



True Foundations

*Living Truth for Lifelong Growth*

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*Study Guide for  
The Da Vinci Code:  
A Quest for Answers*

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## How to Use This Group Study Guide

These group study notes are offered as a free download, and are intended to help prepare men, women, and youth to make the most of the unprecedented opportunity presented to Christians by the release of *The Da Vinci Code* book, movie and DVD. They are appropriate for use in Sunday school, small group settings, and youth groups with equal effectiveness.

The only tools needed for these short (45-minutes) studies will be to print out these notes (for the group leader only), copy the necessary handouts for participants, and make sure each participant has a Bible and a pen or pencil and a few other items (such as index cards). As part of these studies, you will need an ample supply of *The Da Vinci Code: The Quest for Answers* for each participant.

These study notes contain many discussion questions designed to encourage thought and maximum participation in getting a group to an intended destination. Since each group is unique, however, feel free to adapt the questions to your situation.

**DON'T BE AFRAID OF SILENCE.** Try to create an atmosphere in which careful thought is encouraged—by the wise use of silence. Allow a brief time for thought after each question if necessary, then signal for someone to speak up by simply asking, "Anybody?" or "Someone finish your thought out loud."

**LET DISCUSSION FOLLOW ITS OWN PATH** (without letting the group stray too far). Don't be in a hurry to move to the next question in your study notes, but be careful not to let the group stray into areas not related to the topic of discussion.

**FOLLOW A COMMENT WITH ANOTHER QUESTION** as often as possible. After someone has made an observation, ask "Can you think of an example?" or ask how the rest of the group reacts to that statement.

**DON'T FEEL OBLIGATED TO ASK ALL** (or exclusively) the questions in the study notes. If your group's time is limited, highlight the questions you wish to ask. Add questions suited to your own group as discussion develops.

## Group Study: Session 1

### BEFORE THE STUDY

- Obtain ample copies of the book, *The Da Vinci Code: A Quest for Answers*. You will want to ensure that every participant will leave the study with a copy.

*Future Consideration: You may want to obtain additional copies as you move forward. This will depend on the strategy your group devises for using the book post-movie release.*

- Print enough sample copies of the magazine, *The Da Vinci Code: A Companion Guide to the Movie*. You will want to ensure that every participant has a chance to review a sample copy of the magazine.

*Future Consideration: You may want to obtain quantities of the full 20-page printed magazine. The final quantity will depend upon the commitments you solidify by the end of this session on how your group will use the magazine post-movie release.*

- Print ample copies of Reproducible Handout 1.a, titled "Our Response" for each participant. This handout will serve as a summary of your group strategy as well as a guide to solidify commitments.
- Print three copies of Reproducible Handout 1.b, titled "A Quest for Answers – Typical Cultural Response in Anywhere, USA." Select three participants to read the parts for Sam, Sally, and Steve. Provide the three selected participants with the one-page script a few minutes before the session.
- Take a Bible and these notes to the study.

### WELCOME AND INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Welcome everyone, and ask each group member to state their name, and then briefly relate the route they took to get to this study. [Go first yourself, being careful to model how brief you want everyone else to be in sharing]

### PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

The following talking points are designed for the leader to introduce the purpose of the first study session.

"Just as not all of us got here tonight by the same route, there are many different routes people take to come to believe in God or trust in Jesus Christ.

"The purpose of this study is to take advantage of an unprecedented opportunity to discuss spiritual topics with our friends and neighbors, coworkers and classmates. It's an opportunity to express what we believe and explain why we believe what we believe—and all in a way that's as current as a new movie.

"We are going to spend just three sessions together. In these sessions we will prepare and equip ourselves, with God's help, to take advantage of that opportunity and set the stage for spiritual discussions with anyone who reads *The Da Vinci Code* book or sees *The Da Vinci Code* movie.

"Many folks across the country will be motivated and intrigued to engage in discussions after the movie is released. Let us prepare ourselves to engage in conversations of substance that will help seekers and skeptics make informed spiritual decisions to follow Jesus Christ."

Open the session in prayer, or ask someone in the group to pray.

## **SURVEY QUESTIONS**

Survey participants with a series of questions providing ample time for a response.

"Has anyone here read the book, *The Da Vinci Code*, by Dan Brown?"

[IF YES]

"What did you think of it?"

[IF NO]

"What have you heard about it?"

[IF the movie has been released]

"Has anyone seen the *The Da Vinci Code* movie?"

"What did you think of the movie?"

"How would you compare the book and the movie?"

"Whether or not you've read the book [or seen the movie], you'll learn through the short course of this study about some of the claims and distortions the book (and the movie) makes. We will also be reading together a book entitled *The Da Vinci Code: A Quest for Answers*, which together with this study will

equip us to turn this blockbuster book and movie into an opportunity for God to change people's lives.

"In order to do that, we're going to learn from the Bible, and look for illustration to the approach taken in *The Da Vinci Code: A Quest for Answers*."

## STUDY AND DISCUSSION

Invite participants to turn to 1 Peter 3:15.

Ask someone to read aloud 1 Peter 3:15 (preferably from the God's Word Translation, which is the translation used for these studies):

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But dedicate your lives to Christ as Lord. Always be ready to defend your confidence {in God} when anyone asks you to explain it. However, make your defense with gentleness and respect (1 Peter 3:15, GW).

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Begin the discussion using the following and give ample time for answers.

"This short verse will be very helpful to us as we prepare to enter spiritual conversations with people who've read *The Da Vinci Code* or seen the movie. It identifies four crucial characteristics of an effective way to approach opportunities like this."

"Can anyone identify the first characteristic you see in 1 Peter 3:15, that we should reflect if we're going to express to people what we believe and explain why we believe what we believe?" [NOTE: The answer you're looking for is expressed in the first phrase: "dedicate your lives to Christ as Lord"]

### 1. DEDICATION

Ask the following questions, providing participants with ample time to answer.

"Why do you think Peter might have mentioned that first?"

"Do you think this dedication Peter is talking about is a 'one-time-only' dedication, or is it something we are supposed to do regularly?"

“What impact will it have on our spiritual conversations with others if our lives and our efforts are dedicated to Christ before we even attempt to strike up spiritual conversations with people?”

“Does anyone have any other thoughts or comments about this?”

“Can anyone identify the next characteristic we should reflect if we’re going to express to people what we believe and explain why we believe what we believe?” [NOTE: The answer you’re hoping for is expressed in the phrase, “always be ready”]

## 2. PREPARATION

Ask the following questions, providing participants with ample time to answer.

“What sorts of things do you think might be involved in ‘always be[ing] ready,’ as Peter puts it?”

*[NOTE: Possible answers include prayer, Bible memorization, Bible study, and preparation such as this group study]*

“Do you think this ‘readiness’ Peter is talking about means we have to wait for people to come to us?”

“What if you or I don’t necessarily feel ready when someone asks us a question or gives us an opportunity to explain our confidence in God?”

“Does anyone have any other thoughts or comments about this?”

“Can anyone identify the next characteristic we should reflect if we’re going to express to people what we believe and explain why we believe what we believe?” [NOTE: The answer you’re looking for is expressed in the phrase, “when anyone asks you to explain it”]

## 3. CONVERSATION

Ask the following questions, providing participants with ample time to answer.

“What might be implied in Peter’s use of words: ‘when anyone asks you’?”

*[Possible answers: a relationship, a conversation, a process of give-and-take, rather than a heavily one-sided 'witnessing' situation]*

"Do you think being ready for someone to ask means we can't ask questions ourselves? Do you think it implies we shouldn't try to start the conversation?"

"Does anyone have any other thoughts or comments about this?"

"Can anyone identify the final characteristic we would be wise to reflect if we're going to express to people what we believe and explain why we believe what we believe?"

[NOTE: The answer you're looking for is expressed in the phrase, "make your defense with gentleness and respect"]

#### 4. COOPERATION

Ask the following questions, providing participants with ample time to answer.

"What might be implied by this phrase?" [Possible answers include: maybe people were being too rude or disrespectful]

"Don't you think it's just common sense to use gentleness and respect? Do you think it's odd that Peter even had to make this statement?"

"Can you give any examples of what this gentleness and respect looks like in a spiritual conversation?"

*[Possible answers include: starting where the other person is, not dominating the conversation, being willing to listen, being willing to learn in addition to teaching, not interrupting, not "preaching," not acting like a know-it-all, expressing sincere interest in the other person's beliefs and opinions, cooperating with others in a mutual process of discovery instead of always being the "expert,"]*

"Does anyone have any other thoughts or comments about this?"

#### APPLICATION

Provide guidance on the application for what has been discussed thus far by summarizing as follows.

“It’s no coincidence that the four things we’ve just discussed from God’s Word are evident in *The Da Vinci Code: A Quest for Answers*, the book we’re going to read as we continue this study.

“DEDICATION: It’s not overt at the beginning of the book, but Chris—the character in the book who invites his friends Matt and Andrea to meet for spiritual conversations revolving around *The Da Vinci Code*—is a Christian, who has not only dedicated his life to Christ as Lord, but is intentionally pursuing the Christian’s mission of sharing the good news with others.

“PREPARATION: You’ll notice as you begin to read *A Quest for Answers* that Chris has prepared to give an answer. As the book begins, he’s already read *The Da Vinci Code* and he’s all set to invite his friends to learn more with him. As you read further, you’ll discover more and more about the extent of Chris’s preparation.

“CONVERSATION: If you pay close attention as you read the first few pages, you’ll notice that most of Chris’s interaction with Matt and Andrea involves asking questions. He didn’t preach at them; he invited them, asked them, interacted with them—even learned a few things from them. That’s a good model for all of us, to enter true spiritual conversations, talking and listening, giving and taking, asking and answering, in sincere interest and cooperation.

“COOPERATION: One of the best things you’ll see Chris doing as the book progresses is entering into a process of mutual discovery with Matt and Andrea. He involves them in researching questions they all have, instead of merely telling them what he wants them to know. He asks them for input and feedback, and lets them see and hear who he really is and what he really believes, even as he learns more about them and what they believe. He never seems to forget that they are his friends, and that they deserve to be treated with gentleness and respect.

“As we go on to the next two studies, please do everything you can to keep these four parts of the process in your mind and reflect them in your actions.”

## PRESENT THE STRATEGY

Cast the vision for an overall strategic response to *The Da Vinci Code* book and movie using the following talking points.

“This three-part study is designed so that our next two sessions will prepare us for discussions with some of our skeptical or seeking friends and neighbors in a process like Chris models in the book, *The Da Vinci Code: A Quest for Answers*. After the next two short sessions, you will be equipped to respond to questions raised by *The Da Vinci Code* book and movie.

“Each one of us has a personal choice to make regarding our level of involvement with *The Da Vinci Code* book and movie. Some of us will elect to accompany and perhaps even invite our skeptical and seeking friends to the movie. Some of us will not feel comfortable attending the movie. Regardless of our personal choice, we all want to be equipped with an appropriate response to those attending the movie.

“After the movie is released on May 19th, curiosity will be piqued and questions will arise naturally. Invariably you will see a scene similar to the following repeat itself across the country.

“Imagine this: It’s 7:30 p.m. on Friday night in Anywhere, USA. Three friends stroll out of a movie theater. The conversation goes something like this...

[Gesture to participants selected to play the role of Sam, Sally and Steve to begin reading from their script]

*Sam*: “So what did you think?”

*Sally*: “I didn’t know there were all these secret organizations hiding things like Jesus getting married and stuff.”

*Steve*: “I didn’t know that it was just a few people who came up with what we have in the Bible and that so many other books were left out.”

*Sally*: “It makes you wonder what else they’re not telling us about Jesus, the Bible and everything.”

[Readers pause for your comments]

This presents us with an opportunity to embrace an apparent interest and engage in spiritual discussions. We should welcome and respond to such inquiries with openness and readiness, being careful to engage in genuine conversation. Let's see what happens when we encourage our friends to take a closer look at the facts.

[Gesture to participant selected to play the role of Sam to continue reading from the script]

*Sam:* "Yes, I had similar questions. I read a short book recently that really helped me sort through a lot of the questions I had about the movie. I have extra copies I'd be happy to give you, if you'd like. Are you interested?"

[Sam hands a copy of the book to Sally and then offers one to Steve]

[Hand a copy of the book to each participant at this point]

Let's return to the movie scene one last time. At this point in the discussion, Sam should be watching and listening for clues from his friends. Let's assume that both Sally and Steve are showing signs of intrigue and interest in further dialogue.

[Gesture to participant selected to play the role of Sam to continue reading from the script]

*Sam:* "You know, I have been so intrigued by this conspiracy story, and if you're anything like me, you want to find out more and maybe talk through some of the things you find out. What would you think about maybe reading these books, and then getting together over coffee next week to discuss them?"

Much like Sam, you will be able to determine which of your friends are intrigued and interested in further dialogue. For those that are ready, take the opportunity to gently delve further.

After you loan out your copy of *The Da Vinci Code: A Quest for Answers*, arrange to meet in a casual setting such as a café. Our next two study sessions will prepare you to continue that dialogue with your friend(s). You will know fact from fiction. But more importantly, you will know which of the fallacies are more critical to understand. You will know, beyond a shadow of a doubt, the historical evidences that support Christianity. I'm excited about our next steps. I think

these next two sessions go beyond preparing us intellectually for a dialogue – the evidences are so strong that it invoked an emotional response for me. I think you'll find it refreshing and spiritually moving as well.

With that as a backdrop, I would like to open up a discussion. Let's discuss further ideas of how we can take advantage of *The Da Vinci Code* book and movie. To help guide us through the discussion let's take a look at the handout titled, "Our Strategic Response" and fill in the blanks as a group.

Refer to Reproducible Handout 1.b, entitled "*The Da Vinci Code – Our Strategic Response.*" Ask each participant to take a few minutes to fill in their response to the questions posed on the handout. Encourage them to write down the names of their friends, coworkers, classmates, and neighbors with whom they wish to dialogue regarding *The Da Vinci Code* book or movie. (Allow ample time for this)

Remember to be sensitive to the fact that some folks will not wish to support Dan Brown or Hollywood by purchasing the book or buying tickets to the movie. Others will see this as an investment in opening doors to spiritual conversations. You may want to point out that there are other options that do not *directly* support Dan Brown, such as purchasing a used copy of the book.

Ask how many names each participant has written down on the handout. NOTE: Each participant should identify no less than six people to engage. For every six identified, you may anticipate 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of those will be acted upon, which can guide you in ordering books or copies of the printed mini-magazine. To improve participation, you may want to ask for a financial commitment. If your group is willing to contribute funds to purchase the books (\$3.95 each) or mini-magazines (50 copies for \$17.50), they are taking on ownership and the probability is much higher that they will use the available resources. If that is the case, you should order 100% of their projection.

Distribute copies of the book, *The Da Vinci Code: A Quest for Answers*. Let each participant know that this is his or her complimentary copy of the book. Let them know that your church has invested in the book for those that are committed to participating in this three-part study session. If they accept this book, ask that they be committed to reading it in its entirety over the course of the next two weeks. Remind them that they can loan this book out

to their friends. If they would like additional copies, they can order online for \$3.95 at [www.davinciquest.org](http://www.davinciquest.org).

After your group has had ample time to review both the book and the mini-magazine, ask them for other suggestions as to how these valuable resources could be put to good use. (Allow ample time for this) After enough suggestions have been made, you may add the following possible uses:

- hand out free magazine to moviegoers on their way out of *The Da Vinci Code* movie
- leave copies or magazine in doctors' and dentists' offices
- include magazine in church programs for members' to give away to friends

Ask participants for further ideas allowing ample time for response.

"Are there any other ideas you can think of that would help us make the most of this great opportunity?"

Summarize the group's response, using page 2 of the handout as a guide.

## CONCLUSION

1. Make sure everyone in the group has a copy of *The Da Vinci Code: A Quest for Answers* to read before the next session.
2. Ask everyone to read the preface and chapters 1-3 of the *Quest for Answers* book (it's a very short book) before the next session.
3. Set dates for the next two studies.
4. Close the meeting in prayer...perhaps with a prayer of dedication, encouraging participants to "dedicate your lives to Christ as Lord," whether it is to renew or redouble that dedication.

## Group Study: Session 2

### BEFORE THE STUDY

- Make sure you have ample copies of the book, *The Da Vinci Code: A Quest for Answers*. Some people may come to this discussion group without their copy, and others may not have their own copy. Plan to supply a copy of the book to anyone who needs one.
- Take a Bible and these notes to the study. Also take your copy of *The Da Vinci Code: A Quest for Answers*.
- Photocopy Reproducible Handout 2.a for each participant to use during this session.

### WELCOME AND INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Welcome everyone, and ask each group member to state his or her name, and then briefly share what they consider to have been the most important day of their life. [Go first yourself, being careful to model how brief you want everyone else to be in sharing]

### PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

The following talking points are designed for the leader to introduce the purpose of the second study session.

“Part of our purpose in gathering together for these studies about *The Da Vinci Code* is to prepare ourselves to possibly play a role in what may become ‘most important days’ for some of our friends, neighbors, and acquaintances.

Open the session in prayer, or ask someone in the group to pray.

### SURVEY QUESTIONS

Survey participants with a series of questions providing ample time for a response.

“How far has everyone gotten in reading *The Da Vinci Code: A Quest for Answers*?”

“What are your initial reactions?” (allow ample time for responses)

Next, ask the following questions, providing participants with ample time to answer.

"Let's talk about some of the primary claims of *The Da Vinci Code* and some of the information presented in *A Quest for Answers*."

"What are some of the claims *The Da Vinci Code* book or movie make about Jesus, the church, and the Bible?"  
(Possible answers include: The Bible is a product of man, the Emperor Constantine "compiled" the Bible as we know it, the Church conspired through history to suppress the "sacred feminine," Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene, Mary Magdalene bore Jesus' child.)

"Do you consider each of those claims to be of equal importance, or do you think some are more important to study and discuss than others?"

## STUDY AND DISCUSSION

Invite participants to turn to 1 Corinthians 15: 1-4.

Ask someone to read aloud 1 Corinthians 15: 1-4 (preferably from the God's Word Translation, which is the translation used for these studies):

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Brothers and sisters, I'm making known to you the Good News which I already told you, which you received, and on which your faith is based. In addition, you are saved by this Good News if you hold on to the doctrine I taught you, unless you believed it without thinking it over. I passed on to you the most important points of doctrine that I had received:

Christ died to take away our sins as the Scriptures predicted.  
He was placed in a tomb.

He was brought back to life on the third day as the Scriptures predicted (1 Corinthians 15: 1-4, GW).

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Ask the following questions about the text, allowing ample time for group members to answer:

What does Paul say are "the most important points" of all he taught the early Christians in Corinth?

Two elements are common to Paul's "most important points."  
What are they? ("Christ" and "the Scriptures")

Why do you think he emphasized these few things as "the most important points?"

(the answer you're looking for is something along the lines of, "because these are the things on which our faith is based—to use Paul's words from 1 Corinthians 15. If the Bible is not reliable, then it cannot be trusted as the Good News on which our faith is based. And if Jesus is not who he said he is, then his promise of love, forgiveness, and salvation cannot be trusted")

Summarize the discussion by saying,

"While there are many claims in *The Da Vinci Code* that may irritate—even anger—Christians and Christian churches, many of those points are clearly secondary to the primary thrust of the book's plot, and that is to undermine the Bible's reliability and undercut the deity of Jesus.

These issues are central because, **IF** the Bible is unreliable *and* Jesus is not who he said he is, then:

- God's truth isn't true;
- God's love isn't real;
- God's Son isn't our Savior, and;
- God's plans for us and our salvation are as fictional as Dan Brown's book.

"We are going to focus on 'the most important points' in our time together, as Paul did with the Corinthian church. Those 'most important' points are the reliability of the Bible—primarily the New Testament—and the deity of Jesus Christ.

"We will explore the reliability of the New Testament in this session, and the deity of Christ in the next."

Distribute Reproducible Handout 2.a ("The Good News...on Which Your Faith is Based").

Read (or ask a volunteer to read) the handout. Be prepared to patiently explain the content of each table, indicating the textual reliability of ancient literature and the textual reliability of New Testament documents (according to two standards—the time interval between the original and the earliest copy, and how many manuscripts are available to scholars and researchers.

Then ask,

“Based on that handout we just reviewed together, what would you say to someone who wonders whether the New Testament accounts can be trusted?” (Allow ample time for response)

Conclude the discussion portion of the session and allow ample time for response.

“Are there any other ideas or concepts you would like us to discuss, if not now, then perhaps the next time we get together?”

## CONCLUSION

1. Make sure everyone in the group has a copy of *The Da Vinci Code: The Quest for Answers*.
2. Ask everyone to read the chapters 4-6 of the *Quest for Answers* book before the next session.
3. Establish (or remind everyone) of the date and time for the next study.
4. Close the meeting in prayer (or ask someone in the group to do so).

## Group Study: Session 3

### BEFORE THE STUDY

- Make sure you have ample copies of the book, *The Da Vinci Code: A Quest for Answers*. Some people may come to this discussion group without their copy, and others may not have their own copy. Plan to supply a copy of the book to anyone who needs one.
- Make sure you have enough copies of the Reproducible Handout 3.a (“A Quest for Jesus”), and Reproducible Handout 3.b (“A Quest for Truth”), found at the end of this study, along with enough Bibles and pens to ensure that every participant can complete the handout (Note: The first two pages of Reproducible Handout 3.a are best reproduced on both sides of a single sheet of paper).
- Take a Bible and these notes to the study. Also take your copy of *The Da Vinci Code: A Quest for Answers*.

### WELCOME AND INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Welcome everyone, thank them for coming, and ask each person to state his or her name, and then make a statement about himself or herself. The next person must then try to guess whether it is true or false (a shorter version of the childhood game, “Truth or Dare”) before introducing himself or herself. [Go first yourself, being careful to model how brief you want everyone else to be in sharing].

### PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

The following talking points are designed for the leader to introduce the purpose of the third study session.

“Thank you, everyone, for sharing. And just as we may not always know whether other people are telling the truth or not, it can be hard to sort truth from falsehood in other areas, and certainly that’s true when it comes to things that happened two thousand years ago. Would you agree?”

Open the session in prayer, or ask someone in the group to pray.

### SURVEY QUESTIONS

Survey participants with a series of questions, providing ample time for participants to respond to each question.

"How far has everyone gotten in reading *The Da Vinci Code: A Quest for Answers*? Have you managed to finish the book?"

"What are your overall impressions?"

## STUDY AND DISCUSSION

Open the discussion by saying the following.

"Last time we got together, we said that while there are many claims in *The Da Vinci Code*, several of those points are of secondary importance. We committed to focusing on 'the most important points' in our time together, just as Paul did with the Corinthian church.

"Can anyone recall for the group what those 2 most important points were?" (Allow ample time for responses. The 'most important' points are the reliability of the Bible—primarily the New Testament—and the deity of Jesus Christ.)

Ask the group to turn again to 1 Corinthians 15: 1-4 (preferably from the God's Word Translation, which is the translation used for these studies). Read or ask someone to read the passage aloud:

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Brothers and sisters, I'm making known to you the Good News which I already told you, which you received, and on which your faith is based. In addition, you are saved by this Good News if you hold on to the doctrine I taught you, unless you believed it without thinking it over. I passed on to you the most important points of doctrine that I had received:

Christ died to take away our sins as the Scriptures predicted.

He was placed in a tomb.

He was brought back to life on the third day as the Scriptures predicted (1 Corinthians 15: 1-4, GW).

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Ask them to keep their Bibles open to that passage as you ask the following questions:

"As we meet now for our final session together, we're going to focus on the person of Jesus Christ, and primarily the claim made by *The Da Vinci Code*, that he was not divine...and, in fact, that neither he nor his first followers ever claimed that he was divine. As *The Da Vinci Code* states:

The early Church literally stole Jesus from his original followers, hijacking His human message, shrouding it in an impenetrable cloak of divinity, and using it to expand their own power (*The Da Vinci Code*, p. 233).

“Based on what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15, do you think he would consider that claim something worth exploring and discussing? If so, why?” (Allow ample time for response before continuing)

“It should be pointed out that Paul did not say in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 that Jesus was divine. He says the most important points are that he died, was buried, and rose again. So why would you or I think it important that *The Da Vinci Code* asserts that Jesus never claimed to be divine?”

“In order to adequately answer that question, we have to explore whether Jesus—and his earliest followers—did claim that he was only a man, or whether they claimed that he was divine.”

Distribute copies of Reproducible Handout 3.a (“A Quest for Jesus”), explaining as you do:

“The first page of this handout—front and back—contains textual evidence from reliable historical documents (which we discussed in our previous session) that clearly supports the conclusion that Jesus claimed to be divine. Let’s read through it together.”

Still referring to Reproducible Handout 3.a (“A Quest for Jesus”), say:

“The second page of this handout contains textual evidence from reliable historical documents that clearly supports the conclusion that Jesus’ earliest followers believed that he was divine. Let’s read through it together.”

Transition to the next question giving ample time for discussion, but be alert to point out Chris’s depiction of Jesus as either a liar, lunatic...or Lord, as found on pages 87-91 of *A Quest for Answers*.

"If the available evidence overwhelmingly indicates—and it does—that Jesus himself claimed to be both human and divine, then what kind of choices does that present us with, in terms of how we respond to him and his claims?"

At the appropriate moment in this discussion, distribute copies of Reproducible Handout 3.b ("A Quest for Truth"). Ask participants to review the handout silently and then ask the following, allowing ample time for discussion.

"Does this clarify or confuse the issue for you?"

Then ask (allowing ample time for discussion),

"Based on those handouts we just reviewed together, how would you pursue a spiritual conversation with someone who was intrigued or persuaded by *The Da Vinci Code's* contention that Jesus was hijacked and 'turned into' a deity sometime during the third century A.D.?"

Conclude the discussion portion of the session and allow ample time for response.

"As we conclude this three-session series, let me point out to you that the path we just followed in these past two sessions—as we discussed the critical subjects of the Bible's reliability and the deity of Jesus—is much the same path you will want to walk with any skeptics or seekers you engage in spiritual conversations.

"I encourage you to review our study of 1 Peter 3:15 and remember the four characteristics of a Biblical approach to spiritual conversations with skeptics and seekers, as we explored them in our first session.

"I also encourage you, as you enter into such conversations, to remember the focus of sessions two and three, and to be alert to turn the conversation to the issues that really matter. These past two session studies are totally reproducible in your conversations with skeptics and seekers.

“Let me also point out that the handouts we used in sessions two and three can be used—or, even better, adapted slightly—for use in those spiritual conversations.

“And, finally, I urge each of us to consider this group as a continuing resource. This shouldn’t be the last time we discuss *The Da Vinci Code* in our time together. As we enter into conversations and relationships with skeptics and seekers, let’s take the time to share what we have learned. Let’s also keep a running list of other Christians you think might be interested in using *The Da Vinci Code* as an opportunity for God to change people’s lives. Once we have sufficient level of interest, we can repeat this 3-part study session for others.”

## CONCLUSION

1. If it seems appropriate, mention any plans or options that are available for follow-up (discipleship group, new believers’ class, Sunday worship, etc.).
2. Invite everyone to repeat this process, and schedule the next offering of Group Study 1 in this three-part series.
3. To those who are interested, issue (or give the chance to purchase) copies of *The Da Vinci Code: A Quest for Answers* so they can pass along to friends and others that are interested in subsequent studies like this.
4. Close in prayer.

## The Da Vinci Code - Our Strategic Response

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To the right, you will find our approach to *The Da Vinci Code* book and movie. Our group will adopt this approach as well as brainstorm additional ideas. Once this document is complete, we will have outlined and committed to definitive steps to take full advantage of this opportunity to engage in spiritual dialogue with seekers and skeptics.

### Our Approach

- Invite *or* talk to those who attended movie
- Share your book
- Continue dialogue on book at café

Take a moment to answer the following questions 1 through 3 on your own. In a moment, we will collect and summarize our commitments as a group.

### 1. How committed are you to engaging in this three-session study?

- Yes, I can commit to the three 45-minute session times
- Yes, I can commit to spending 1-2 hours during the week to read the *Quest for Answers* book prior to session 2 and 3

### 2. How comfortable are you in engaging your friends in discussions related to *The Da Vinci Code* book or movie?

- Yes, I want to engage \_\_\_\_ friends in discussion. Their names are:

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- Yes, I want to give \_\_\_\_ friends a copy of the mini-magazine
- Yes, I am willing to put \$\_\_\_\_\_ toward a collective fund to off-set the cost of the mini-magazine
- Yes, I will loan my *Da Vinci Quest* book to friends who show further interest.
  - In addition, I may want \_\_\_\_ additional copies of the book

### 3. Do you have additional ideas on how to use these resources?

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## REPRODUCIBLE HANDOUT 1.A

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### Summary of our group's commitment and strategic response:

- \_\_\_\_ individuals signed on to read the book and participate in study group
- Our group as a whole will engage in discussions with \_\_\_\_ friends
- We hope to hand out \_\_\_\_ copies of the mini-magazine
- We hope to loan or give out \_\_\_\_\_ copies of *The Da Vinci Quest* book

### Additional ideas on how our group wants to use these resources:

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## A Quest for Answers - Typical Cultural Response in Anywhere, USA

*[Select three readers to play the role of Sam, Sally and Steve]*

After the movie is released on May 19th, curiosity will be peaked and questions will arise naturally. Invariably you will see a scene similar to the following repeat itself across the country.

[7:30 p.m. on Friday night in Anywhere, USA. Three friends stroll out of movie theater.]

- Sam "So what did you think?"
- Sally "I didn't know there were all these secret organizations hiding things like Jesus getting married and stuff."
- Steve "Yeah, and I didn't know that it was just a few people who came up with what we have in the Bible and that so many other books were left out."
- Sally "It makes you wonder what else they're not telling us about Jesus, the Bible and everything."

**[Pause for Leader Comments - This presents us with an opportunity to embrace an apparent interest and engage in spiritual discussions.]**

- Sam "Yes, I had similar questions. I read a short book recently that really helped me sort through a lot of the questions I had about the movie. I have extra copies I'd be happy to give you, if you'd like. Are you interested?"
- [Sam hands a copy of the book to Sally and then offers one to Steve]

**[Pause for Leader Comments - Many of your friends will be intrigued and interested in further dialogue. For those that are ready, take this opportunity to gently delve further.]**

- Sam "You know I have been so intrigued by this conspiracy story. I don't know if you've heard of Josh McDowell, but he is a reputable historian in the Christian community. He has an interesting story – he started out as a skeptic, spent years researching the historical claims of Christianity and now he's one of the strongest proponents and most read author on the subject. In fact there's an interview with Josh on page 14 in that magazine. I love his last line – "True historical data holds no skeletons for belief... you want to look for answers in history not fiction." I even picked up his new book *The Da Vinci Code: A Quest for Answers*. I loved it and I think you would too. I can loan you my copy. It would be fun to explore this together. Do you want to get together over coffee next week?"

## The Good News...on Which Your Faith is Based

The Apostle Paul talks about “the Good News...on which your faith is based.” But if that Good News is unreliable, then our faith (and all it teaches us about the way to experience forgiveness of sins and a meaningful relationship with God) is built on a shaky foundation.

So, what if—as *The Da Vinci Code* claims—the New Testament was an invention, a “revisionist history,” basically, written and adopted centuries after the events they record in order to support a political and religious power play?

Historians evaluate the textual reliability of ancient literature according to two standards: (1) what the time interval is between the original and the earliest copy; and (2) how many manuscripts are available.

So, for example, virtually everything we know today about Julius Caesar’s exploits in the Gallic Wars is derived from ten manuscript copies, the earliest of which dates to within 1,000 years of the time *The Gallic Wars* was written. Other generally accepted texts from the ancient world are listed below, with the time interval between the original and the earliest copy, and the number of manuscripts available to scholars and researchers.<sup>1</sup>

**Textual Reliability Standards Applied to Classical Literature**

AUTHOR	BOOK	DATE WRITTEN	EARLIEST COPIES	TIME GAP	NO. OF COPIES
Homer	<i>Iliad</i>	800 B.C.	c. 400 B.C.	c. 400 yrs.	643
Herodotus	<i>History</i>	480–425 B.C.	c. A.D. 900	c. 1,350 yrs.	8
Thucydides	<i>History</i>	460–400 B.C.	c. A.D. 900	c. 1,300 yrs.	8
Plato		400 B.C.	c. A.D. 900	c. 1,300 yrs.	7
Demosthenes		300 B.C.	c. A.D. 1100	c. 1,400 yrs.	200
Caesar	<i>Gallic Wars</i>	100–44 B.C.	c. A.D. 900	c. 1,000 yrs.	10
Livy	<i>History of Rome</i>	59 B.C.–A.D. 17	4 <sup>th</sup> cent. (partial) mostly 10 <sup>th</sup> cent.	c. 400 yrs. c. 1,000 yrs.	1 partial 19 copies
Tacitus	<i>Annals</i>	A.D. 100	c. A.D. 1100	c. 1,000 yrs.	20
Pliny Secundus	<i>Natural History</i>	A.D. 61–113	c. A.D. 850	c. 750 yrs.	7

Clearly, Homer’s *Iliad* is far more reliable than the other texts of antiquity. It is supported by 643 manuscript copies in existence today, with a mere 400-year time gap between the date of composition and the earliest copies we have available for examination today. But that standard pales in comparison to the New Testament.

Using the accepted standard for evaluating the textual reliability of ancient texts, the New Testament stands alone. It has no equal. No other book of the ancient world can even approach the reliability of the New Testament. (See chart of “Textual Reliability Standards Applied to the Bible.”)<sup>2</sup> Nearly 25,000 manuscripts of

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from *The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, 38.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

## REPRODUCIBLE HANDOUT 2.A

the New Testament repose in the libraries and universities of the world. The earliest of these is a fragment of John's gospel currently located in the John Rylands Library of Manchester, England; it has been dated to within *50 years* of the date when the apostle John penned the original! (More extensive details of when many of these manuscripts were written can be found in *The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict*).

### Textual Reliability Standards Applied to the Bible

AUTHOR	BOOK	DATE WRITTEN	EARLIEST COPIES	TIME GAP	NO. OF COPIES
John	New Testament	A.D. 50-100	c. A.D. 130	+50 yrs.	Fragments
The rest of the New Testament authors			c. A.D. 200 (books)	100 yrs.	
			c. A.D. 250 (most of N.T.)	150 yrs.	
			c. A.D. 325 (complete N.T.)	225 yrs.	+5,600 Greek mss.
			c. A.D. 366–384 (Latin Vulgate trans.)	284 yrs.	
			c. A.D. 400–500 (other trans.)	400 yrs.	+19,000 trans. mss.
			<b>TOTALS</b>	50–400 yrs.	+24,900 mss.

Based on the evidence of history, no other book compares to the Bible in manuscript authority and attestation (and, contrary to the fictitious and erroneous statements in *The Da Vinci Code*, discoveries like the Dead Sea Scrolls have only added to that authority).

By contrast, consider the scholarly consensus surrounding the “gospels” that are favorably—preferentially—cited in *The Da Vinci Code*:

The Gospel of Thomas...	early- to mid-second century A.D.
The Infancy Gospel of Thomas...	early- to late-second century A.D.
The Gospel of Mary...	mid-second- to third-century A.D.
The Gospel of Philip...	mid-second- to third-century A.D.

In other words, these “gospels” are dated by scholars to between a hundred and two hundred years after Jesus' lifetime, while the New Testament Gospels (see the chart on p. 24 of *The Da Vinci Code: A Quest for Answers*) date to within a few decades.

## A Quest for Jesus - The Historical Record

### JESUS CLAIMED TO BE DIVINE

#### MATTHEW 28:18-20

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*"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."*

#### MARK 2: 5

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*"Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralyzed man, 'Son, your sins are forgiven.'"*

Once again Jesus takes it upon himself to do something that no man has the authority to do: forgive sin. Some people might say that Jesus was just simply stating the fact that his sins would be forgiven and not actually granting it. Or some may say that Jesus was personally forgiving this man, and not actually clearing his debt to God. These assumptions sound good but are actually disproved in the next two verses. That is where we see the people's response to Jesus. If Jesus were simply stating a fact or personally forgiving this man, it wouldn't have been a big deal and there would not have been a negative reaction. But verses 6 and 7 tell us that after Jesus forgave the paralytic, the scribes reasoned in their hearts,

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*"Why does this Man speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?"*

From the scribes' own response, we can see what it was that Christ was doing: He was granting forgiveness of sins, something that only God could do.

#### LUKE 23: 42, 43

A thief on the cross next to Jesus asked Him to remember him when He comes into His kingdom. Jesus responds by saying,

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*"Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise."*

Jesus took it upon himself to grant the thief's request, though only God can permit entrance to paradise.

#### JOHN 5:23,24

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*"He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him. Most assuredly, I say unto you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed on from death to life."*

#### JOHN 8:19

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*"You know neither Me nor My Father. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also."*

## REPRODUCIBLE HANDOUT 3.A

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### JOHN 8:58-59

On one occasion, when Jesus started talking about Abraham—who had lived thousands of years earlier—his opponents ridiculed him for speaking as though he knew Abraham. Jesus responded,

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*"Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am."*

With those words, Jesus employed the ineffable name of God—which his detractors clearly understood to be a claim to deity, for the next verse says,

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*"Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him, but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple."*

### JOHN 14:1

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*"You believe in God, believe also in Me."*

Notice he did not say "believe me." All of us say that. He said "believe in Me"... in the same way he said to believe in God, as deity.

### JOHN 14:6-7, 9-11

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*"I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him. ... He who has seen Me has seen the Father; ... Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me; otherwise believe because of the works themselves."*

### JOHN 19

When Jesus was put on trial, we are told one of the reasons he was on trial. Pilate was going to release him, but the Jews responded,

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*"We have a law, and by that law He ought to die because He made himself out to be the Son of God" (vs. 7).*

Some may say, "Well, we are all sons and daughters of God," but the Jewish leaders clearly believed Jesus was making a unique claim, one which equated him with God.

### JOHN 10

After claiming, in vs. 28,

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*"I give eternal life to them,"*

Jesus states in vs. 30,

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*"I and the Father are one."*

The Jewish leaders understood what he was claiming, and so tried to stone him. Jesus questioned them as to why they wanted to stone him and they responded,

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*"For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy; and because You, being a man, make Yourself out to be God" (vs. 34).*

The leaders of the Jews clearly understood that Jesus was claiming to be divine.

## REPRODUCIBLE HANDOUT 3.A

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### JESUS' FOLLOWERS DESCRIBED HIM AS DIVINE:

#### THOMAS

When Thomas saw Jesus after the resurrection, he cried out, in no uncertain terms,

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*"My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28).*

#### JOHN

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*"In the beginning was the Word [Jesus], and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. ... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:1-3, 14).*

*"And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life" (1John 5: 20).*

#### PAUL

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*"Of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God" (Rom. 9: 5).*

He also said of Jesus,

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*"Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Phil. 2: 6-11).*

Paul said, in Col. 1: 15-17,

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*"He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist."*

#### JUSTIN MARTYR

...wrote of Jesus, "being the first-begotten Word of God, is even God"; "both God and Lord of hosts."

#### IRENAUS

... referred to Jesus as "our Lord, and God, and Savior, and King."

#### CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA

... called him "truly most manifest Deity, He that is made equal to the Lord of the universe; because he was His Son."

## A Quest for Truth

In light of the historical evidence, there can be little doubt that Jesus claimed to be God—a claim his earliest followers declared to be certified by the fact of his resurrection from the dead after his crucifixion (e.g., see Acts 2:32-36).

Therefore, the possible conclusions we can reach in light of the evidence can be charted as follows:

