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THAT CUSTOM LOOK

It's the nature of the beast to want to chop it, bob it, customize it, and make it mine. I'm not talking about the beast between my knees, but the beast between my ears. The beast in me can't seem to leave well enough alone. I don't want to ride a clone-bike down the street, wearin' that silly grin like everybody else is wearin'. I want my ride to be a real part of me, so I scrape it, cut it, hack it, weld it, paint it, and do it all over again until I get it right. It bugs the heck out of me that I can't tell a Chevy from a Toyota anymore. All the plastic bikes out there nowadays look the same, and you'd even think that the company is making bikes according to mass appeal, rather than for the individual! Used to be you could sit down and spend hours ordering up the exact vehicle you wanted - done just right - and have the only one like it. Now you just fork over the money for the privilege of riding the newest cookie, fresh out of the oven. Everybody's got one, why not you?

Like I said, it's just not in my nature to be like everybody else. I want to be what I was made to be - a unique beast, identical to no other. My finger prints have no match. Noone's eyes are exactly my color. Who else would want this face? Why should I be riding something that looks like everything else on the street? I am in the process of fixing second gear, and then I am going to do some things to the bike, to reflect who I am. Since I am color-blind, I'm not concerned about color. My wife told me the bike was charcoal gray. That's what it looks like to me, except I thought charcoal was black. It's got a factory fairing on it, which is nice when the weather is cold, but I can't decide whether to leave it or chop it. My wife mentioned installing a hack, so she doesn't have to sit in the wind stream. I know she doesn't understand why the dog rides with her head out the window, either. Anyway, there are a lot of things I can do to let people know that this is my ride - an extension of who I am. I could spend 4X on chrome what the bike cost when it was brand new. Of course, some of my friends think I should get a different bike because this one will never make a statement about who I am. It's not "out there" far enough. It's too conventional.

I'm not talking anymore to the guy who suggested that a "knucklehead" would be about right. I've been thinking about a "shovelhead" or something like that, because I am just an old-fashioned kind of guy. I like tinkering and fixing, and . . . come to think of it . . . maybe not. If riding isn't a challenge, it is easy to get bored. I never considered that part of riding might be the uncertainty of ever arriving at the destination. I'll think on that another day.

Many of us are looking for the ride that defines who we are. It's not just where we've been that says a lot about us, but how we got where we've been. I mean, my wife wants to visit our daughter in California. She wants to get on a plane and fly out there, have someone pick her up at the airport and deliver her to the house, ride around in the passenger seat of the daughter's minivan for a week, get on a plane and fly home. That's a perfect definition of insanity. Everybody's doin' it. That's the point. Yep, let's fire up the shovel and head west. Where we gonna' stop on the way? Wherever we are when we need to stop. Reservations? Nope, I feel real confident that all will be OK. If anything breaks, we'll fix it. If something goes wrong, we'll deal with it, and we won't have to stand in line with a bunch of clones.

Every one of us is unique. God did not make us exactly like anyone else. He has a unique plan and purpose for our lives, as we learn to trust Him. The world wants to force us into its own mold, making us just like everyone else. That's not for you, is it? The Bible says that we are not to be conformed to this world, but we are to be transformed by the power of God working in our hearts and minds. He wants to bring the beast between our ears under control, so we know what needs to be bobbed and chopped, and scraped, and painted. He designed our lives to uniquely reflect His life, in such a way that it brings happiness and peace to us and those around us. Yes, there are some things we need to lose, to make life better. You know what some of them are. There are also things to be added to make life more enjoyable and challenging. You, like me, may need to trade in the old ride for a new ride, recognizing that the old doesn't really fit you anymore. God's got a new "custom" ride waiting for you. Climb aboard.

Sam Downey

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