

Florida Baptist Historical Society Biography Collection

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The link you have chosen connects to the specific individual's resource files that provide the basis for information which the Historical Society has used to develop the respective biographical profile. The sources attached may include copies of articles gleaned from back issues of the *Florida Baptist Witness* and other news publications. Other resources include books, historical journal articles and church histories that are cited as documentation for the biography.

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Stevens, Bradley served as pastor of San Antonio Community Church.

By EBONY WINDOM
Times Staff Writer

Last month, the Rev. Jeff Olsen snagged a copy of *The Da Vinci Code*.

He had heard the buzz and wanted to uncover the truth for himself.

By the time Olsen had read the last page of *The Da Vinci Code*, he was eager to take the topic to the pulpit.

"Some churches want to ignore it. Some may protest it. We want to just create a dialogue," said Olsen, who leads Grace Community in Wesley Chapel.

The best-selling book raises controversial issues related to Christianity.

In *The Da Vinci Code*, author Dan Brown mentions puzzling clues found in several Da Vinci paintings, including *The Last Supper*. Brown writes that Jesus actually wed Mary Magdalene. And the book even questions Jesus' divinity.

"It questions the facts upon which people base their faith," Olsen said.

Now, the book has spawned a film by the same name, which is set to hit theaters Friday.

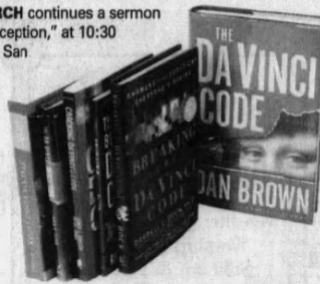
Some Catholic leaders have even urged folks to boycott the movie. Several Christian authors have offered their own take on the topic.

Pasco County pastors are weighing in. Instead of shying away from *The Da Vinci*

IF YOU GO

SAN ANTONIO COMMUNITY CHURCH continues a sermon series, "Understanding the Da Vinci Deception," at 10:30 a.m. Sunday at 31251 State Road 52 in San Antonio. Call (352) 588-9985.

GRACE COMMUNITY will launch a weekly sermon series on *The Da Vinci Code* starting at 9 and 10:30 a.m. May 21. The congregation meets at Kids R Kids Learning Center, 1540 Mansfield Blvd., in Wesley Chapel. The public can join the church's *The Da Vinci Code* discussion group at 6:30 p.m. May 23 at Holiday Cafe, 5344 County Road 581, in Wesley Chapel.



Code, Olsen sees the book and upcoming film as an opportunity for outreach. Next week, Olsen will launch a three-part sermon based on the novel. Then he'll hold a series of discussion groups at a nearby coffee shop.

And Olsen says all perspectives are welcome. The group will chat, sip coffee and explore Christian author Josh McDowell's *A Quest for Answer*.

Grace Community has added a *The Da Vinci Code* link on its Web site where folks can find other Christian resources related to *The Da Vinci Code*.

The upcoming film, starring Tom Hanks, is sure to stir up questions, Olsen

said.

So on the church's Web site, there's a place for folks to e-mail Olsen their questions.

Although it's a fictitious historical mystery novel, a note in the front of *The Da Vinci Code* insists that all architecture, documents and secret rituals mentioned in the story are accurate. And that throws some people off, Olsen said.

"(The *Da Vinci Code*) is so convincing that people aren't sure what's fact and what's fiction," said the Rev. Bradley Stevens, who leads San Antonio Community Church. "So we're trying to separate these things out for people."

Stevens, 49, is tackling the topic in a six-week sermon series called "Understanding the Da Vinci Deception." Attendance has slightly risen since Stevens began three weeks ago.

Stevens himself has never gotten past the first few pages of *The Da Vinci Code*. But his wife read the book and called it "creepy." So Stevens said he already knew he "wasn't going to agree with it."

Armed with the Bible on Sundays, Stevens sets out to debunk certain issues found in the book.

Some pastors are panicking, Stevens said. They fear that issues raised in *The Da Vinci Code* will lead folks to question the Christian faith, he says.

Last week, City Church Center in Odessa offered a seminar "The Da Vinci Code: Real or Fake?"

So folks must bear in mind, *The Da Vinci Code* is not a history book, Stevens said.

"It's not the author's fault that people are taking it as a history book," Stevens says. "We wouldn't take *Gone With the Wind* and say it's a Civil War history book. It's just fiction."

Still, love it or hate it, *The Da Vinci Code* has made for good water cooler chatter, Olsen said.

"The plus side is that people will actually seek the truth," Olsen said.

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Senior Pastor

Bradley Stevens (1999)