

# Missing the Munchkin Part

Author Timothy Jones, in his book *Awake My Soul*, shares an interesting story about the audition of his daughter, Bekah, 6, for the part of a munchkin in *The Wizard of Oz*.

The thought that she might not get the part seemed never to occur to her, he said. About 250 children showed up for 50 parts.

“In a huge gym, the two directors had the children line the four edges of the cavernous building, the tallest on one end trailing down to the shortest on the other end,” Jones said. “The directors went through the line, having each child say his or her name and age. They did it again, this time urging, ‘Say your name loud. Say it with animation.’ The boisterous, enthusiastic kids were told to sit down, marking them in a kind of first cut.”

Finally, the directors got to Bekah. Jones said he was at the opposite end of the line, and “my heart sank when I could not hear her. She was too quiet, too restrained.”

The directors gave the kids other chances, other quick assignments, “but I could never hear Bekah. I knew she was not standing out. The expressive, outgoing kids were getting the parts.”

After two hours, the children all gathered in a knot around the directors. The names of the chosen 50 were read off a list. Bekah didn’t make it.

“Bekah threaded her way to me afterward, cheeks flushed. She hugged me hard as we prepared to walk out. “I’m proud of you,” Jones told her. “I am so impressed that you auditioned.” Then he said quietly, “I’m sorry you didn’t get the part.”

Bekah’s tear floodgates opened. She grabbed her father and sobbed. He picked her up, and she buried her face in his shoulder.

The next morning, she told her mother, “The kids who got parts didn’t behave right,” she said. “I was good. I was quiet like I was supposed to be. And I didn’t get a part!” She had equated goodness with restraint, Jones said. She was trying hard but in the wrong way. She thought the directors wanted reserve, stiff attention, frozen alertness. Instead, they wanted energy, emotion, enthusiasm. They wanted kids who could be themselves.

Therein is a lesson for us. Many people feel that way around God – restrained, rigid, tight. They can’t relax and simply received God’s wondrous grace.

Caught up in rules and rituals, they forget that a relationship is what matters with our Lord. And they miss the opportunity to awaken to the grace-filled kindness of God.

*But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace (Romans 11:6 ESV).*