

## CPYU 3(D) REVIEW

# Movie/DVD: *Twilight*

**Background/summary:** Based on the best-selling novel of the same name from the four-book series by Stephanie Meyer, this teen-targeted vampire-human love story debuted in theaters on November 21, 2008, grossed almost \$36 million on its first day, and has gone on to gross almost \$400 million worldwide. The DVD released on March, 21, 2009 and sold over 3 million units the first day, putting it in the top five first-day sales of the last two years.



### Discover: What is the message/worldview?

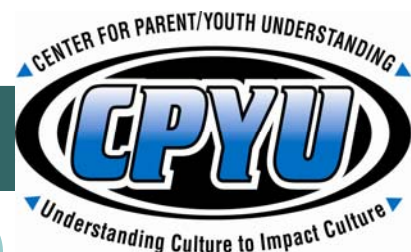
- 17-year-old Bella Swan, an independent child of divorce, moves to the small coastal town of Forks, Washington to live with her father Charlie. As she nervously settles in at her new school, she meets classmate Edward Cullen, a highly unusual young man who comes from an equally unusual family. Bella's attraction to the good-looking and mysterious Edward is cemented after he inexplicably saves her from getting hit by a van. Edward warns her against becoming his friend.
- The curious Bella learns that Edward is a vampire locked into a teenage existence. His adopted "siblings" and "parents" are all vampires as well. However, they are part of a vampire clan that battles their vampire-natures by holding each other accountable as they strive to live in harmony with humans, avoiding the temptation to drink human blood by hunting animals only. In addition, the Cullen clan wars against vampires who come into their territory to seek out human victims.
- Even though Edward's knowledge of himself leads him to tell Bella that it would be better if they stayed away from each other, he admits that he is so attracted to her that he doesn't think he can stay away from her anymore. She responds, "Then don't." Their love relationship begins. As the movie progresses, Edward cements his role as Bella's protector. Drawing on biblical imagery, he tells Bella that the lion has fallen in love with the lamb. Bella replies, "What a stupid lamb." Edward tells/warns Bella that as a vampire, he's the world's most dangerous predator, a reality that he obviously regrets and wishes weren't true. Still, Bella believes in Edward and says that she loves him, rather than fears him.
- Bella's love for Edward leads her to express her desire to have Edward turn her into a vampire. Edward exercises self-discipline driven by good sense and love, telling Bella that he will not do it.
- A trio of tracker vampires enter the Cullen's territory and encounters the family as they joyfully play a game of baseball with Bella as the lone human present. James, one of the tracker vampires, catches Bella's human scent and embarks on a quest to prey upon her. The Cullen family joins together to whisk Bella away to Phoenix (where she lived before moving to Forks) where she will be safe. James tracks her down and lures her by claiming that he's holding her mother hostage. Before the Cullen family arrives to rescue Bella from the trap, James bites Bella's wrist. The Cullen family destroys James as Edward sucks James' venom from Bella's wrist, saving her from transforming into a vampire.
- The film ends with Edward and Bella dancing at the Forks' High Prom. Seeking revenge, James' evil mate - tracker Victoria - appears on the scene, ready to avenge the death of James. Viewers are left hanging and the stage is set for the next film in the series.

## Discern: How does it stand in light of the biblical message/worldview?

- Ever since humanity's fall into sin (Genesis 3:6), all creation has been polluted by evil. Consequently, all creation and humanity groans for redemption (Romans 8). Even those who are redeemed continue to battle their sin nature over the course of their life on this earth. *Twilight*, through the power of fictional story, clearly portrays the inward struggle we all face with our sin nature. This reality and the resulting minute-by-minute battle is one we must be conscious of, knowing our weaknesses and susceptibility to temptation.
- The fictional story resonates with teenagers because of the romantic element. Love is a commitment—not a feeling—that keeps no record of wrongs. Love endures all things, even the shortcomings of others. While it could be argued that Bella is blindly infatuated, the story does depict two young people who attempt to reasonably evaluate their relationship rather than acting solely on the basis of their emotions.
- In a biblical marriage, husbands are instructed to love their wives as Christ loves the church and gave himself up for her (Ephesians 5). While Bella and Edward are not married, Edward is noble in his desire to put Bella first, caring for her and protecting her, even to the point of saving her life on two occasions. In addition, Edward struggles to suppress his sin nature so as not to violate Bella in any way.
- The church is the body of Christ. We are instructed to carry each other's burdens and to function in a healthy system of mutual accountability (Galatians 6). The Cullen family presents a picture of fallen people living in a culture of accountability as they guard and protect each other from evil.
- The Scriptures are clear on the fact that we are to pursue and serve the Kingdom of God rather than the Kingdom of the world, the flesh, and the Devil. Many who equate vampires with the Kingdom of Darkness will struggle to find any redeeming value in *Twilight*. However, it's important that our opinions regarding *Twilight* reflect sound Biblical thinking rather than merely our own personal opinion. In addition, don't forget that vampires originate in legend and folklore.

## Decide: What do I do with it?

- While this first film in what promises to be a four-part series promotes virtue, the jury is still out on where the series will end up. Proceed with caution. At the same time, don't jump to conclusions prematurely. That said, the sheer number of young *Twilight* fans, many of whom populate our Christian homes and youth groups, warrants thoughtful discussion and processing of the film from a distinctively Christian perspective. This is a film to watch and discuss *with* kids who have already seen it. Take the opportunity to point out positive themes in this fictional story. The film's controversial nature and large audience requires our attention and informed response.
- Different kids will process *Twilight* in different ways. Our responsibility is to hear how they are processing the film, then respond with appropriate biblical guidance, affirming those themes that can be affirmed and challenging those that must be challenged. Many young Christian viewers see the film as promoting goodness, virtue, honesty, and sexual abstinence. Others who may become fascinated with vampire-culture should be dissuaded from pursuing dangerous paths that may not so much be associated with the film, but with the negative aspects of vampire legend. Remember, we must deal with the heart issues that yield these negative responses.
- Viewing and discussing *Twilight* with kids who have seen the film *does not* promote vampirism. Instead, it models and promotes critical Christian thinking, offering us wonderful opportunities to discuss Biblical truth regarding love, sin, temptation, sexuality, and faithfulness.



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