

The Appeal of Twilight

Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* series currently hold three of the top ten slots on Amazon's best sellers list. Her Young Adult novels about a love story between a human girl (Bella) and her vampire boyfriend (Edward) are popular with far more than just young adults. And "popular" is quite the understatement.

A friend who does ladies' nails told me that one of her 60-something clients confessed, "Don't tell my husband, but I'm in love with Edward." She also told me that when she invited one of her friends to go out to a movie, she was rebuffed with, "Oh, sorry, but I'm going to stay in with Edward tonight."

"Popular" doesn't quite describe the series. "Obsession" works well, though.

What's all the fuss about? And is it safe for young readers?

What struck me as I read *Twilight* is how much the vampire Edward displays the beauty and strength of the Lord Jesus Christ. No wonder people are attracted to him! Whether this is intentional or not—the author is a Mormon, though I don't see Mormon theology anywhere in the book—I believe it's easy to get wrapped up in the transcendent relationship of a god-like figure and his beloved human sweetheart because it echoes the love story of God and His people.

Consider the way Edward is written:

- *He is able to read minds (hearing the thoughts of those near him, with the exception of Bella)*
- *He has superhuman strength*
- *He has superhuman speed*
- *He consistently exhibits strong self-control, keeping his emotions and his great power in check*
- *He is loving, kind, and thoughtful*

- *He is self-sacrificing*
- *He is tender and sensitive, at the same time the essence of masculine strength and leadership*
- *He is lavishly generous*
- *He anticipates Bella's needs and desires and is prepared to meet them in ways that are in her best interests, even if it costs him*
- *He sparkles in the sunlight with a stunning radiance*

Edward and Bella's relationship echoes the dynamics of Christ and His beloved bride, the Church. The relationship is a mixture of agony and sacrificial love. Human and vampire are very different and very other, yet they both desire oneness and intimacy. This reflects the way humanity and divinity come together in Christ and the Church.

Bella tells Edward, "You are my life" (p. 474). This sense of connecting to and being lost in the transcendent is the foundation of a healthy relationship with our Creator and Savior; but it is the essence of unhealthy emotional dependency in another creature. It sounds very romantic, to put all one's eggs in another's basket, but it also gives all our power away to that person since they have the power to make and keep us happy and fulfilled. This is safe in Jesus' hands, but no one else's.

I think there is a good reason for the strong reaction to the characters and the dynamics of the story. They resonate with the far larger Story of God wooing His people.

I found one passage that hints at a worldview perspective on the *Twilight* series. On page 308, Bella asks Edward where vampirism started originally. He answers,

"Well, where did you come from? Evolution? Creation? Couldn't we have evolved in the same way as other species, predator and prey? Or, if you don't believe all this world could have just happened on its own, which is hard for me to

accept myself, is it so hard to believe that the same force that created the delicate angelfish with the shark, the baby seal and the killer whale, could create both our kinds together?"

However, thinking biblically, we know that the vampire "kind" doesn't truly exist. It's a fantasy. There are no "undead" people like vampires. Hebrews 9:27 tells us that "it is appointed unto man to die once; and after this comes judgment." Transitioning from human to vampire by being bitten with a vampire's venom doesn't happen.

The book's cover features a pair of hands proffering an apple. Just after the table of contents, this quotation from Genesis 2:17 appears by itself on a page: "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."

The author says on her website,

The apple on the cover of Twilight represents "forbidden fruit." I used the scripture from Genesis (located just after the table of contents) because I loved the phrase "the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil." Isn't this exactly what Bella ends up with? A working knowledge of what good is, and what evil is. The nice thing about the apple is it has so many symbolic roots. You've got the apple in Snow White, one bite and you're frozen forever in a state of not-quite-death... Then you have Paris and the golden apple in Greek mythology—look how much trouble that started. Apples are quite the versatile fruit. In the end, I love the beautiful simplicity of the picture. To me it says: choice. (www.stepheniemeyer.com/twilight_faq.html#apple)

Should tweens and teens read this series? I think it provides an opportunity for parents and other authority figures (like youth group leaders) to read and discuss the themes of the book with youth, particularly what makes Edward so attractive.

People are drawn to him for the same reason that a seeking heart is drawn to Jesus. The best use of this book and series is if the reader can be pointed to the One who can actually fulfill the fantasy that Stephenie Meyer writes so well, of being cherished by a strong and beautiful Lover who thinks and acts sacrificially.

Because the heart that is drawn to Edward is actually looking for Jesus.

Note: Since writing this blog post, I have read all the books and done a lot of research, coming to a different conclusion. Please be sure and read Part 2: [A New Look at Twilight: Different Conclusion](#). Thanks!

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