

Lessons From Da Vinci

We must put down our protest signs and start a dialogue with others.

In Mid-November, The Da Vinci Code released on DVD. Looking back since the film premiered in May, recalling the deep feelings it stirred in our culture, I've been thinking about the reaction of the Christian community and what we can learn in retrospect.

I'm sure you'll remember that during the last few months before the movie opened there was a wave of anger that Sony Pictures would release a major film that essentially said the Christian faith was founded on false pretenses.

When I was interviewed on CNN, MSNBC, CNBC and other media outlets, I often discussed the fact that Christianity seems to be the last subject people can criticize without fear of reprisal.

Can you imagine if a major studio released a movie that said Islam was a fraud? The public would be outraged.

Recently on Comedy Central the producers of South Park put the network to the test and filmed scenes that disparaged both Muhammad and Jesus. The network cut the scene in which Muhammad was being made fun of. But with Jesus, the ridicule was just fine.

It's been interesting to see both the secular and faith communities react to Da Vinci. From the beginning, I called for a gracious strategy of engagement rather than protest. But now that time has passed and the DVD is released, what have we

learned?

Think before boycotting the media. Consider the history of boycotts. The leadership of the massive May 1 boycott on Mexican immigration are questioning its success. Many worry that it created bad feelings with the public and may have done more harm than good, in spite of the thousands who protested.

During the last boycott of Disney by a major denomination, the company said sales actually went up! So we need to be careful with boycotts and use them only when absolutely necessary.

Start a conversation with the culture. After my appearances on most of the talk shows, non-Christian producers and staff would come up to me and say, “Wow, I didn’t know there were Christians out there who thought this way.” They wanted to talk with someone about the film but were afraid of believers who publicly disapproved of it. We must put down our protest signs and start a dialogue with others.

Use the resources that are available. I was excited about all the seminars, books, teaching materials and other resources that were marshaled to point people to the truth of the Bible. Sites such as pointed thousands of people to some of our most brilliant scholars and leaders who provided important information to help people share their faith.

Even the Los Angeles Times reported on the incredible number of pastors who used the film to share correct information about Christianity.

Stay with the original assignment. Too many Christians get so caught up in controversial issues that they lose their focus

on reaching the world with the gospel. Yes, politics, culture, poverty, social problems, media and a host of other issues are important. But we need to address them in light of the Great Commission.

Know that a movie can't stop the faith. The film won't create a nation of agnostics or atheists. Yes, some will be duped, but frankly, the Christian faith has defeated the Roman Empire, and transformed music, literature, art, scholarship, and science throughout Europe and the West.

Although I'm always ready to share my faith and I am concerned about the moral decay of the culture, I'm not too worried that God needs defending. He'd rather I spend more time focusing on loving my neighbor.

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