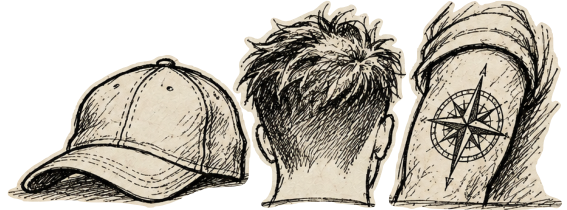


HATS, HAIRCUTS, AND TATTOOS

Are we making some decisions harder than they need to be?

I came across an interesting analogy recently from James Clear that has me thinking about how we make decisions. Apparently, there are three kinds of decisions in life. **Hats, haircuts, and tattoos.**



HATS

You put on a hat. You look in the mirror. You don't like what you see. So, you take it off. Simple. No consequences. No regrets. You can change your mind in seconds.

Some decisions are like that. They're easy to make, easy to reverse, and carry very little risk.

HAIRCUTS

You get a haircut. You look in the mirror. You don't like what you see. Unfortunately, you can't put your hair back. But give it some time, and it will grow back. You might have to live with an awkward hairstyle for a few weeks, but eventually, you'll have another opportunity to try something different.

Some decisions are like that, too. They involve a little more risk, and the consequences might take some time to work through. But they're not permanent.

TATTOOS

You get a tattoo. You look in the mirror. You don't like what you see. Now you've got a problem. Tattoos are intended to be permanent. Sure, there are ways to remove them, but they're expensive, uncomfortable, and not always completely successful.

Some decisions deserve that kind of careful consideration. They involve commitments and consequences that can affect us, and sometimes others, for years.

Three kinds of decisions. Three very different levels of consequence. And here's what fascinates me. I wonder how often we treat hats like tattoos.

An opportunity comes along. Something new. Something unfamiliar. Something that might require us to step outside what's comfortable. And almost immediately, we begin considering everything that could possibly go wrong.

What if it doesn't work?

What if we make a mistake?

What if people don't understand?

What if we regret it?

Before long, a relatively simple decision has become an enormous undertaking. We organize meetings. We develop strategies. We conduct research. We seek advice. We discuss every possible outcome. And sometimes, after all that effort, we decide not to do anything at all. All because we've convinced ourselves that trying on a hat is the same as getting a tattoo.

WHEN EVERY DECISION FEELS PERMANENT

I've watched this happen in churches, organizations, businesses, and in my own life. Someone has an idea. A new way to connect with people. A different approach to something we've always done. An opportunity to explore unfamiliar territory.

But instead of asking, "*What would happen if we tried this?*" we begin asking questions that assume we're making a permanent commitment.

How will we sustain it?

What if it grows?

What if it fails?

What will people think?

What happens if we need to change direction?

Those aren't necessarily bad questions. Some are important. But are they the right questions for the decision we're actually making?

What if we're simply trying on a hat? What if we could experiment for a few weeks, pay attention to what happens, learn something, and decide what to do next? No enormous investment. No elaborate strategy. No permanent commitment. Just a small step into something unfamiliar.

JESUS AND THE UNFAMILIAR

One of the things that fascinates me about Jesus is how often He invited people to move before they had everything figured out. When He sent the seventy-two ahead of Him in Luke 10, He didn't give them an elaborate organizational structure, a comprehensive strategy, or a detailed plan for every possible situation.

He gave them simple instructions. Go. Enter homes. Extend peace. Receive hospitality. Heal the sick. Announce that the Kingdom of God has come near. And if a town didn't welcome them? Move on.

They weren't being asked to establish permanent institutions in every town they visited. They were being sent into unfamiliar places to participate in what God was doing. There was risk involved, certainly. Jesus made that clear. But there was also movement, discovery, and the opportunity to respond to what they encountered along the way.

They would learn things by going that they could never have learned by staying. And I wonder if we've sometimes made following Jesus more complicated than He intended. Not because we care too much about faithfulness, but because we've confused faithfulness with having everything figured out before we begin.

WHAT KIND OF DECISION IS THIS?

I'm learning to ask myself a simple question whenever I'm facing an unfamiliar opportunity:

Is this a hat, a haircut, or a tattoo?

If it's a tattoo, I want to give it the careful consideration it deserves.

Some decisions involve responsibilities, relationships, and commitments that shouldn't be taken lightly.

If it's a haircut, I need to recognize that there may be some discomfort involved.

Things might not turn out the way I imagined. I might have to live with the consequences for a while. But I'll learn. I'll grow. And I'll have another opportunity to move forward.

And if it's a hat, I should ask why I am spending so much time thinking about it?

Try it on. Look in the mirror. See what happens. And if it doesn't fit, take it off.

I've become increasingly convinced that some of the most fruitful discoveries in life begin with small experiments that nobody could have predicted. Not every idea needs to become a program. Not every experiment needs to become permanent. Not every opportunity requires a five-year plan.

Sometimes, we simply need the courage to try something and trust Jesus with what we discover along the way.

So, here's a question worth considering:

Is there something Jesus may be inviting you to explore that you've been putting off because it feels too risky, too complicated, or too uncertain?

Take another look. You might discover you've been treating a hat like a tattoo.