

Responding to *The Da Vinci Code*

On May 19, *The Da Vinci Code* movie will be in theatres across the nation. Dan Brown's book by the same title has been the most popular read of the 21st century. You may have heard of it. You may even have heard that it will "change" the face of Christianity.

If you haven't read the book, what do you need to know about it?

1. The book is fiction.

It is not a true story, and although Dan Brown brings forward some "facts" just before the prologue it does not mean the whole book is factual. In fact, there are many good articles that show why even his "facts" aren't right. During a recent trial for plagiarism in London, England, Mr. Brown admitted in court that his book was fiction.

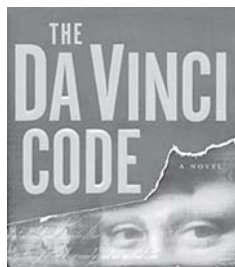
2. What new insight into Christianity does *The Da Vinci Code* bring to light?

In the words of King Solomon: "There is nothing new under the sun."

a. *The Da Vinci Code* only rehashes a very ancient heresy—Gnosticism. Gnostics (some of whom predate Christianity) believe in a "secret knowledge" that has been revealed (usually because it has been suppressed by the ruling powers). This secret knowledge saves us.

b. The book makes reference to other scriptural writings that were destroyed and hidden that did not make it into the Bible.

You may or may not have heard of the Gospel of Thomas, the "newly discovered" Gospel of Judas, the Gospel of Mary and other "gospels". These texts may provide the clearest attack on Christianity from *The Da Vinci Code*. Again, all these texts are Gnostic in origin. The New Testament was gathered on the basis of the writers being eyewitnesses to the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. By the time the Gospel of Thomas appeared (late second century at the earliest) the New Testament looked like it does today. The Christians of the 2nd Century did not accept this late entry into their Bible.



c. Mary Magdalene married Jesus and they had a family. Jesus did not die on the cross at around 30 years of age.

This claim is nothing less than a wholesale attempt to discredit Christianity. What is our faith based on? The cross. There is no evidence that Jesus married. Many non-Christian writers of antiquity write about the death of Jesus and of the new faith that took hold of the world after His death. There is not a word about Mary Magdalene.

3. Why is this book so popular?

Gnosticism, in all its forms, is popular in today's culture because the spirituality of the gnostics comes from within ourselves. It shares many of the same characteristics as the New Age Movement. The "divine" is us. We are gods or goddesses. We create our own truth. Not unlike the time of the Judges when everybody "did what was right in their own eyes."

As believers in Christ we have a wonderful opportunity to discuss our faith. *The Da Vinci Code* has made discussing Jesus Christ popular. Talk to your pastor about how you can engage people in the true Gospel of Jesus Christ through the book and now the movie that has so many talking about Christianity. Check out synod's website for links and ideas: www.lutheranchurch.ca/davinci.



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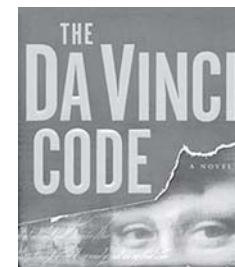
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Walking through the open door to witness

Although its fifteen minutes of fame should be up by now, like controversial fictional stories about Jesus before it, *The Da Vinci Code* too shall pass— hopefully not so quickly that you don't have a chance to talk with an unchurched person about it, however. How does your response to the fictional story witness the truth of Christ?

Here are three witness tips based on three common responses of Christians to the story: anger, indifference, and excitement

1. Anger

Are you upset and offended? Are you experiencing righteous anger because the divine reputation of the Saviour is seemingly besmirched? Angry that the devil is once again encouraging doubts? It's okay to let people know you are hurt and offended—strong emotion witnesses the depth of your relationship with Jesus and can open up a frank discussion. Just don't rant and blast. Do not judge individuals, but gently point out the truth. Focus that energy into equipping yourself with answers so that you can have respectful conversations, trusting the Holy Spirit to work in hearts. Dr. Paul Maier and other Bible scholars have excellent advice to help you respond. Give them a Google or go to www.lutheranchurch.ca/davinci.

2. Indifference

History, not just Hollywood, is rife with fictional stories offensive to the Gospel and contrary to Scripture, so why should I care about one more piece of fiction? Monty Python's *The Life of Brian* is easier to dismiss, but your mild response can actually demonstrate a security in your faith that speaks volumes. Express that you don't care about the movie or the controversy because it is fiction. Christ did what He

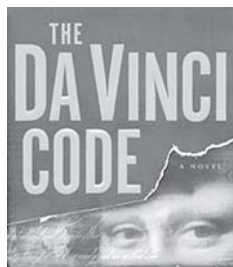
did and is who He is no matter who does or doesn't believe in Him. Gently share what you believe and invite your friend to learn more. Let the Holy Spirit bring the ultimate resolution to the controversy in their heart!

3. Excitement

Are you rejoicing in the fact that the fictional story has thrust the divinity of Christ into mainstream conversation? You may even be excited that the media is trying to keep the controversial buzz going with pieces on the supposed Judas document. Listen to what your friends and co-workers are saying. What do they like about the story? The controversy? What questions have been raised?

You who are strong in your faith can see the film to prepare for conversations. Let people know you are excited to have an excuse to talk more about the Lord you love. Explain that controversy and misunderstanding is normal, in fact it is only knowing Christ as one's Saviour that brings understanding; only standing at the foot of the cross cracks the "code." The Holy Spirit makes that possible!

May your conversations be so exciting they need bushels of popcorn and many litres of pop!



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