

A princess story I can get behind

By [Julie Clawson](#)

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I am not a fan of Disney princesses. I can deal with the tiaras and the pink, but I'm disturbed by the sexualized visions of thinness, the suggestion that to be ugly is to be evil and the promotion of [extreme body modification](#) in order to get the guy.

But my five-year-old daughter lives in the real world. Escaping the princess culture isn't even an option. So when I heard that Disney's latest princess flick, *Tangled*, has a female lead who is strong, adventurous and in possession of a personality, I allowed myself to hope for a non-cringe-worthy princess.

I took my daughter to see *Tangled* on opening day, and I wasn't disappointed. The story

focuses on Rapunzel's journey to break free from the woman (Gothel) who kidnapped her as a baby and has held her captive in a tower. But it isn't just a simple tale of rescue and escape; it is the story of Rapunzel discovering her passions. Her captivity convinced her that she was weak, good for nothing but domestic chores, and in need of protection from the evil world. Yet as she enters that world she discovers that it is a beautiful place where dreams can be fulfilled. The true evil was captivity, which kept her from being whole.

The characters are all living others' dreams instead of their own. Gothel believes she must remain forever young and beautiful. Flynn Rider is convinced that if he had enough money he could find happiness. The brigands live a life of crime while their true dreams--one wants to be a concert pianist, another a mime--are left unfulfilled. Even Rapunzel's sidekick is a chameleon, changing to fit into its surroundings. Those who find redemption in the film turn away from the pressure to be what others tell them they should be and embrace who they were born to be.

Disney is finally telling a story that delivers a life-affirming message. As a Christian who constantly prays that my children will be able to live into who God created them to be and not be swayed by the siren calls of our culture, I found the message faith-affirming as well.

Other Christians don't agree. Todd Hertz's [review](#) misses the point of the redemption story, reducing the film to a story of a girl finding her parents. He suggests that the manipulative words Gothel uses to keep Rapunzel captive (the world is evil, so good must be kept protected) have biblical roots and would be a good discussion starter for family reflection.

Armond White [condemns](#) the film, asserting that it is "strained through a sieve of political correctness that includes condescending to fashionable notions about girlhood, patriarchy, romance, and what is now the most suspicious of cultural tenets, faith." He derides the Rapunzel character as "a girl of contemporary spunk, daring, and godlessness," all apparently evil traits.

It's hard to raise a daughter. While the culture feeds her lies about how being a pretty princess is all that matters, the church too holds her back from living life fully. Its message is that she cannot be who she was created to be if that involves questioning authority, exposing herself to danger or showing a little spunk from time to time. Women have been held captive by these messages for too long, and I'm grateful that *Tangled* offers something more affirming--even if it's in the guise of a princess.