



The Hand-Me-Down Family

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Callie Gray always assumed she would never marry, until she took a leap and became a mail-order bride. But when she arrives in Sweetgum, Texas, she gets the shock of her life. Her husband is dead, and his brother proposes she marry him, for the sake of his orphaned nephew and nieces. Jack Tyler warns her not to hope for a love match--theirs is strictly a convenient marriage. But Callie yearns for a true partnership with the man who has unexpectedly captured her heart. Now she must convince him what he truly needs is a lifetime of love, faith and family--with Callie by his side.

The Hand-Me-Down Family Details

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From Reader Review The Hand-Me-Down Family for online ebook

Dorcas says

This is such a touching story about a woman with a birthmark who takes her friends place to be a mail order bride. Winnie Griggs makes compelling characters that you root for from the very beginning. The "groom" at first is very displeased with the switch but as the story goes on, the way he sticks up for the heroine touches your heart. It was one of those stories where I had to take a few breaks to "get a hold" of my emotions as I got so involved with the characters. Love this story!

Sharon says

This book just made me feel good! I loved the characters and how they became a family. Would definitely read more of her books!

Cynthia Davis says

A great book, i could not put it down, it was a very touching story of a family brought together

By faith and love of god. I recommend this blkk a must read I promos you will notwant to put down.

Anita says

Loved the book, setting, story, characters, and time setting, location etc...good book to read

Deborah Malone says

Now having said all of this I want to give a review of The Hand-Me-Down Family by Winnie Griggs. This is a historical romance that takes place in California, 1888. Winnie takes the main character, Calley Gray, and puts her on a stage coach to meet her new husband by proxy. Before she arrives he loses his life in a fire and leaves his young daughter without a father. (she had already lost her mother, Calley's good friend).

Now, mind you, Calley knows no one in California and is shocked to say the least when she finds out he is dead. She meets his brother Jack Tyler who wants to take care of his brothers daughter as well as his sisters two children who also lost their parents in the fire. Most of the book is about Calley and Jack vying for the children. Neither think the other is capable of doing it alone. So they get married - for convenience.

Calley has a birthmark on her face that makes her feel no one would ever love her, so she has settled on just being a mother. But then she begins to have feelings for Jack - but Jack is going to leave to go back to his old job as soon as they are settled.

The rest you will have to find out for yourself. This is a book I would not have chosen in the past, just because it wasn't a mystery. I am so grateful that I am now open to reading other books. I would not have wanted to miss this one! I don't think you will either. Here is a link to Winnie's web site: <http://www.winniegriggs.com/>. Go over and take a look - you might just find yourself back in time!

M.A. Nichols says

Rounding up from 3.5 stars.

This was a cute, easy read. There's not a lot to say about it because it wasn't particularly stand-out or unique, but I enjoyed it all the same. What can I say, I'm a sucker for heroine with a disfigurement finding love. I will say that I liked the way the Christian theme was handled in the book. It felt more like a natural part of the story and the characters, rather than preachy and sermonizing, even though there is a touch of it in the story since the hero has lost a bit of his faith and has to rediscover it.

It's not one I think I would ever pick up again, but it was engaging, and I ended up reading it all in almost one sitting.

Jennifer says

Loved Callie and her take whatever comes her way even though she struggles with her self confidence. Callie Gray is unprepared for how upside things turn out for her when she arrives in Sweetgum, Texas or for her first meeting with Jack Tyler.

Jack Tyler has come home to deal with the loss of his family and take of his nieces and nephew not at all prepared to take of his brother's new bride now widow who is prepared to fight for the kids in every way. Will Jack and Callie learn to work to together and save this family or will Jack throw it all away?

Elise-Pinterest+Goodreads=The Perfect Book Boyfriend says

I bought this book because right now I am into mail order brides (don't ask me why). This book was very sweet in a Little House on the Prairie kind of way. There is no cursing or sex and the most you will get is a kiss, and its not a "hot" passionate kiss. There is also a lot of praying, church and scripture reading so if you are not into that, this is not your book. What I didn't like is that she seemed a little pushy in her beliefs. What I did like is how she came to terms with her birthmark and the way he treated her about it. Very sweet touching story, but like I said, if you are not into the Christian type books, this is not for you. I would lend this to certain friends. TTFN.

Awjtf says

Loved it!

Mallory Gaile says

We've all read stories where the heroine is pure perfection, we love these ladies but it's a refreshing change to have a heroine that isn't. Callie, though beautiful on the outside, has a birthmark that takes a little getting used to.

It doesn't stop her from standing her ground with Jack, when it comes to the children that were part of his life and are now part of hers.

This was my first book by this author and I can't decide if I liked it more because of the romance or the journey Callie takes to become comfortable in her skin. Either way this won't be my last Winnie Griggs.

Terri says

it is wonderful story .. My mother will read this book soon.. I am going to read more of Winne's books for future.

Danielle The Book Huntress (Back to the Books) says

The Hand-Me Down Family was my first foray into Christian romance in a long time. I was excited to read this one, because I've enjoyed books by Winnie Griggs in the past. In addition, I am a big enthusiast of marriage of convenience storylines.

All and all, this was a pleasant read. I did have some moments where I felt like things were moving at a sluggish pace. Also I had issues with how the spiritual messages seemed to be somewhat cut and pasted in. What I mean by this is, I felt like Ms. Griggs was motivated to stick in passages where the characters were praying or recalling Bible scriptures. This could be due to my time away from Christian romance, and being unused to this motive of including spiritual content into the message.

I am not a big fan of overt preachiness or what I call PSA's (Public Service Announcements) in a fictional story. I think that the moral and a message should be neatly integrated into the story, and spread throughout, much like one would put a small amount of salt in cookie dough to give it that piquancy to balance out the sugar. The reader can then ponder the story and delve through to get the message out as they enjoy the narrative.

In this story, I felt that the spiritual aspects might have been a little too blatant. Again, I have to admit that this is coming from a person who reads very little Christian fiction (although I would like to read more that is good and entertaining and has a good underlying message). Thus, I can't judge Ms. Griggs, and probably need to read more of the Love Inspired and other Christian romances in my tbr pile to get a feel for how this is done.

My disappointment with the lack of subtlety in the spiritual aspects was balanced out by my interest and attraction to the characters and the sense of inadequacy that they struggle with. Callie has a disfiguring mark

on her cheek, a port-wine birthmark. She is very self-conscious about it, and wears bonnets all the time to keep it concealed. My heart went out to her. It is very difficult to be different, especially if your differences are overt and obvious. In my opinion, she seems to overcompensate by trying to be a good Christian and to be perfect in every other way. Her marrying Leland and taking on his young daughter is part of her do-good complex. At some points, it made her come off as being self-righteous. As a committed Christian, it is a tough road to walk, because you do have to hold yourself to a different standard, and your choices reflect your beliefs. Callie definitely showed a deep faith in God, but she seemed to spend time trying to get Jack to do things to express his faith for the benefit of the children they were raising together. I found this frustrating. Everyone's walk is different, and it bothered me on a personal level that she was somehow forcing her beliefs on how a Christian should act on Jack. I do agree that the parents serve as spiritual role models for kids, but it seemed kind of hypocritical to force Jack to act in a way that wasn't true to who he was. I think all of us believers have been in situations where we were the 'less spiritual' person and we've been nudged and lectured by the 'more spiritual' people in the church or group. It's not a good feeling, and it can cause people to stay away from the church or groups to avoid that feeling of pressure and inadequacy. Which brings me to Jack.

Jack has always lived in his older, 'better' brother's shadow. He got all of Leland's hand-me downs, and now it looks like he'll have to take on Leland's responsibilities by marrying his by-proxy wife and taking care of his young daughter, along with the two children of his sister and her husband, since all three adults perished in the same fire. He wants to do right by the children, but at the same time, he regrets having to leave behind the independent life he has made for himself, with his own business and a good name unassociated with his family. He is very insecure about his place in the world in comparison to his brother, and it manifests in his behavior. I had trouble with this part, but his feelings of coming short and his resentment about it, combined with his feelings that God didn't answer his prayers to help him to matter as much as his brother, cause him to turn his back on his faith. He doesn't stop believing, but he has a very separate relationship to God. He adopts a 'God helps those who help themselves philosophy' and doesn't pray or go to church. I struggled with this concept, but then I came to the realization that believers can tend to blame God for not coming through in ways that we may think He should, but with maturity, we realize that God was listening, but He just knew better than us, and that's why He didn't give us what we wanted. And eventually we come to thank Him for how He does answer our prayers.

I liked the aspect of this book in which Jack's feeling of not measuring up enables him to see and to understand Callie's insecurity about her birthmark. From the beginning, he shows that her birthmark doesn't bother him and encourages her to show her true face to the world. He was withdrawn in some ways, because of his fears of not measuring up and wanting to stay uninvolved, but at the same time, he was a very sensitive and caring person, and showed very good fatherly traits in how he interacted with the kids.

Some of the parts in which Callie is treated less than kindly because of her birthmark just about broke my heart. The intolerance that people can show is very sad. Even Simon, who is one of the orphaned children, says some pretty ugly things about her birthmark and makes Callie cry in a scene that is very heart-wrenching. I liked how Jack supported her and stood up for her and always made her feel beautiful and worthy.

There is also a retired schoolteacher, Mrs. Mayweather, who serves as a source of strength to the floundering couple. It is her suggestion that they marry to take care of the children, and she gives encouragement to get past their issues in ways that are sometimes on the underhanded side. For instance, she makes Callie have to take her bonnet off in front of all the women to put on a strand of pearls that she gives the bride to wear on her wedding day. At first, I thought that was pretty mean, but I could see why she did that. She didn't want Callie to be ashamed for what she couldn't change about herself, and to hide it from the town so that they

would accept and like her. That made a lot of sense to both Callie and myself after the fact. She also tells Jack some things he needs to hear and gives him nudges when necessary. She really ends up being a very important character in this story in the way she aids both Callie and Jack in their emotional growth and their coming together as a couple.

I feel that the romance part could have been a little more developed. As a Christian romance, I didn't expect any lovemaking or sensuality, but I was surprised that the only interaction that we get to see is a brief kiss that is barely described. I was thinking that more could be shown and not stray from being a sweet romance. I am a big believer that chemistry in a romance novel doesn't have to be tied to the bedroom. There can be a strong attraction shown in every interaction between the couple. I didn't really feel that big of an attraction between Jack and Callie, other than their respect and caring for each other. Although we do get to see Callie and Jack spending time together, more of the time is devoted to discussing the kids and issues with the family, and less getting to know each other on a personal level.

I was glad I got the opportunity to read this book, and it was a moving read for me. I had a few issues that I felt kept it from being a favorite of mine, but I would consider it a keeper for the good message, the well-drawn characters, and the poignancy of seeing Jack and Callie deal with their issues of lack of self-worth and worthiness in the world. It was definitely a worthwhile read.

Rating 3.5/5.0 stars.

Brynnie says

This was a sweet story. However, I felt it could've been a lot better. I know Christian books tend to have less romance but this book barely had anything. Some parts also moved very slow and had me struggling to keep reading. I also felt the religious aspect was a bit in your face.. like Bible passages just thrown in all over the place. While some people might like that, I prefer books that are more subtle. Overall, I think the writing was good and had an interesting plot but it just fell short.

SheLove2Read says

This is one of those books that sneaks up on you unexpectedly. I absolutely loved it.

Callie Gray has traveled to Texas to be with her new husband and children. (She married him by proxy) She is excited to be starting a new life away from her well meaning but smothering family back in Ohio, even though she knows this is not a love match but one of convenience (her best friend has died and the husband needs someone to help him raise their children). You see, Callie has a small but noticeable port wine birthmark on her face. As such, she's "on the shelf" and when this chance comes to have a family and a life outside of being pitied, she's praising God for her fortune. However upon arriving in Texas, she finds out her husband has died in a fire. A widow before she's a wife.

Remorseful that she never got to meet her intended, she instead focuses on the children, who luckily were spared. Unfortunately she doesn't count on her husband's estranged brother trying to push her out of the picture and take the children himself.

Jack Tyler has been estranged from his brother for 11 years. As the younger brother he always got the hand me down and castoffs and came to resent it. The final blow was when he proposed marriage to a lovely young woman only to find out she was in love with his brother! (Coincidentally she was Callie's best friend) Jack is now back in town to take responsibility for his nieces and nephews. He's also dealing with a lot of guilt over his relationship with his brother and not being able to resolve it before he died. As such, he's also turned away from God, instead choosing to believe the incorrect adage of "God helps those who help themselves." When he finds out about Callie he's naturally resistant to what he sees as "the competition" for the children. With the help of the local schoolmistress, Jack and Callie come to the decision that they will employ their own marriage of convenience for the sake of the children. Jack can't take care of the kids on his own and Callie can't work the farm on her own - so they compromise and each hope that their own sacrifice will be for the benefit of the children when all is said and done.

Callie is a character I loved from page one. She's as accepting of her birthmark as any woman could be, especially of the time period, although she does hide herself behind big and ugly bonnets when not at home. (Maybe not as accepting as she thinks she is?) She genuinely loves the children at first sight and does her best to be a stepmother to them without trying to replace her best friend in their hearts. Even when she overhears one of the children make a horrifically ugly remark about her birthmark to a friend, she hides her discomfort and pretends she didn't hear it. Later on she takes a walk in the woods, away from the family, and bears her anguish to God. I found myself sobbing right along with her. Jack, noticing her missing, goes in search of her and finds her crying. Not knowing why or what she's crying about, he simply kneels beside her and holds her while she cries. I fell in love with Jack at that moment. ;-)

Jack is the hero who grows on you. Initially he's dead set against Callie being in the kids lives but after some soul searching he realizes he really can't do this on his own. I love the way he never took out his anger over the circumstances on Callie, which he could easily have done. He also never looked twice at her birthmark. What a man! Knowing that there is more to a person than looks or a birthmark, he treats Callie with respect and honor. On their wedding day he overhears two catty old women disparaging Callie and defends her in a subtle but very "I mean business" kind of way. Jack goes out of his way to try and make Callie comfortable around the kids and encourages her to leave her ugly bonnets off at every opportunity. Of course there's some angst on Jack's part along the way - this is not the life he had envisioned for himself and he struggles with the turmoil of that. Although I thought the HEA was slightly rushed, it definitely was a very touching one and well done.

I would recommend this to anyone who's looking for a meaty, introspective romance.

Brook Reader says

I recommend this book

An emotion packed blended family story to pull each of your heartstrings.

I love books that include children the children draw me in make the story told more realist.

Well done Winnie Griggs.

I chose to review this book
