

A Holy Ghost Haircut

Satan has used lies and racial stereotypes to divide and isolate us.

Several weeks ago I decided to get a haircut while I was waiting for my daughter's car to be repaired. I looked across the street and saw a sign that read "HAIR" and figured I could try a new place for a change-even though I was unfamiliar with the neighborhood. When I walked in I realized it was a shop that catered to African-Americans.

Everyone in the salon was black, and they all gave me slightly puzzled stares when I came through the door. They probably weren't used to seeing middle-aged white guys come in this place too often.

I immediately smelled chemicals I'd never smelled before. About eight women were seated in chairs on the left side of the salon, and I soon learned that many of them had been there for two hours getting relaxer treatments or elaborate weaves. Several men were in the cramped lobby waiting for the one male stylist who specialized in men's hair.

I had an awkward choice to make. I could turn and walk out, and risk sending the message that I didn't want to be in a black hair salon. Or I could do what Jesus would do. I quickly decided that He had led me there.

I gave my name to the receptionist-a kind-faced, middle-aged woman who was carrying on a spirited conversation with one of the female customers about her unexpected pregnancy. I was told that "Devon" would be cutting my hair when he finished with the four men in front of me.

I could feel the stares more intensely as I thumbed through worn copies of Ebony and Black Enterprise. The receptionist looked at me every minute or so with a nervous smile. I asked

her about her large family and told her about my four teenage girls.

We suddenly had a lot in common.

While a wall-mounted television blared a rerun of The Proud Family, the whirring of hair clippers blended with a dozen conversations to make the room buzz. There was a sense of community in this place that I've never felt in the sterile suburban salon I visit once a month. These people knew one another, shared their family news and even swapped prayer requests.

I felt at home, but many questions were going through my mind. Do these folks even want me here? Will they laugh when I leave? Does Devon know how to cut a white guy's hair?

All the men in front of me were getting their heads shaved except one, who was having his hair platted in tiny patches and adorned with beads. I did not want beads, a shaved cut or a "low, low fade," which in black lingo means shorter than a buzz cut.

When I got in Devon's chair I immediately pushed past the awkwardness. "So is there really any difference when it comes to cutting black or white hair?" I asked.

Devon laughed. "No, man. It's all just hair." He laughed again when I admitted that I used Afro Sheen on my curls when I was a teenager in the 1970s.

Devon did a great job on my hair, and I told him I'd be back again. Then I told the receptionist I hoped she would have no complications with her pregnancy. A lot of eyes followed me as I walked to the door.

Some of those people looked dumbfounded, as if I had broken an unwritten social rule. I just smiled and waved. It felt good to break some stereotypes-and make new friends in the process.

My experience that day reminded me that Jesus went out of His way to break social barriers. He even went to Samaria—a place no other kosher Jewish rabbi would dare visit. After He ministered to the divorced woman at the well, He stayed there two days—most likely eating Samaritan food, living in a Samaritan house and soaking in Samaritan culture (see John 4:40). Who knows? Maybe He even got a Samaritan-style haircut.

Satan has used lies and racial stereotypes to divide and isolate us. But when we cross ethnic and cultural lines and learn to spend time with one another, we discover how flimsy the devil's barriers really are. I hope you will venture outside your safety zone and start crashing through the cultural blockades that separate people in your community.

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