

the purpose of I.M.P.A.C.T. is to Expose students to God's love, to Equip them to Exalt God, Enjoy other believers, and Experience the work of the ministry!

## Should I Let My Teen Use Facebook?

Even though he's set up an account behind my back?

**Dear Dr. Bill:** My husband and I have a teen son who is almost 15 and a really great kid. He's never given us any trouble — until recently. When he asked us about using MySpace and Facebook, we were very firm and said NO. We've talked with him many times about how the computer can be both helpful and harmful, and we explained that Facebook was originally created for college students, not high school freshmen.

But I've since discovered that he secretly set up a Facebook account without our knowledge or permission. I was livid, but my husband and I talked calmly with our son, explaining the dangers — how his account included our home address, where he goes to school, even his birth date! Then we deactivated the account and have grounded him from the computer, his cell phone, and from LIFE! (Just kidding.)

Now I would love to turn off our computer and throw it in the trash, but I know this is not realistic. We practice good computer rules in our home, but even as a stay-at-home mom, I can't watch my son every moment of every day. Plus, I don't want to overreact and hover over him. But how can we prevent this kind of thing from happening again?

— Amber

Dear Amber:

I hear from many parents who are extremely concerned about how technology and the Internet are impacting the lives of their kids. One of the best experts I know on this topic is my friend Vicki Courtney, the founder of Virtuous Reality Ministries and the author of the book *Logged On and Tuned Out*. I submitted your question to Vicki, and here's what she suggests:

*Amber, you mention that your son is "a really great kid," has "never given you any trouble" and is "almost 15." Given that information, I'm wondering why you would completely ban him from Facebook, rather than allow him to partake in this freedom under your guidance and watchful eye.*

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*I can certainly understand your hesitancy to allow him on the site given the media attention the social networking sites have received, but the sites can also be used to bring glory to God. The key of course, will be your involvement.*

*I have allowed my freshman-aged son to set up a profile on Facebook, but as a condition, I have his login and password information. I can log onto his account and check it over anytime. In addition, we set up parameters on the front end concerning what information he can share, and had him sign off on a contract of safety guidelines before we would allow him to participate.*

*Further, I added the conditions that he not join our city network or make his page public to his entire high school network. In other words, his page can only be viewed by those he allows as "friends."*

*Your son was wrong to set up a page behind your back, and of course, there should be consequences for his dishonesty. However, I encourage you to ease up some on your total ban from Facebook. At the very least, give your son some hope of a minimum age that you will allow participation during his high school years.*

*I fear that if you ban him from the site for the entire time he's under your roof, you will send an overall message that you don't trust him. Chances are, he will set a page up the minute he moves out and you will have lost any opportunity to walk him through the process and train him to use the Internet in a responsible manner.*

*It's a tricky balance when it comes to extending freedoms while at the same time, offering protection. The key will be staying engaged in the process, and it is clear that you are a caring parent who would make that a top priority.*

Some good advice from Vicki Courtney. By the way, the Internet contract Vicki mentioned can be found at [www.loggedonandtunedout.com](http://www.loggedonandtunedout.com).

Thanks for writing, Amber. If you'd like to order a copy of Vicki's book *Logged On and Tuned Out*, call Focus on the Family at 1-800-A-FAMILY (1-800-232-6459), or visit our online [Resource Center](#).

## **TWILIGHT**

"I'd never given much thought to how I would die."

So begins one of the most resonant *love* stories to touch teen culture in quite some time. Love, found in a world filled with terrifying monsters in the moonlight. Love, found at a strange high school in a tiny, rainy town that Bella Swan did not want to live in. Love, found by a cold-blooded vampire who didn't think he would ever feel warmth again. Love, found by both of them to be intoxicating to the point of creating near giddy insanity.

Bella moves to Forks, Wash., to live with her dad after her divorced mother remarries. She thinks of it as an exile. Certainly she doesn't think anything good will come of it. She's from Phoenix, and she hates the cold and rain. She's a high school junior, so she doesn't relish the idea of starting over at a new school. She's uncertain about her relationship with her dad.

But she fits in better than she anticipates. Or at least she thinks she does until she meets Edward Cullen. Butterflies start circling in her stomach the moment she sees him, but all he does is glare at her. It might take a while to smooth out the bumps, but Bella's determined to make it work with her white-faced dreamboat.

So determined, it turns out, that even when she learns that he's a bloodsucking vampire, she's unwavering in her newfound infatuation. "You don't scare me," she tells him repeatedly, almost as if she's trying to convince herself along with him.

Her resolve is continually tested as she learns that it's all he can do to resist the desire to kill her, as she meets his intimidating family of vampires, and as she becomes the target of a nomadic "tracker" vamp, who's decided she's the endgame of an eternal

lifetime. But love is love, she figures, no matter the risk. And therein lies the heart and soul of *Twilight*—exhibited in both grand and shocking ways.

### **Positive Element:**

Family is a big part of what nurtures *Twilight's* love. Edward's coven—family—of vampires is a loving one. Each member is committed to protecting the others, even Bella when she becomes part of them through her relationship with Edward.

The Swans, while more fragmented, still show a great deal of cohesion demonstrated through selflessness. Dad opens his arms and home to Bella after years of separation. Uncomfortable at first, Bella tries to give him a fair shake when she arrives. And she does everything in her power to make sure that when her life is threatened, Dad doesn't become collateral damage.

Superlatively, Bella willingly offers herself as a sacrifice meant to save her mom's life. She narrates, "Dying in the place of someone I loved seemed like a good way to go."

### **Spiritual Content:**

Accepting, for a moment, the idea that vampires can exist in a fantasy world and that they are capable of making "moral" choices within the framework of their predetermined natures, it would be fair to say that the Cullen clan's choice to avoid killing humans is ... positive. Edward explains to Bella that they are "vegetarians," meaning that they have learned to survive on the blood of animals. Beyond being grateful that she's not going to be devoured mere moments after falling in love for the first time in her life, Bella interprets this as them being "good" vampires who have struggled, some for centuries, to renounce their evil inclinations.

So within the context of a monster mash such as this, we can see a reflection of the Christian calling to put away the old man of sin and embrace the new one—a path that while straight and narrow, is certainly more difficult to walk.

Edward and Bella don't talk about it much, but it is intimated that despite their ability to choose good over evil, Edward considers himself and all other vampires to be eternally damned, and he resists mightily the idea of allowing Bella to descend into the abyss that he finds himself submerged in. She doesn't care a whit about that. She's eager to become a "cold one" if only it means she will be with her beau forever.

Edward can read minds. His sister, Alice, sees visions of the future.

### **Sexual Content:**

Clearly tempted to go farther, Edward wrenches himself away from Bella after they begin kissing. (Before he does so, they embrace, eagerly lock lips and slowly lower themselves onto her bed.) There's a pro-abstinence message in his decision to disengage, but it's muddied by a couple of facts: 1) He's avoiding sexual contact because he knows it will cause him to want to kill her, not because he believes the contact itself would be immoral in any way. 2) He says he's been in the habit of sneaking into her window at night and watching her sleep. And once he admits that to her—and she doesn't run screaming, calling him a creepy stalker—he proceeds to spend the night with her in her bed (clothed, but cuddling).

Dialogue dips into the sexual arena when Edward tells Bella what people at a restaurant are thinking about. He grins, looking around the room and saying, "Money, sex, money, sex, cat." Mom asks Bella if she's "being safe." There's a quick joke about a

swim team's padded Speedos.

Girls at school wear tops that expose a bit of cleavage. And prom dresses—Bella's included—reveal even more.

### **Violent Content:**

The first question a colleague asked me when I returned to the office after seeing *Twilight* was, "Were there any gory vampire bites shown in the movie?" It's a fair question, and it probably mirrors what a whole host of parents began wondering the moment after a whole host of Kaitlins and Ashley's started begging to go see it.

The answer is yes.

In flashback, we watch Carlisle "create" Edward by biting down into his neck. There's no blood visible in this "transformation," but there is in other vampire attacks. Bella's hand is slashed in a fight with the tracker vamp, and he ultimately bites her, too. This takes place in the midst of a frenetic battle that starts with just Bella and the tracker, and ends up a full-scale melee involving Edward, Jasper and Alice. The tracker's head is twisted nearly off (onscreen) before he's disassembled and burned in a fire (mostly offscreen or out of focus).

Bella is hurled across a room; she slams into a mirrored wall. The tracker breaks her leg by stomping on it. When Edward tears into the rival vampire, they all but destroy the building they're in, blasting through floors, walls, windows, etc.

When Bella does a bit of Web research on the "cold ones," we watch over her shoulder as she sees drawings and cinematic images of bloody killings. We see flashes from contemporary vampire assaults, too; these hint at the violence that transpires

rather than fully expose it.

To save Bella's life, Edward sucks her blood from the puncture wound the tracker inflicted, drawing the venom back out of her. And it's not the only time she's in danger: When the Cullens first meet the tracker, they square off in threatening, animalistic crouches to defend her. When a careening van veers toward Bella, Edward stops it with his hand. And when a small group of ne'er-do-wells accosts Bella in an alleyway, she's crowded and threatened before Edward swoops to the rescue. (To his credit, he resists the urge to kill the men.)

In a sequence used to illustrate a lie told about how Bella got hurt, we see her tumble down stairs and smash through a large window.

### **Crude or Profane Language**

One exclamatory use of "h---." "Oh my god" is interjected a handful of times. There's a line about a "butt-crack Santa."

### **Drug And Alcohol Content**

Bella's dad downs beer on several occasions. In one scene we see him pile two six-packs onto a friend's lap. Edward refers to Bella as his "own personal brand of heroin."

### **Other Negative Content:**

To protect his vampire identity, Edward has cultivated the fine art of lying. Bored with safe driving rules, he speeds and executes fancy—difficult and dangerous for us mere mortals—quick-turn tricks.

In a ploy to try to protect him from the vampires, Bella reluctantly, yet intentionally, wounds her father with words her

mother used when they divorced.

### **Conclusion:**

There are two kinds of people who will watch *Twilight*: Those who have read the books ... and those who haven't. The two groups will see a very different movie. The latter will casually make its way through a romance-obsessed vampire yarn involving a human high school girl and a 17-year-old vampire who's actually over 100. The former will observe the very same romance, but layer onto it the entire story arc that unfolds through the four Stephenie Meyer novels that have birthed this movie franchise.

That makes it difficult to write *just* a movie review about a movie that isn't *just* a movie, but rather part of tall tale that doesn't end at twilight, or even the dark of night. It goes beyond into the realm of the eternal—something not really hinted at onscreen ... yet.

I'll give you an example of how *Twilight* neophytes and *Twihards*, as they're starting to be called online, will react differently as the film unspools: When Jacob shows up for the first time, he's ostensibly a minor character who, along with his wheelchair-bound dad, is delivering an old truck that Bella's father bought for her. OK, fine, right? No big deal. But when he first peeks his head onto the screen, a portion of the audience—primarily female, for the record—is likely to erupt with squeals of delight. They certainly did at the advance screening I attended. Why? Because Jacob *eventually* becomes A) Bella's best non-Edward friend, B) a shapeshifting wolf and C) a hunk.

Fans of the books clearly weren't there to just see a movie. They were there to experience the thrill of "meeting" their favorite characters in all their huge, big-screen glory. This says a lot about how much impact Meyer's story is having. Readers—and

now moviegoers—are soaking in everything she's written, taking it to heart and wearing it, quite literally, on their sleeves.

One *Twilight* T-shirt being sold (and which I saw at the movie) proclaims, "Forbidden Fruit Tastes the Best." And that's certainly one of the film's underlying themes. This isn't about me beating up *Twilight* for being about vampires, though. There are positives in it that bear repeating: The Cullens refuse to be party to murder even when it's their "nature" to kill and feed off humans. Edward consistently controls his own blood lust around his classmates and especially around Bella. He cares for her. He protects her. Bella offers up her life for her mom.

But there's enough negative undercurrent even in this first outing (the books get darker as they progress, so presumably the movies will follow) to justify some pretty serious conversations afterwards for those families that decide to defer their better judgment—which would normally push vampire flicks out of bounds—and go ahead and go with the flow and see the show. The positivity of Edward and Bella's abstinence needs to be tempered with a discussion about what's so very wrong with them "sleeping" together and him sneaking into her room. His resistance to turning her into a vamp must be contrasted with her desperate desire to become one. Her obvious love for her father needs to be stacked up next to her willingness to deceive him both when his life depends on it *and* when it just suits her romantic desires.

Bella finds herself inexorably drawn to the "bad boy," and she does little to resist. She calls herself a "stupid lamb" (and there's already a T-shirt out there that splashes the phrase across its front), refusing to wise up for fear that clarity might mean her heart will be broken. Indeed, she waves away Edward's objections as if they were just annoying mosquitoes buzzing around her head.

We know that he doesn't want to hurt her. But *she* doesn't.

There's an important life lesson lurking in Bella's obstinance. But don't look for *Twilight* to unpack it for you. It's too dizzy from breathing in the heady fragrance of heedless and headstrong young love.