

# Charlie and the Chocolate Factory (2005)

Rated PG. Our ratings: V-3 ; L-1 ; S/N-1 Running time:

*Better is a little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and trouble with it.*

*Better is a dinner of herbs where love is than a fatted ox and hatred with it.*

*Proverbs 15:16-17*

*Train children in the right way, and when old, they will not stray.*

*The rich rule over the poor, and the borrower is the slave of the lender.*

*Whoever sows injustice will reap calamity, and the rod of anger will fail.*

*Proverbs 22:6-8*

*Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for you reap whatever you sow.*

*Galatians 6:7*

We always expect something whimsically different from the creator of *The Nightmare Before Christmas* and *Beetlejuice*, and Tim Burton does not disappoint us in this delightful adaptation of Roald Dahl's novel. Both Mr. Burton's direction and John August's script retain the novel's darker side. Looking like a Prince Valiant in Victorian attire who has been shut up in a dark cell far from sunlight,

Johnny Depp's Willy Wonka sports long hair and bleached-white skin. His demeanor around, and clumsiness (or better, unease) in talking with children bring to mind W.C. Fields. That he has been deprived of and needs a loving family becomes readily apparent as the almost gruesome story of the visit of a group of five children unfolds.

Taking place in a nameless English city, the film's hero is young Charlie Bucket (Freddie Highmore), who lives in a decrepit house with his mother (Helena Bonham Carter), father (Noah Taylor) and both sets of grandparents. The living quarters are cramped, but the family lives in loving support of one another (though one of the grandmothers can get a bit cranky at times). Grandpa Joe (David Kelly) once was employed at the nearby giant chocolate factory, but fifteen years earlier the owner Willy Wonka dismissed all of the employees out of fear that one might steal his candy recipe. All wonder how he continues to produce his Wonka Bars by the millions.

No outsider has been allowed inside the factory for years, so the launching of a lottery for five children's tickets to tour the factory elicits world wide interest—and, of course, the sale of millions of additional chocolate bars in the hope of finding one of the golden tickets inside. Due to the Buckets' dire financial condition, Charlie's consumption of the candy has been limited to just one bar a year, at Christmas-time. However, he is given enough money this time for two, but neither turns out to contain the prized ticket. Meanwhile, one by one, a child discovers one, until at last just a single ticket remains to be discovered. Of course, our pure-hearted little hero winds up with the fifth.

On the great day of the tour all five children wait at the

factory gate, along with the one adult that each contestant is allowed to bring along. In Charlie's case it is Grandpa Joe.

The first four winners stand in stark contrast to Charlie. Not only are they all from well off families. They are hopelessly spoiled and perverse. Augustus Gloop (Philip Wiegratz) is a pig in human form; Veruca Salt (Julia Winter) is as greedy as Scrooge McDuck; Violet Beauregarde (AnnaSophia Robb), always with a wad of gum in her unpleasant mouth, thinks only of herself; and Mike Teavee (Jordan Fry) is aptly named, always glued to the tube while making demands on those around him.

Willy Wonka meets his guests at the gate with a song and dance act that does not go over so well. Pale faced and dressed in Edwardian garb, he has reminded some adults of Michael Jackson, and the fanciful interior of his factory might be construed as a take-off on Jackson's Neverland estate. Fortunately, I don't think most children will catch this, though they cannot fail to notice his aversion to all the children, except for kind-hearted Charlie. Willy appears to be half-child, half-adult himself, with his easily aroused ire and petulant delight when the four unworthy children receive their just punishment. No compassion in his soul, just a satisfaction in seeing the unjust reap their just rewards. Burton tries to solve the mystery of how Willy Wonka became what he is by adding the subplot of Willy's candy-hating dentist father who kept his son away from candy by making him wear in his mouth a tortuous brace.

The factory interior created by Burton is a marvel to behold, with streams of chocolate flowing by gumdrop trees and candy mountains. His workforce now consists of members of a tribe he once came across in the jungle, pint-sized Oompa-Loompas (every one played by computerized actor Deep Roy), who perform a number of whimsical songs. He also employs a band of squirrels that remove the meat from mounds of hard-shelled walnuts.

All of the above is a treat for the eyes and ears. We root for good ole Charlie and his family, who, like their good-heated counterparts in Dickens' "A Christmas Carol," are duly rewarded. With a touch of malice lurking just beneath the surface, Johnny Depp's Willy Wonka is an unforgettable character, but would we want to entrust one of our children to him? (Still another possible parallel with the recent events surrounding Michael Jackson.)

## **For Reflection/Discussion**

1) What does Charlie have that Willy Wonka and the four other children do not? Check out Proverbs 15:16-17.

2) How do the Bucket family members support one another amidst their poverty? Some other passages from Proverbs to check: 16:8,16,19 and 17:1.

3) What is the problem with each of the other four children? How is the fate of each a working out of Proverbs 22:8 and Galatians 6:7?

4) Would you say that the story is based on law or grace?