

EXTREME GRACE

The Teal Mini

by Dick Duerksen

The moral of the story is this:

God is eager to give us gifts of far greater value than anything we can imagine—and wildly better than we deserve.

We'll call her Holly and assume she lives in a middle-class American family. She is a Seventh-day Adventist, as are her parents. She is 16, a high school junior attending an Adventist boarding academy as a "day" student, driving about 30 miles each day from home, to school, to work, and back home again. She earned an "A" in driver's ed., is a student body leader, and a member of three school clubs.

Both Mom and Dad are totally tired of driving her everywhere, especially since the timing and location of her appointments do not match theirs at all! It is time for Holly to have her own car.

Sunday morning they dropped off Holly at baseball practice and headed for the auto mall. Dad thought Holly needed a 1985 Oldsmobile Cutlass, one "she couldn't get hurt in." Mom was more interested in "new chrome."

They wandered from Olds to VW to

Mitsubishi to Honda and more, listening to spiels from salespeople as diverse as the cars. By 3:00 p.m. they were exhausted and ready to relegate Holly to her bicycle.

On a bench beside the Honda dealership, Mom and Dad thought aloud about their girl, their budget, and God.

"What kind of car do you think God would like us to give her?" Mom was the questioner.

"One with air bags." Dad was always practical.

They talked for most of an hour, concentrating more on God's grace than on cubic displacement and air bag placement.

"God gives gifts," they decided, "so we'll know he loves us."

"But, it's more than that," Mom again. "He gives us gifts so we'll recognize His love, be excited about it, and want to share it with everyone we know!"

"Does that mean a mini-van?" Dad was also always mischievous.

They laughed and drove downtown and stood transfixed before the plate glass windows of their town's newest dealership.

"There's not even room for an air bag in that!" Mr. Practical spoke first.

The salesperson quickly dispelled that thought, showing off air bags here, there, and everywhere.

Within a half hour they were both convinced, already imagining Holly's response.

Color was the hardest part,

but they finally settled on teal, a kind of blue that "called out to be admired and loved."

They arranged to pick it up Tuesday noon, Holly's 16th birthday. Mom drove it to the academy, parking it deep in the student lot.

Holly was waiting at the customary parental "pick-up point."

"We bought you a car," Dad spoke and Mom glowed. "It's in the student lot. See if you can find it."

Holly sprinted around the music building to a lot covered with cracking blacktop. There were pick-up trucks, small cars, big cars, old cars, and new cars. Even a couple of minivans. But there, shouting love in the midst of all the others, was a teal blue Mini.

She turned, amazement and excitement blending into awe.

"For me?"

"That look," Mom told me later, "I would pay anything for that!"

I know. It was her first car, and they should have bought a used Olds. She's probably not old enough to drive it wisely or treat it with care. She might wreck it. She might use it to take her friends out somewhere they shouldn't go. There's a lot of things she could do poorly with the gift.

Like we do with grace.

But Abba, our ever-loving Father, gives it anyway—eager for us to experience awe at his love.

Parents are like that.

