

At age 12, I was living in Beaufort, South Carolina and attending the 7<sup>th</sup> grade at Beaufort Junior High School. Several years prior to this age, I had played organized baseball and football; but during that year, I received a back injury {a pinch nerve} that kept me from playing both sports altogether. Still, I was able to ride my 10-speed, to fish, and to hang-out with some of my friends like Mike Bell and Jeff Brown. It was not a good year because of the injury and the transition from a good elementary school to a not-so-good junior high school; still, I tried to develop other interests such as playing the drums and rock-in-roll, and going to youth activities at the local Baptist church.

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This time period represented some real changes in my life. First, the school was very different and also included riding a bus instead of my bicycle. Second, my true-love at the time, Lori, had “broken-up’ with me; never to show any interest again. Third, the sports injury was very painful and made even walking painful for awhile. This time period or age does not “bring back fond memories”; as it presented circumstances and changes that I did not prefer or welcome.

The word “cool”, to mean popular or well-accepted, was widely used in 1973 – when I was 12. During elementary school, I was most-likely a “cool” kid who fished, played sports, went to dance hops, peddled around on my bicycle, went to the movies, and basically had fun. But at 12, the “coolness” began to wear-off and this once-outgoing kid was now becoming a quiet, insecure pre-teen. But even being cool, or thinking of yourself as cool, is over-rated...don’t you think?

Being cool requires a lot of effort and, at times, compromise of your values or what you think is “the right thing to do”. When the popular choice conflicts with our personal values, a choice must be made...and the consequences must be accepted as well. The wrong choice may lead to trouble that far outweighs the acceptance that we all desire from time to time. Sometimes we can be cool and be “real” at time same time...but not always.

Jesus was cool because he helped the poor, fed the hungry, healed the sick, and saved the lost. But he also ministered to all people as the acclaimed savior of the world – which for some people was very un-cool and downright unacceptable. Although he came to save all mankind from the peril of sin, the response was anything but acceptance; indeed, all mankind condemned him to death without the realization that his death was ordained that mankind might be restored unto God, our maker. In faith, we believe that he rose from death and, by his resurrection; we too can overcome death – the punishment for our sins. Jesus is still real and, as far as cool, well that is between you and Him.

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