

Make the Most of Da Vinci

Be ready to begin a conversation that could eventually change the culture.

I don't have to tell most Charisma readers that the new movie *The Da Vinci Code* isn't based on truth. In fact, although the story is highly fictional, many viewers will assume it's the real thing. The book was a best-seller, and I'm sure the movie will be big box office.

The fact is, there will always be plenty of other movies that scorn our religious values and offend our faith. So how should we react? Should we boycott, protest, complain or engage these often offensive entertainment projects?

I'm a big believer in engaging the culture—using these books and films to begin a conversation about the truth and how it can change people's lives. The media is the most intrusive influence on the planet, and that's why understanding its power is one of the most critical issues facing the church today. So as you think about your own personal reaction to the movie and how you'll discuss the film with your friends, co-workers and family, here are a few things to consider:

How you discuss the film reveals a great deal about your own relationship with God. Nonverbal aspects of a conversation say much more than words. Therefore, your attitude communicates just as much as the information you're sharing. Are you hostile? Defensive? Superior? Or do you react with love, looking for an opportunity to share the real story of your faith? That doesn't mean compromise, but it does mean sensitivity.

When it comes to entertainment, I'm not so sure God really needs defending. Yes, we should know the facts and doctrinal principles of our faith, but in cases like this God can handle this film and anything else quite well by Himself. Our job is to reach the world with the good news of Jesus Christ. Often, spending our time building fortresses to defend the faith or holding protest signs just distracts us from our real assignment.

First, consider how your non-Christian friends will respond to the message. They don't understand and therefore respect what the Bible says, so they don't share our worldview. Remember that perception is critical in today's culture. Jesus was remarkably aware of His audience and always responded sensitively to different types of people. Galatians 1:10 tells us that it's not about "pleasing men." I believe the world is looking for men and women who aren't afraid to stand up for the truth. But Acts 17 teaches us that we also have to engage and justify their attention in order to begin the conversation.

Know what you're talking about. It's interesting that the crowd's reaction to Jesus in Matthew 7 wasn't about how anointed He appeared, His speaking skills or even the content of His message. They remarked that Jesus spoke as "one having authority" (NKJV). We would do well to make sure we have our facts in order and speak from a position of expertise, so that whether or not the audience agrees with us they have to acknowledge that our argument makes sense.

I wish we lived in a world where everyone agreed with me, but I can't even get my wife to do that. In a democracy, people have the freedom to make outrageous statements, spark controversies of all kinds and offend. But I'm convinced that, with certain exceptions, the answer is engagement, not

building walls, protesting or boycotting.

Will The Da Vinci Code drive millions away from the historic Christian faith? No. But what it will do is give us one of the greatest platforms we've had in a long time for sharing our faith. For more information on the film and how you can respond, go to .

Don't waste this opportunity by holding a picket sign. Be ready to engage in a spirit of friendship and respect that will begin a conversation that could eventually change the culture.

Phil Cooke, PH.D., is a media consultant to ministries and churches worldwide. He publishes a free monthly e-mail newsletter, Ideas for Real Change. Find out more at . To read past columns in Charisma by Phil Cooke, log on