

THE DAUGHTER LEFT BEHIND

Dr. Timothy Paul Jones is a professor and associate vice president at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. His scholarly research has focused on the psychology of faith and on factors that influence faith formation in Christian households.

In his book *Proof*, he writes about his middle daughter, who is adopted. She had been adopted before, but her adoptive family gave her up and put her back in the foster system. For some reason, this previous family had not treated the little girl like she was truly their child.

Whenever they went to Disney World, they took all their biological children with them but left their adopted daughter behind. She got the message that she wasn't wanted, wasn't good enough to earn a gift like Disney World. She wasn't a full member of the family.

So when Jones and his family adopted this little girl, she had a lot of behavioral outbursts. The Jones family decided that the best way to welcome this little girl into their family was to plan a trip to Disney World. But when they told their new daughter, her behavior problems multiplied. She lied, she stole food, she treated her new siblings cruelly.

No matter what system of punishment or reward the Joneses used, their adopted daughter's behavior was out of control. This little girl was so afraid of not getting to Disney World that she was trying to guarantee her new parents would have a reason to leave her behind.

The day finally came for their trip, and the family went all out – rides and refreshments and long lines and exhaustion. As they collapsed in their hotel room that night, Jones asked his new daughter what she thought of the experience.

She smiled and said, "Daddy, I finally got to go to Disney World. But it wasn't because I was good; it's because I'm yours."

And then Jones writes, "That's the message of outrageous grace. Outrageous grace isn't a favor you can achieve by being good; it's the gift you receive by being God's child."

Think about your own situation. If you don't know the gift of outrageous grace, then you don't know God – because our salvation is not about our goodness, but about God's grace.

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast (Ephesians 2:8-9 NKJV).

– Beecher Hunter