

THE DA VINCI CODE

By Carol Duerksen

I wasn't going to read *The Da Vinci Code*, but when one of my youth group members said she started it but chose not to finish it because she "just didn't need to go there," well, that made me curious. That, and its huge controversial popularity got the best of me. So I read it. It's a well-crafted story—one with some very unique approaches to Jesus and Christianity. It didn't enhance or destroy my faith.

I haven't seen the movie—maybe I will someday on DVD. My curiosity has been satisfied. But for many people, *The Da Vinci Code* has been a must-see movie, and for others, a "must-not see."

I read a great article in the May/June 2006 issue of *YouthWorker Journal* called "Dealing with the Da Vinci Code." In the article, *YouthWorker* interviews Dr. Craig Blomberg, Distinguished Professor of New Testament at Denver Seminary in Colorado, and asks him to reflect on the best-selling book by Dan Brown and the subsequent movie. I would highly recommend that you read the interview if you are wondering what to do with this book and film in relationship to your youth. Following are a few brief excerpts:

Youthworker: What practical suggestions do you have for youth workers in terms of youth meetings, small groups, and Bible studies? How can they address some of the issues raised in the film?

Blomberg: I would suggest they prepare a presentation about how the New Testament books were chosen and when, century by century. This is one subject that is so screwed up in *The Da Vinci Code*.

Equally important would be a presentation about the content in the four Gospels and the claims they make about Jesus. This will help address claims that those who affirmed the deity of Christ were a historically late and theologically unorthodox minority.

Youthworker: What have you heard from parents of youth?

Blomberg: One of the e-mails I received was from a Catholic man who was concerned that his 16-year-old son who was reading this book would have his head filled with anti-Catholicism. Protestant fundamentalists have the similar worries about the questions of Jesus' deity.

My response is that rather than seeking to shelter kids from all the horrible stuff in the world, we should interact with them while they are in our orbit of influence. If they haven't had some good models of engagement, it will not serve them well when they are out of our orbit of influence.

Youthworker: What does The Da Vinci Code say about how Christians should engage with popular culture overall?

Blomberg: The people who invite me to speak recognize that *The Da Vinci Code* presents us with a great opportunity to engage the culture on topics we are not typically informed about, like Constantine, The Nicene Creed, and the Gnostic Gospels. These may not be the most important questions of faith, but some of them impinge on important doctrines. So when people of the secular culture are willing to strike up conversations on topics like that, I think, *What a wonderful opportunity to talk intelligently with them about that!*

If we don't engage, the danger is that people will believe this stuff as if it weren't fiction. Dan Brown says on page one of his book that it is based on "fact." This is either a fictional device he is using or he is confused on certain theological ideas.

I would hope that when Christians meet people who show an interest in the topics raised in *The Da Vinci Code*, they can respond in a winsome and non-combative fashion and say, "Let me share a few things about it. I see why so many people are reading it—it's a fun book to read. But there is not much of anything in it that is true about Christianity." I would hope that could be a model for engaging culture.

Youthworker: Do you have any final thoughts for youth workers?

Blomberg: Yes. Everyone should get and study Darrell Bock's book *Breaking the Da Vinci Code*.

Many thanks to YouthWorker for allowing us to reprint portions of this article from the May/June 2006 issue. If you aren't already a subscriber to YouthWorker Journal, I'd strongly suggest you check it out at www.youthworker.com

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