breaking relationships, control, and addiction. Shame is fundamentally damaging, and when not resolved, it leads to destructive behavior. This was certainly true for Paul. “One of the most profound things I discovered about shame is this: shame destroys your ability to distinguish between an observation and a

value statement. For instance, my wife might say, ‘Paul, don’t put the colored clothes with the whites.’ But what I heard was this: ‘I don’t know why I married such a loser of a human being as you.’”

Paul goes on, “And when I married Kim, suddenly there was someone who was unknowingly poking through my thin layer of perfectionism, right through to my shame. And all I wanted to do was run away, because I was constantly interpreting everything through the lens of shame.” His eventual affair, which came after years of hiding, pretending, and performing at marriage, offered him the illusion of “perfect unconditional love.” However, it turned out to be complete delusion and total disaster.

THE FIRST STEP TOWARD TRUST

Paul needed to get to a place where his life of lies was so exposed that it was clear to him that he had to get help. He took so long to get to that place in part because he had been abused, damaged, and hurt by the very people who should have protected him. “I didn’t trust anybody,” Paul shares. “From early childhood on, trust has always been the big issue for me. I knew I had to find a way to let go of control, but control had become my default response to fear: intellectual control, conversational control, and manipulation of people and circumstances around me.”

Paul goes on, “When you hit the bottom, you stop pointing fingers. Abuse – as horrific as it is – is a prison of choice. It’s the story you can go back to and then manipulate the people around you, whether consciously or unconsciously. But at some point, you have to own what you’ve done – and owning is huge. And I think a lot of people don’t get to the point where they own it. Instead, they get

sucked into something else that will give them identity, worth, value, or significance - and control does that.”

After the big confrontation with Kim, one way Paul started letting go of control was by finally asking for help. “I took the yellow pages of the phone book, opened it up under the heading ‘Counseling,’ and started with A. I worked my way down till I came to the listing for Agape Youth and Family Services, which mentioned their specialization in childhood sexual abuse. I called strangers that I had never met before, and for the first time in my life asked another human being, ‘Can you help me?’ And that’s where I found Scott Mitchell, who became my therapist and then later my friend. That started pushing me out of my isolation toward a sense of community.”

Scott Mitchell mapped out a therapy plan, then explained the stages of the process to Paul. But he warned him, “Most people bail out after a few months. Once you start feeling a bit more in control again, you’ll be tempted to back out – but that’s right before you hit the really tough issues.” Paul agreed to the plan, determined not to back out.

THE SHACK OF PERSONAL LIES

Paul gave himself fully to the therapy work he needed to do, beginning the process of unraveling the lies he had believed about himself, God, and others. But several months in, he came to a place where he wanted to give up. “When this happened, it caught me completely by surprise. I would say that was about the lowest point I experienced in my life. I was standing on an abyss and looking back at all my history, and I didn’t know if one single thing about me was actually true,” he says. “I didn’t know what was actually a survival mechanism, and

what was actually me. I didn't know what was a façade, and what was real about me. And when I hit that point, I lost all my hope." At that point, he again considered killing himself. It was only the intervention of two friends that kept him from going through with a plan to end his life.

"Dealing with what you think is the truth of your being becomes the deep issue where so much work has to be done. And it is the process of suffering that exposes the lies that underpin the way you deal with yourself, with others, and with the world," Paul explains. Healing from brokenness is possible, even from the destructiveness of sexual abuse – but it is hard work. "The whole journey was extremely tough, and for a great part it just meant slogging through another day's sense of shame, along with the fury from others - and rightfully so."

Paul describes his eleven-year healing process, which led to the writing of his book, *The Shack*. It started with an intense nine-month therapy process that exposed most of the lies that had made up the prison of his soul. "To use the metaphor of the *shack*, those nine months involved tearing down everything to the bare structure, right down to the foundations," Paul describes. "In that process of tearing it all down, I began to realize so many things that I thought were true actually weren't true. That's when the lies are exposed, and that is bulldozer work. You have to go down to the bottom, into the basement and all the rooms."

THE GREATEST RISK

After the deconstruction, the slow recovery and integration process would start, and it happened primarily through the building of

relationships – the very thing Paul feared the most. “Because most of our damage happens primarily through relationships, the healing will be primarily through relationships. I’m convinced about that, because I don’t think there is a truer reality about the nature and character of God than relationship,” Paul emphasizes. “That’s the tough part and the hard road. It’s so much easier to think our way to freedom, or to take a pill. Relationships are full of mystery and full of risk, and they involve a person who is a moving target. But they are the only place where true healing and integration takes place, because trust has to be rebuilt. With help, I began to understand I had to move out of isolation and into community.”

Paul clarifies that the healing process in itself is different for each person. “There is no formula, as much as we would like a formula. Everybody is hurt in a different way, and the uniqueness of that damage has to do with the uniqueness of the person. That’s why the presence and involvement of the Holy Spirit is so essential, because only God knows how you are crafted, and then how you were damaged, and how that needs to be healed.”

THE JOURNEY TOWARD AUTHENTICITY

In that past, Paul had participated in Christian counseling that advised him to reject the past and refuse to look at what was behind. Before his façade came crumbling down, Paul tried to follow this advice, but it never brought about lasting change. Instead, it reinforced his performance. Over and over, he tried to live a “holy” life, but every time he would crash and burn again. The weeds of his addictions would spring up again, because they had not been dealt with at the root.

Paul believes that true healing involves reconciliation and justice, and this only happens when the past is dealt with and the damage is healed. “I believe God is a craftsman, not a draftsman. God has a high view of humanity,” he says. “The Psalms talk about the intricacy of the human soul and the weaving of this incredible wonder. We look at the planets and we are amazed, and yet the wonders of the planets are nothing compared to a human being. But we don’t look at it this way. We have a low view of humanity so we want to *fix it*. We want to make it work without the person becoming a *real* person.” He explains that we want the end product. “We want to say, ‘All right. Fixed! Now I can perform in a way that is acceptable. Now I can be successful.’” However, success is something totally different from what our culture projects.

Paul describes this healing as the process of becoming an authentic human being. “All of the things that happen as a result are rather irrelevant,” he says. “Success is the overflow of authenticity, or else it’s not success – it’s just another façade.” You cannot be authentic unless you are whole and grounded in your true identity in God. He summarizes it in this way, **“Wholeness is when the way of your being and the truth of your being match – where your conduct and actions match who God says you are, and you agree. And that is where so much work has to be done!** That is the essence of the maturing process every human being is invited to, and there is no shortcut.”

Paul did not come to this realization until he dealt with his wrong religious belief systems and his understanding of who God really is. For instance, he had always read the English Bible translation of John 16:18, which says that the Holy Spirit *convicts the world of sin*.³⁷ But when he studied the Greek word for sin in the passage, he

became aware of its nuances and implied meaning. “The word for sin is *harmatia*, which means a *negation of your origin and being*,” Paul explains. “So anything that is disengaged or not integrated with your origin or being is sin - and that is brokenness, the non-authenticity. Also, the word *convict* in the Greek language means *expose*. **So the Holy Spirit actually comes to expose what is not authentic.**”

The journey of authenticity is a journey of trust and turning from wrong religious beliefs to a face-to-face relationship with God. That is the essence of repenting – of re-turning to God and His truth about who we are. This involves rebuilding trust and living in the grace of one day, which is at the heart of the healing process. But the process of getting there...? Paul wouldn't wish it on his enemy. “It is so hard, because you have to challenge everything.”

THE SHACK OF RELIGIOUS LIES

For Paul, the long and slow process of unraveling the damage of the past required a major paradigm shift in his beliefs about himself and God. His religious upbringing had added another dimension to the brokenness in his soul. “My big issue as a child was belonging. I lost all sense of belonging, and the theological doctrines I grew up with added a whole different dimension to this. I grew up with the idea that it was better to die before you messed it up. And then certain ideas of predestination and election reinforced the sense that there was no assurance of salvation. There was no sense of belonging, and that tormented my soul.”

Paul was also led to believe that it was his duty to protect the mission at any cost. His parents appeared to prioritize that more highly than anything else, to the extent of “sacrificing” children on

the “altar of God’s purposes.” And in Paul’s experience, that became linked with secrecy about the abuse he suffered.

FROM ABUSE TO ADDICTION

Paul’s addiction to pornography was due to both his experience of sexual abuse, and his religious upbringing. The latter especially encouraged a detachment between head and heart. “As soon as you do that, you create a vacuum, which needs to be filled. And one of the attractions of pornography is that the imagination of a relationship is a lot ‘safer’ than dealing with the potential of losses in a real one.”

Paul first tried to deal with his addiction within the strictures of his religious upbringing, and within that he saw only two options. The first was self-discipline. “I got terrified of the fear of hell, and so I tried to push myself into righteous performance,” he explains. “But that didn’t work for long. Eventually I would crash and burn, and end up with an even greater sense of shame.” Paul’s second option was to join an accountability group – but that didn’t work either. “If you have an addiction, you will find a way to supply,” he states.

Today, Paul says that he hasn’t had an issue with addiction for 22 years. So what changed to enable him to conquer it? Paul started to understand his true identity in Christ, and the truth of who he is in God’s sight. **“I learned about the truth of my being - and the way of my being followed it.** So what is the truth of my being? I’m pure of heart. That’s the truth of my being. And the way I live my life flows from this truth.”

THE TRUTH OF YOUR BEING

In order to discover his true identity, Paul had to confront the doctrines and beliefs he had grown up with. “I had to challenge total depravity, the theology that basically teaches that all you are is a ‘piece of crap,’ and Jesus comes and wraps you in His righteousness, so that God the Father turns a blind eye.” Paul continues, “And I had to challenge all of that by asking some fundamental questions: Was there not a good creation before I got hurt, broken, damaged and lost? Was there not something that was whole, in order for it to be broken? Can wholeness exist without brokenness? Yes. But can brokenness exist without wholeness? No. Can life exist without death? Yes. Can death exist without life? No.”

As Paul learned how flawed his theology really was, he began to challenge what he believed and what he thought was certain. “This is a lot riskier, scarier, uncertain, and ambiguous, but it is also mysterious, amazing, wonderful and life-giving, because trust always is. **Certainty and trust don’t live in the same house.**”

There is only one certainty, and that is the character of God. The Apostle John writes, “this is what we learned from Jesus, that God is light and in him there is no darkness at all.”³⁸ Paul asked himself whether he believed that, and if not, why not. He found himself comparing his own desire to be a good father with his disbelief that God was a good father. He reflected that on the one hand, the Bible says that love doesn’t keep a record of wrongs³⁹ – but it seemed that God did. “These were the beliefs I built my world around, and everything was up for question,” Paul explains.

Slowly, Paul unraveled all the lies that he had believed, and the experience totally transformed his theology from a set of religious rules to a real and trusting face-to-face relationship with God. And

the evidence of this paradigm shift can be seen in the way he lives. “Now the way of my being totally matches the truth of my being. I am the same person in every situation,” Paul says. “Before, it didn’t matter how you lived your life. The theology was independent of the way of your being. We had a codified theology, how you lived your life was irrelevant; you just had to stick to a certain set of rules, and in the end you were never good enough anyway.”

BECOMING CHILDLIKE

An essential part of Paul’s healing process involved restoring his childlikeness and living in *the grace of today*. “I willingly had to stop ‘future tripping.’ We are given grace for today, but so often we miss it, because we worry about things that are not real. A child naturally knows how to live in the grace of today, because that’s their whole universe. There is nothing beyond today, and they don’t even know how to talk about two weeks ago or anything like the future. There is a wonder, a presence, and awareness of what’s going on around them that most of us don’t have because we are not present,” Paul shares. “It took me 50 years to become childlike and learn to live in the simplicity of the grace of a day, to live in the here and now.”

So how did he get to that point? Was it based on a single willful decision to trust God, as is often taught in church circles? It’s not that simple. “Real trust has to be based on real truth, and truth is a person,” says Paul. “Part of the healing journey is to unmask the lies. You say, ‘I trust,’ because it is what you’re theologically supposed to do, but as soon as something goes sideways, you are scared like everybody else,” Paul states. “You can’t truly trust someone you don’t think is good. You can’t truly trust someone you don’t believe loves you.

So when the goodness of God and the love of God are in question, then our words are nothing but empty disassociated mumbo-jumbo; it's just magic."

Paul continues, "When you do that, you are masking over the lies that you actually believe about God. But **God is after those lies, because they are integrated into your person, and you function out of those lies.**" He emphasizes that God is not impressed with religious language, because it only illustrates that the way of our being *doesn't* match the truth of our being. Its use means we don't really believe that God is good. Instead, we are creating a way of being according to some superficial definition of righteousness. Says Paul, "What we are actually doing is changing our behavior to match what our theology says it is supposed to look like. But that's not God. That's divorcing yourself from who you are as a human being."

Paul believes that many Christians have separated the performance of our righteousness – the way of our being – from the truth of our being, because we really think that we are unworthy. He explains, "If we believe theologically that the truth about us is that we are no more than a piece of crap and are really depraved., it makes it impossible to trust God, because we are just waiting for the hammer to come down."

One of the greatest dangers of depravity theology is the disconnection between the head and the heart, and Paul's healing process entailed moving from that separation to full integration. He describes it, "Finally I came to a place in my journey where I was fully integrated: I was the same person everywhere. I wasn't struggling in a hotel room all by myself, and I didn't have a world of secrets."

Of his life now, Paul says, "I am the same person in every situation. I have no secrets and I have no addictions. And I'm not

talking only about being ‘fifty shades of grey.’ I am talking about ‘gold-chain-addictions,’ such as doing something great for God, having a platform, achieving a destiny, experiencing the anointing, or any of the empty theological words that people then make into expectations of performance.”

THE WRITING OF THE SHACK

Paul’s wife Kim went through her own healing process, and as Paul dealt with the lies and shared every part of the journey with her, her trust in him was slowly rebuilt. It took a long time for their relationship to heal, but after 11 years Kim came to the point where she could say that the hard work had been worth it. She then kept asking Paul to write down his experiences for their kids, so he could share with them the change that had taken place in how he saw God, himself, and the world.

Then, in 2004, they experienced financial ruin. In a matter of months, they lost all their material possessions: his work, their house, their car. But they saw it as an opportunity to practice living in the grace for today and trusting God to provide the next meal. Paul describes the experience, “There is nothing like losing everything to heal you from the fear of financial insecurity. Initially it was incredibly difficult, but in retrospect, it became one of the most precious times in our lives, because the joy of God became our constant companion!” He continues, “That’s what happens when you live inside the grace of one day – you don’t run away from joy. We are so geared to be ‘future trippers’ – where we can’t trust, where we create imaginations that don’t exist, and we miss the grace that was given to us for today. And by this time, I had stopped being a future tripper.

I learned to be childlike and trust God to provide what I need one day at a time.”

During that time, Paul had only two prayers left. One was this: “*Papa*, I don’t want to be an old man one day looking back at my life, wondering, ‘What would it have been like to take the risk of actually trusting?’ I don’t want to be that guy.” His second: “*Papa*, I’m never again going ask you to bless anything I do. I’m done with performance, achievement, and trying to make things happen. But if you have something you want to bless, and it would be okay for me to be part of that, I’ll be all over it – and I don’t care if that would be cleaning toilets, holding a door open for someone, or whatever that would be. I just want to know in the end of the day *you did this and I got to participate!*”

Paul was working three jobs: cleaning offices, handling shipping and receiving, and working as a hotel night clerk. On his train commute between work and the outskirts of Portland he began to write a story to give to his six children for Christmas. After all, he didn’t have any money to buy gifts, so a story of his own making it would be. When Kim had asked him to write something for their children, she had been hoping for six to eight pages – but when Paul was done, he had completed a fascinating novel of 250 pages: *The Shack*.

The story starts with a mysterious note Mackenzie Allen Phillips receives one day in his mailbox. Four years earlier, Mack’s youngest daughter Missy had been abducted during a family vacation and brutally murdered by a serial killer. Her blood-stained clothes were found in an abandoned shack deep in the Oregon wilderness, but her body was never found. Since that time, Mack has been haunted by a *great sadness*. Then one day he receives a note from “Papa,” the name his wife uses for God, inviting Mack to return to the same

shack. Uncertain of what to expect, Mack goes to the place of his greatest devastation, where he experiences a weekend-long encounter with the Godhead. Papa, or God the Father, appears in the form of a large African-American woman named Elousia (the Creator and Ground of all Being), Jesus is a middle-aged man of Middle-Eastern descent, and the Holy Spirit is revealed as an Asian woman called Sarayu. Each in turn engages Mack in conversation and leads him to the places of pain in his heart, slowly transforming them, as Mack lets go of the lies, wrong paradigms, and resentments in his heart.

Paul made fifteen spiral-bound copies of his story at Office Depot in time to give them to his children for Christmas. It was never his intention to publish the story. But he gave a few extra copies to his friends and family, who in turn shared copies with other friends. From there, the story started spreading like wildfire.

Three acquaintances approached Paul and encouraged him to publish the book, with the long-term goal of someday making a movie. The four of them sought a publishing agreement, but *The Shack* was rejected by 26 different publishers. Christian publishers considered the story too edgy and risky. Secular publishers liked the story, but said there was too much “Jesus” in it. So two of them created Windblown Media and self-published the book in 2007. Selling books out of a garage, two storage units and the local printer in Los Angeles, and with no marketing other than a simple website and word-of-mouth referrals, they sold over one million copies in thirteen months.

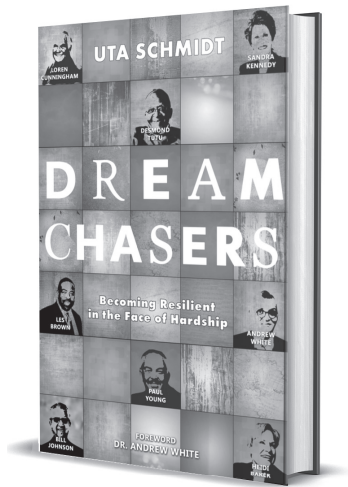
The Shack is a phenomenon that nobody saw coming. It gave people a new language with which to have a conversation about God that was relational and not religious. It broke down walls and reached the precious places of the people’s hearts. “The story of *The Shack* is

absolutely crazy,” Paul says today. “God totally surprised everyone. In retrospect, I see God saying with his sense of humor ‘Hey Paul, you know this book you’re writing for your kids for Christmas? What if I bless that? You give it to your kids, and then I’ll give it to mine.’”

The Shack sold over twenty million copies worldwide and is among the top 100 best-selling fiction books in all of history. In March 2017, it was released as a top-notch Hollywood movie by Lionsgate, starring Octavia Spencer (Papa), Sam Worthington (Mack) and Aviv Alush, who was the first Jewish actor in history to portray Jesus in a major motion picture.

That’s how crazy the story is.

Paul’s journey toward healing has been an excruciatingly painful and intense process, but in the end, it’s been worth it, not because of the outward success, but because of the inward.



DREAM CHASERS

BECOMING RESILIENT
IN THE FACE OF HARDSHIP

UTA SCHMIDT

Have you ever known the pain and disappointment of a shattered dream, a hope deferred, a vision put on hold? Maybe you started out with a dream in your heart, but it got buried beneath the rubble of life's challenges. Perhaps life took some unexpected turns and threw you off course. Know this: you are not alone.

Dream Chasers follows the lives of nine ordinary people who overcame great hardship in pursuing their God-given dreams. In doing so, they became resilient heroes of faith. As you read their stories you will be inspired and find new strength to overcome the difficulties you are facing in your own journey of following the dreams God has placed in your heart.

Endorsements:

Dream Chasers is an exploration of raw human experience, an invitation to look through the eyes of another's story and back at our own.

William Paul Young, author of *The Shack*

You can't help but be inspired as you read the stories of the trials and victories of some of my personal heroes

Bill Johnson, author and pastor of Bethel Church

If you have a dream inside of you and want to know how to make your dream a reality, you must read this book.

Les Brown, author of *Live Your Dreams*

This is a book about getting up when life knocks you down. It is a book that must be read.

Canon Andrew White, Vicar Emeritus of Baghdad

