

Film Capsules April 2015

To see longer reviews with the Scripture texts, click onto the film title.

[Metalhead](#)

Rated R. Psalm 139: 7-12; Matthew 11:28.

This Icelandic film is an uplifting Good Friday-Easter themed film about a farm family unable to let go of their grief when their teenaged son dies in a tractor accident. His sister Hera takes over his heavy metal music collection, guitar, and even his clothing as she seeks respite from her pain through heavy metal music. Years later the new pastor of their Lutheran Church becomes the catalyst for healing of the girl and her parents, leading to their passing from Good Friday into Easter. The wonderful last celebratory scene of the film reminds me of the main character in *Zorba the Greek* (or even Snoopy for you Peanuts fans). Although the film has not yet come to our art house theaters, you can watch it as a streaming video on several outlets such as Amazon. It is well worth seeking out—may well be Visual Parables' Top Film of the year. A good film for church groups to watch and discuss, though be warned, there is a brief sex scene.

[While We're Young](#)

Rated R. Jeremiah 17; Zechariah 8:16a.

Noah Baumbach's comedy for real adults is a delightful tale of two Manhattan couples, one in their early 40s who have become blasé about life, and the other in their mid 20s who are experimenting, eager to find good in things the older couple have given up—such as vinyl records, VHS tape, and bicycles. The contrasts drawn are insightful, with the older couple at first finding renewal, until the husband, a documentary filmmaker unable for almost 10 years to complete his film,

begins to question the motives of the young couple who have inserted themselves into his life.

[It Follows](#)

Rated R. Psalm 55:4-7.

This is a chilling horror story, much of it set in decayed Detroit. It is almost a throwback to the old moralistic horror films of the last century in which promiscuous teenagers die for their sins. The young woman infected by a curse when she engages in sex finds that her friends and sisters loyally stand by her as a strange, shape-shifting creature follows her everywhere, its movement as slow as a zombie's, and just as relentless. One of the better films of this genre, its ambiguous ending leaves us wondering.

[Cinderella](#)

Rated PG. Psalm 31:24; Zechariah 7:9.

My question as to why another take on the old fairytale—there have been so MANY film versions since the 65 year-old Disney animated version—was quickly answered in this live actor release. Director Kenneth Branagh and scriptwriter Chris Weitz have provided more details to the plot, making this a romantic tale in which the put-upon maiden, played so beautifully by Downton Abbey's Lily James, is much more human. This family film will especially be loved by girls, but the boys will find plenty of delights and laughs in the transformation of creatures into the coach and horses that deliver Cinderella to the ball.

['71](#)

Rated R. Psalm 10:8-9; Luke 17:2.

Set in Northern Ireland's Belfast in 1972 when the Catholic push for civil rights was changing into the violent IRA-dominated underground war, the story transpires over one

chaotic night when a novice British soldier is separated from his mates in Catholic territory. Literally running for his life, he is wounded when a Protestant pub is destroyed by a bomb (a touch of irony at this point), and then, unconscious on the street, is taken in by a Catholic couple who save his life by stitching up his deep wound. All the while two young IRA members, searching for him through the night, are drawing closer to his hiding place. The brutality on both sides of "The Troubles" is revealed, turning a thriller into a plea for better understanding.

[Insurgent](#)

Rated PG-13. Psalm 72:4; Romans 12:2.

The second part of the teenage trilogy about a dystopian walled-off Chicago in the near future combines elements of the chase genre with the usual cautionary message of such films—be careful of what you seek. In this case it is the security that the law and order crowd seek at the expense of individual freedom. One of the young characters, whose mother is the leader of a rebel group, refuses to support her because he believes she would be no better than the woman leader of the faction they are rebelling against. Best part of the series is that we are given another strong young heroine who will be key to the overthrow of oppression in the remaining films of the franchise.

[What We Do in the Shadows](#)

Rated R. John 3:20.

If you are left cold by such vampire films as in the *Twilight* series, then this dark spoof might be for you. I loved the "mocumentary" films *Best of Show* and *Waiting for Guffman*, and now this New Zealand one in which a documentary crew follows four vampires in Wellington who are getting ready to attend the undead community's yearly celebration of The Unholy

Masquerade. The vampires face many inconveniences in the 21st century, such as the one born during the Middle Ages, who calls himself “Vlad the Poker” because “Vlad the Impaler” had already been taken, realizing that it is no longer socially acceptable to torture people in his dungeon. Crazy fun, though be warned—the spoof is a very bloody one, not for the squeamish!

[Focus](#)

Rated R. Luke 16:18.

Another con game film, this one, like the long series of such films (remember *The Sting* or *The Music Man*?), requires us to set aside moral scruples in order to root for the protagonist. Will Smith is charming, and so observant of details that he deserves to be called The Sherlock Holmes of Scam.

[Chappie](#)

Rated R. Psalm 12:8; Psalm 8:4

The South African director who brought us the wonderful *District 9* returns to his country where in the near future the city of Johannesburg has turned law enforcement over to a company that manufactures robot cops. Their inventor wants to add A.I. to the robots, but his boss doesn't want such a change. However, when he and a damaged robot are kidnapped by three bumbling crooks, he gets the chance to try out his experiment, which leads to unexpected results. Funny and moving at times.

[The Gunman](#)

Rated R. Proverbs 4:17

Another of those dark tales in which a ruthless assassin, this time played by Sean Penn, becomes the target himself, leading to a search for the identity of the would-be killers from

Africa to London, Barcelona, Gibraltar, and back to Africa. Quite a thriller with a large body count, crooks that can't hit our hero no matter how many bullets they shoot (probably enough to keep a munitions factory busy for six months!), and fights, chases, and stunts that make the film totally unbelievable. Too bad that Sean Penn, like Liam Neeson, also a fine actor, has to sign on to such dreck.

On DVD or Streaming Video

[Wild Tales](#)

(Spanish with English subtitles)

Rated R. James 3:4-6; Leviticus 19:18

The film is well named, this Oscar nominated Argentinean film consisting of six tales showing the terrible effects of allowing anger to move on to seeking vengeance. Some of them darkly comedic, one even grizzly in its consequences, each story is like a midrash on the numerous Scripture passages that warn us about seeking revenge. The last story about a bride learning of her new husband's infidelity at their wedding reception (to which he has invited his illicit partner) is an over the top sequence that just as you think everything (and everyone) is out of control, ends with the possibility of reconciliation.

[The Wrecking Crew](#)

Rated PG.

This documentary is not about a demolition team but a group of 30 and more Los Angeles studio musicians in the Sixties and Seventies who became known as "The Wrecking Crew." They backed up, and made contributions to, such artists as Elvis Presley, Nat "King" Cole, Bing Crosby, Dean Martin. Frank Sinatra, Sonny & Cher, Nancy Sinatra, The Mamas & the Papas, The Byrds,

Simon & Garfunkel, The Righteous Brothers, The Monkees, and of course, The Beach Boys. If you are a fan of music of that period, you enjoy the interviews and music clips.