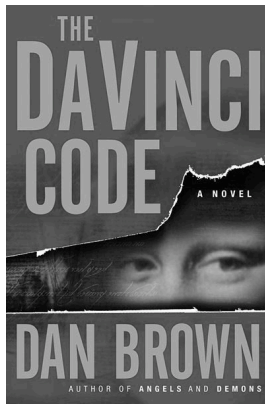




Providential Reasons

Small Group Work Sheet
February 13, 2011



Part 1 - Ice Breaker

•Have you read, The Da Vinci Code? What did you think of it? If you haven't read it, do you know someone who has? What was their reaction to the book?

•This sermon is the most *technical* of this series. What did you not understand that you would like the group to discuss tonight?

Part 2 - Sermon Review

•Where were the books of the Old Testament kept?

•Why is the table of contents

between the Hebrew Bible (Our Old Testament) and the English Old Testament different? Examine them in the graphics below to see the difference.

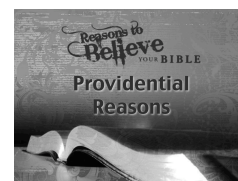
- How is Luke 11:50-51 an incidental proof of the books Jesus accepted as His Bible?
- What was the criteria for accepting as authoritative the books we have in our New Testament?
- What books in the Old Testament and New Testament was a small minority unsure about and why?
- By what time in history were the books of our New Testament accepted as authoritative by the church in the ancient world? What time in history did Gnostic and other false gospels begin to appear? What time in history did church councils create official lists of the authoritative New Testament books the church recognized? What do these dates tell us about the authority of the late gnostic gospels and the churches response to them?
- How do Catholics and Protestants look at the Bible differently?

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- Why does the Catholic Bible have more books in it than the Protestant Bible? What would you say to someone who said that as Protestants, we are missing part of the Bible?
- Who assembled the books of the Bible together and how was it done?
- What would you say to a friend who was struggling to trust their Bible after reading *The Da Vinci Code*?
- What parts of the message are you struggling to understand. Discuss them with the small group and read the sermon manuscript online if necessary.
- Go to www.Christ2Rculture.com and click the [Message of the Week](#) button. At the bottom of the message, leave your unanswered questions and sermon thoughts for the church.

THE OLD TESTAMENT			
Genesis	1	Ecclesiastes	553
Exodus	45	Song of Solomon	560
Leviticus	81	Isaiah	566
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1 Samuel	225	Joel	760
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Part 3 - Digging Deeper... *The rest of The Da Vinci Code story*

Who is Mary Magdalene?

There are many women named Mary in the Bible. The best known is, of course, Mary the mother of Jesus. Then there is Mary of Bethany, who lived with her sister, Martha, and her brother, Lazarus, who was raised from the dead by Jesus. This Mary was the one who poured perfume on Jesus' feet and wiped it with her hair (see John 11-12). Neither of these women is Mary Magdalene.

The Mary we are discussing is Mary Magdalene. Magdalene is not her last name; it designates the city she was from - the city of Magdalene in Galilee. This Mary had a rough history. Read Luke 8:1-3 to learn about it. She had been possessed by seven demons, a most severe affliction. Jesus delivered her from the demons and she was so grateful for what he did she devoted herself to his cause, giving of her time, service and financial support, and becoming part of his inner circle with the other disciples. Mary is included in many of the key scenes about Christ including his crucifixion, burial and perhaps most significant of all, she was the first witness of the resurrection. This is a prime example of not only how Jesus honored Mary, but how he elevated the role of women in his day.

Mary Magdalene and Jesus

In *The Da Vinci Code* a character of Brown's invention contends that this is not all that we know about Mary; she was married to Jesus, and the marriage is a matter of historical record. Nothing could be further from the truth. There is no historical record whatsoever supporting the idea that Mary was in a romantic relationship with Jesus, much less married to him. There is no evidence that indicates Mary had a relationship with Jesus beyond being a committed, devoted, spiritual follower.

Karen King, a history professor at Harvard University and one of the world's leading authorities on Mary Magdalene, states categorically that there was no such relationship between Mary and Jesus.

So where did Brown get this idea? From *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*, a book that was published in 1982 and that the New York Times Book Review called one of the all-time classic examples of pop pseudo-history. And what was the source of *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*'s information? Neither the Bible, nor ancient manuscripts, but French folklore.

What is the motivation behind such fabrications? Dan Brown himself has said on his website that he has a desire to promote the idea of the "sacred feminine" - goddess worship. One of the characters in the book says that "the quest for the Holy Grail is literally the quest to kneel before the bones of Mary Magdalene." In fact, the novel ends with the main character worshipping Mary Magdalene, seemingly experiencing her as a goddess.

The Art of Da Vinci

One of the more intriguing assertions made in Brown's novel is that there are hidden messages about all of this in Da Vinci's art. According to Brown, Leonardo filled his work with clues and signs pointing to Mary Magdalene as the wife of Jesus, mother of his child, and the Holy Grail.

The main work he focuses on is Leonardo Da Vinci's famed mural *The Last Supper*. Brown claims that in the painting, the apostle to the right of Jesus is not the apostle John but Mary Magdalene. Anyone who has seen this work agrees that the apostle John does look a bit feminine. Yet, art historians do not believe Leonardo was trying to portray a woman. It was common during the renaissance period to portray the apostle John as young, fair and clean-shaven.

It has also been observed that Da Vinci had a tendency to portray all young men in his paintings in a feminine manner. Whether this was due to his alleged homosexuality or his stylistic taste, we do not know.

Not only is the apostle next to Jesus in *The Last Supper* not Mary Magdalene, it was never intended to be construed as such. In Venice resides the preliminary sketches of the painting. Not only did Leonardo make the sketches but *he labeled each apostle in the painting*. Guess who is labeled next to Jesus,... John!

Brown also makes much of the fact there is no chalice in the picture, claiming that Leonardo wanted Mary to be seen as the Holy Grail. Yet even the most novice of art historians have pointed out that there was no chalice present because Leonardo wasn't painting the moment when the bread and the wine were being passed. The scene is the moment when Jesus announced that one of the apostles would betray him. That explains why each apostle has a look of shock on their face and why the face of Judas is shaded.

Readers must realize that *The Da Vinci Code* truly is a work of fiction even though Dan Brown claims his novel is based on countless facts. Most of his facts are either exaggerations or outright falsehoods. The biggest problem is that most people do not know the difference between fact and fantasy in his book.