

YOUTH LEADER RESOURCE:

A group discussion guide in response to *The DaVinci Code* book and movie

by Alex McFarland

“Widespread readership of an intriguing thriller is nothing unusual, but *The Da Vinci Code* is something else again. In the almost two years since its publication, the novel has become a record bestseller, with 7.35 million copies in print.”ⁱ The popularity of this book creates an opportunity for each of us to answer the many questions that it raises. (See 1 Peter 3:15.)

Here are seven of those questions, along with brief answers and resources for further study.

“Gospels that described *earthly* aspects of Jesus’ life had to be omitted from the Bible” (*The Da Vinci Code*, p. 244).

1. Was Jesus’ divinity an invention of men?
 - a) If men wanted to create a new religion, they would never choose one with a God-man as its central figure and a resurrection from the dead as its foundation (1 Corinthians 15:14, Ephesians 2:20).
 - b) The men who proclaimed His resurrection were martyred because they would not deny their faith in Christ. J.P. Moreland writes, “For one thing, the disciples had nothing to gain by lying and starting a new religion. They faced hardship, ridicule, hostility, and martyr’s deaths.”ⁱⁱ
 - c) The original disciples were fearful skeptics who initially did not believe in the resurrection. They had to be convinced (Matthew 16:21-22, 26:56; John 20:19-28).

“Anyone who chose the forbidden gospels over Constantine’s version was deemed a heretic” (*DVC*, p. 234).

2. Do the Gnostic gospels actually reflect authentic Christianity?
 - a) The Gnostic gospels were written *after* all other books in the New Testament had been completed.^{iii iv}
 - b) The early Church rejected the Gnostic gospels because they proclaimed doctrines contrary to the clear teachings of Christ and the apostles, i.e., that all physical matter was inherently evil^v (Matthew 15:10-20, Hebrews 13:4).

“Constantine ‘commissioned and financed a new Bible....The earlier gospels were outlawed, gathered up and burned’ (DVC, p. 234).”^{vi}

3. Did Constantine and other early Christian leaders suppress ideas contrary to Christian doctrine?
 - a) Constantine did not make Christianity the state religion of the Roman Empire. He simply granted freedom of worship to Christians and pagans with the Edict of Milan in 313 AD.^{vii}
 - b) The Old Testament had been completed even before the birth of Jesus. Although much of the New Testament was recognized before Constantine’s reign, Athanasius recorded the earliest complete list of New Testament books in A.D. 367.^{viii}

“Nothing in Christianity is original” (DVC, p. 232)

4. Did New Testament teachings and ideas originate in pagan Mystery religions?
 - a) Most mystery religions flourished long after the closing of the canon of Scripture.
 - b) Mystery religions involved experiencing higher realms of reality through altered states of consciousness. In contrast, Christians were committed to following Christ’s teachings.
 - c) The mystery religions were a fusion of various religious systems. They worshipped a variety of pagan deities. On the other hand, Christ’s followers worshipped the One who claimed to be the only way to God (John 14:6).^{ix}

“The Christian Scriptures ‘evolved through countless translations, additions, and revisions.’ (DVC, p. 231).^x

5. Is our Bible based on reliable documents?
 - a) The Bible passes three critical tests for the reliability of ancient literature.
 - 1) Bibliographical test: the number of manuscripts and their closeness to the original.
 - 2) Internal evidence test: Is the document free of known contradictions? Did the writer use primary sources?
 - 3) External evidence test: Is there supporting evidence from writers outside the Bible? Is there evidence from archaeology?^{xi}

“Mary Magdalene. . . . More specifically, her marriage to Jesus Christ. . . . It’s a matter of historical record” (DVC, p. 244).

6. Were Jesus and Mary Magdalene married?
 - a) There is a total absence of support for this claim in either Scripture or early church traditions.^{xii}
 - b) Neither the apocryphal gospels nor the Gnostic gospels refer to a marriage between Jesus and Mary Magdalene.^{xiii xiv}
 - c) Dan Brown’s reference to the Gospel of Philip’s use of the word “companion” in support of his assertion of marriage is based on a strained translation of the word. The word is usually translated as friend or companion.^{xv}

“Despite its patently fictional content and glaring factual inaccuracies, *The Da Vinci Code* has been the subject of endless cocktail party chatter and water-cooler discussions.”^{xvi}

7. Are the historical assertions in *The Da Vinci Code* accurate?
 - a) Claims that the Merovingians founded Paris (p. 257). Paris was already established about 700 years before they arrived.^{xvii}
 - b) Claims that the Vatican tried to suppress the release of the Dead Sea Scrolls (p. 234). None of the scrolls speak of Christianity. They do support the accuracy of the copying of the Old Testament manuscripts. Therefore, the Vatican did not and does not try to suppress their publication.^{xviii}

ⁱ Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1999), 242.

² Richard Abanes, *The Truth Behind the Da Vinci Code* (Eugene: Harvest House, 2004), 26, 40.

³ Hank Hanegraaf and Paul L. Maier, *The Da Vinci Code: Fact or Fiction?* (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 2004) 19.

⁴ Abanes, 41.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 16, 23.

⁷ Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict* (Nashville, Thomas Nelson, 1999), 23-24.

⁸ Hanegraaf and Maier, 57-59.

⁹ Abanes, 25.

¹⁰ McDowell, 33-68.

¹¹ Hanegraaf and Maier, 16.

¹² *Ibid.*, 16.

¹³ Abanes, 38-39.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 39.

¹⁵ Amy D. Bernstein, “Decoding the *Da Vinci* Phenomenon,” *U.S. News & World Report* (Special Edition, 2004): 7.

¹⁶ Hanegraaf and Maier, 33.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*