

# EXTREME GRACE

## Splitting Chin Hairs

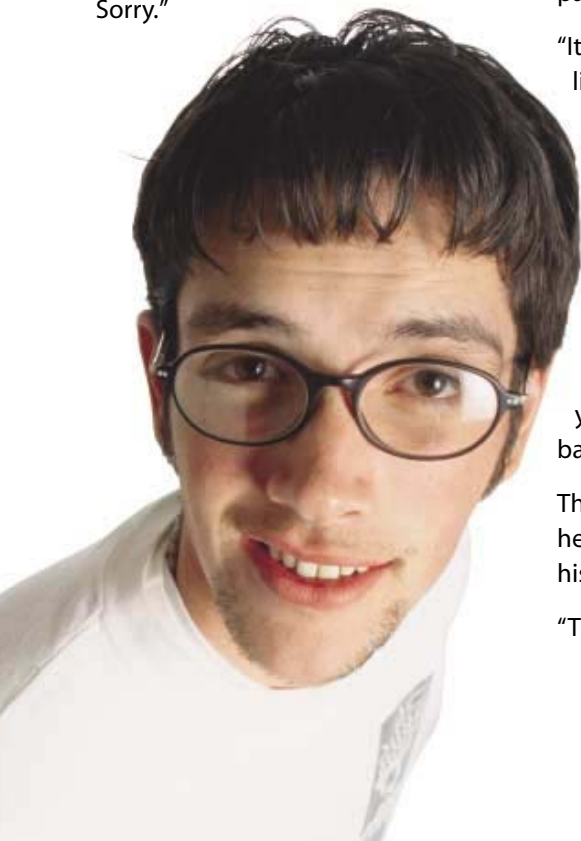
by Dick Duerksen

It began with a rule.

Well, that may not be quite true. It probably began with a group of people who wanted their school to look like the best high school in town, and who knew that scruffy guys could destroy that look with three razorless days.

But, for the new principal, it began with a rule. And with a commitment to follow the board's mandates.

"No beards on guys. Sorry."



It was a good rule. After all, have you seen how seedy teenage gentlemen usually look when they allow their facial hair to grow? It can be quite disconcert-

ing, especially to those who notice such things.

So the principal and the staff enforced the rule, even though one of the faculty members was bearded. "When you get older, you may grow a beard like his, too," was the best explanation anyone could muster for the differing standards.

Till thunderous Thursday.

The principal was in his office, tending to principal things, when a teacher hurled Thomas through the open door.

"Look at him," she shouted. "He's growing a beard!" So he was. "Take care of him," she snarled, and then slammed the door. She had done her duty, and now it was the principal's turn to enforce the rule.

"It's a stupid rule!" The principal listened as Thomas colorfully trounced the board, the school, the church, the enforcer, and the principal.

"Thomas," the principal began, "even though you hate the rule and believe it is unfair, it is the rule, and you must follow it to attend school here. I must ask you to go home, shave, and come back tomorrow with a clean chin."

Thomas' response is not printable here, and it brought the principal to his feet.

"Thomas. This is no longer an issue

of a beard. Now we are dealing with insubordination."

There was more shouting, and the secretary knocked on the door to see if everything was ok. After she had gone, the principal offered Thomas an alternative.

"The board meets Tuesday, and I would be glad to take your concern to them. Go home, shave the beard, put the hair in a Ziploc bag, and bring it to me. I will take it to the board and explain why you and a number of the other students see this as an unfair rule. Let's see if they might change it."

Thomas' response included more cursing and slammed doors as he exited the office and the school. The principal sat silently, wondering what the rule was teaching about God's character.

Tuesday morning the principal arrived at his office early, eager to complete final preparations for the board meeting. In the center of his desk was a baggie filled with little tiny black hairs. No note. Just hair, miraculously appearing on the desk.

Two hours later the principal held up the baggie and told the story to the board.

"What would you like us to do?" the chairman asked.

"I would like for you to suspend the rule and allow us to start a beard-growing contest this afternoon."

There was laughter all around, and then an hour of discussion about how to choose rules that accurately represent God's character of grace.

Things were pretty scruffy for several days, but the girls quickly took care of that. The beard-growing contest was a hairy success, even though Thomas came in third.