

READERS' GUIDE TO CRACKING DA VINCI'S CODE



You have read *The Da Vinci Code* and were left with many questions. Now you have read *Cracking Da Vinci's Code* and may have more questions. Don't let that alarm you. When on a quest for truth, questions are powerful tools. Do, however, be careful. Be careful to ask questions that increase discernment, not that feed skepticism. In other words, "be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves" (Matthew 10:16).

The following questions are designed to help you work through any doubt or confusion you may be experiencing. Perhaps you will want to consider these by yourself or in a small group of friends; the key is to continue probing until you have found clarity. Keep in mind that even after much discussion you may not have all the answers, but you will have grown. God promises that "if you call out for insight ... and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God" (Proverbs 2:3–5). And ultimately you will discover that there is but one Answer to all of the questions you will ever encounter. That Answer supersedes any code you will ever encounter. It is our desire that, if you do not already know the Answer, you will meet Him through what we have shared with you.

Blessings to you on your journey.

Chapter 1: The Code That Shook The World

1. How firm is your knowledge of who Jesus is? If your faith was challenged, could you defend it? How would you do it?
2. Do you think *The Da Vinci Code* poses a threat to Christianity? Why or why not?
3. *The Da Vinci Code* starts off with a declaration from the author that “all descriptions of artwork, architecture, documents, and secret rituals in this novel are accurate” [DVC, 1]. Do you believe that claim? How do you hope to benefit from studying *Cracking Da Vinci's Code*?
4. Brown wants you to “learn a ton” from his book. Do you think fiction is a good teaching device? Why or why not?
5. Pilate, when confronted with Jesus, asked the eternal question: “What is truth?” Is it possible to know absolute truth? Is there even such a thing as absolute truth or is truth relative to each person and each situation?

Chapter 2: God's Second Best Idea

1. Carrie Williams, the fictional character who begins each of our chapters from here out, experiences two “sexual shocks” in one day—the come-on by her boyfriend and finding out her roommate is a lesbian. Do you think this is a fair representation of our culture today?
2. Do you agree with our statement that “*The Da Vinci Code* is ultimately—when pressed to its not-so-logical conclusion—an appeal for free sex, separate from the parameters established by God”? Why or why not?
3. Explain the differences between *agape* and *eros* love. How can you develop *agape* in your love for another person?

4. Do you see the Bible as a book that promotes “maximum sex”? Can you think of any passages other than those mentioned in our text that support this?
5. If sex is God’s “second best” idea, what is His best idea?

Chapter 3: Women Are More Sacred and Feminine Than the “Sacred Feminine”

1. Looking at what the Bible has to say about women and at the history of women in the foundation of the church, how convincing is *The Da Vinci Code* in its claim that the church is a great oppressor of women? Do any of our arguments in this chapter satisfactorily counter that claim, as far as you are concerned? Why or why not?
2. In his very clever book of fiction, Brown makes up various facts to further his agenda. To give one example, he grossly exaggerates how many men and women were put to death during the Great Hunt era of the Middle Ages. (Contemporary research shows that there may have been 50–60,000 killed in comparison to Brown’s five million.) Do you think *The Da Vinci Code* strives for accuracy or for emotional impact? Should the convictions we hold stem from one’s intellect or one’s heart? How do you balance the two?
3. We would not be fair if we did not acknowledge that some early church leaders did wrongly oppress women, even using the Bible to support their actions. Can one legitimately separate the actions of an individual from the organization he or she represents? Are there contemporary examples that come to mind? How do you determine responsibility?
4. Does *The Da Vinci Code* ultimately call for a celebration of the uniqueness of male and female or a blending of the two into one androgynous gender? How does the Bible differ from that? How do you respond to the premise that men and women are different?

Chapter 4: Jesus—Who Was He, Really?

1. Brown claims that Jesus was not considered divine until Constantine's time. We listed but a few of the early church leaders who wrote of Christ's divinity before the Council of Nicaea. How do you respond to Brown's assumption that Jesus was not divine? Do Jesus' human traits prove He wasn't divine? Why or why not?
2. Why was it important for Jesus to ask His friends who they thought He was? How would their answer change the way they thought about Jesus?
3. How is Paul, and the dates he wrote his letters, important to understanding the divinity of Jesus?
4. Is it important to you whether or not Jesus is truly divine? Why or why not? Who do *you* say Jesus is?

Chapter 5: Who Is Revising History?

1. Evan gives Carrie a lesson in the flying habits of geese. Just how does a flock of geese compare with how the church is supposed to function? Did you find the analogy helpful?
2. If history truly is just a "fable agreed upon," who are we to believe? How can we tell what version of history is the "truest"? Is there such a thing as true history?
3. Christian history seems to have many "losers"—those who committed great sins or who were killed for their faith. Yet *The Da Vinci Code* claims that church leaders—the winners—rewrote history to favor their "side." How do you respond to Brown's argument that winners write the history?
4. If you were a Christian when Constantine proclaimed religious tolerance and forced pagans to convert, how would you have

reacted to these new “Christians”? How do you think they would have reacted to you and your teachings? Would you have compromised your beliefs to “meet them in the middle?”

Chapter 6: Don't Shoot the Canon

1. If we did not have the Bible to follow, if we did as Marcion suggested and got rid of all scripture, what foundation would we have for moral law? What would keep each of us from doing what felt good at the time, regardless of the consequences to others?
2. Why is it important to know how our current Bible was assembled? Does this affect your personal faith?
3. Can a follower of Jesus dismiss the Old Testament as outdated and observe the New Testament only? Explain.
4. Our conviction that the Bible is the Word of God is based on faith *and* years of careful study. Do you believe that the Bible is trustworthy? Why or why not? Does that reasoning apply to the canon selection too?
5. After reading this chapter, do you believe that Constantine manipulated the formation of the canon? Or do you believe the canon was well established before the Council of Nicaea? Explain your stance.

Chapter 7: The Gnostic Gospels vs. the New Testament Gospels

1. Winston Churchill is credited with saying, “A lie gets halfway around the world before the truth has a chance to get its pants on.” There are scholars, preachers, and authors—in this case, the fictional Professor Gibson—who repeat phrases that have been shown to be false, but by saying them often enough, such thoughts are nevertheless given credibility. How can we be open-minded while maintaining a strong sense of discernment?

2. Now that the Nag Hammadi texts have been “taken to the masses” through *The Da Vinci Code*, many people could begin to doubt the veracity of the Bible. If you hold the Bible to be the irrefutable Word of God, how will you defend it against these “secret scrolls?” If you do not base your beliefs on the Bible, do you trust the Nag Hammadi texts? Explain your choice.
3. Do you agree with the 1997 Gathering of Presbyterian Women that the four biblical Gospels are biased toward males? Should there be a Bible just for women?
4. If you follow the teaching of Gnosticism to its logical end, who will be your god?
5. We write, “Here we begin to decipher *The Da Vinci Code* and to suggest the real reason for its enormous popularity. The book appeals to many people because it expresses in such an engrossing way the new liberating religious option that has recently taken the West by storm.” Where have you seen signs of this new religious option in our culture?

Chapter 8: Secret Knowledge

1. In the description of the *Hieros Gamos* rite, we learn that it is through this rite that men open their minds to receive knowledge from the divine. How does this pagan ritual treat the female partner?
2. What is the difference between “spirituality” and Christianity?
3. Contrast the pagan mantra (“You are at your best when you are not thinking”) to the admonition in scripture to “take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5).
4. How do you define sin? Where does the concept of sin come from—man or God? What does the feeling of guilt have to do

with sin? Is sin a problem that needs to be dealt with or simply a part of life?

Chapter 9: The Clash of the Symbols

1. What roles do symbols play in the church? Do symbols play a part in your spiritual life?
2. What symbols are mentioned in the Bible? Which ones have positive connotations? Which ones have negative meanings?
3. Is it necessary to believe in a literal Satan in order to be a Christian? What would Satan's purpose be? Do you believe in Satan? Why or why not?
4. Why do you think some Christians are embracing the message of goddess worship?

Chapter 10: Cracking the Code

1. What does the phrase "The End of Days" mean to Christians? What does it mean to pagans?
2. What would a "non-Christian Jesus" look and act like? Does the world need a "non-Christian Jesus"?
3. The Goddess promises unity and peace. Does Christianity hold the same promise for everyone on earth?
4. What is meant by C. S. Lewis's comment, "God is a particular Thing"?
5. After reading *The Da Vinci Code*, was your image of Jesus changed? If so, how? Has your image of Jesus changed now that you have read *Cracking Da Vinci's Code*? How?