

EXTREME GRACE



Let's Get Married

by Dick Duerksen

I went to bed early and exhausted on New Year's Eve. No Times Square clock-watching. No need to dodge flying fireworks or brave the freezing cold of midnight. Just crash into bed and sleep, sleep, sleep. At least, that was the plan.

The knock came at 12:01 a.m., January 1, 2003.

Brushing away the cobwebs of first-hour sleep, I focused bleary eyes and mumbled something like, "Come in."

"Pastor Duerksen?" His voice brought me full awake.

"Yes."

The door opened, and in walked Rouru Kapao, dedicated boyfriend of our daughter Julene. He was fumbling with his cap and stumbling over a carefully planned speech.

I listened, fascinated by the expected, and still overwhelmed by the request.

"Pastor Duerksen, I have come to ask if I can marry your daughter." He stood by the bed and waited for me to say something intelligent.

My body wanted to say, "Yes, Sure," and then go back to sleep.

My heart wanted to say, "Julene? Why, she is so young! Are you sure this is the right time? How will this work with your new jobs? Have you thought about

where you will live? And what about health insurance?" ... and a thousand other "father" questions.

It's hard to let a daughter go. A dad's mind immediately fills with a gallery of photographs. Julene holding her first kitten. Julene in the Redwoods. Julene at graduation, with friends, with family, at Christmas. You get the idea. Father is on rewind when he should be on Full Forward Fast Track!

I could feel her listening at the door.

So, my lips said something like, "Yes, Rouru. You may marry Julene. Brenda and I are so proud and pleased with the relationship you have developed and the blah, blah, blah, blah."

All they heard was "Yes!" and the bedroom was quickly filled with New Year's revelry.

Later that morning, I lay awake thinking about love and marriage. Imagine the smile on God's face as he finally got Adam and Eve's attention so he could say, "I give this woman to marry this man!"

Imagine Isaac watching from the hilltop as Rebecca's caravan came up the road. Feel his heartbeat? Imagine his hopes, his fears, his imaginations?

And what about Rebecca?

How would you like to be cameled hundreds of miles to the home of an unknown husband! Imagine her hopes, fears, and imaginations. Terrifying!

I remembered that text in Isaiah (62:5) where God describes how he feels about me. "As a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so I will rejoice over you." And I remembered Rouru's love-filled face.

Julene's mother awoke in the bed beside me.

"What are you thinking about," she asked.

"About the night I asked your dad if I could marry you."

Laughter warmed our bedroom as we remembered Papa's chuckling response, "I'm sure glad I'm sitting down!"

That was late evening, January 8, 1969. Thirty-four years ago!

We lay quiet for a long time, each of us caught up in memories and imaginations.

"They'll be very happy," Brenda broke the silence.

For the next hour we talked about love, marriage, children, school, pets, church, finances, children, health insurance, and all of the other things parents with marriage-bound kids worry about.

Then we remembered two lovers sitting on the edge of our bed earlier in the morning.

"He loves her," I said.

"She loves him," Brenda said.

"And they each love being loved by God," we both said.

"They'll be very happy."

