

It seems like every part of our society has been touched by tattoos; movie stars, rock stars, athletes, and everyday people. Many Christians, both famous and unknown, are becoming a part of the tattoo craze. There are several reasons why people get tattoos.

1. To honor a friend or loved one who died.
2. To demonstrate love for a child or significant other.
3. To identify one's religion.
4. To show that the person has served in the military.
5. To recognize some special lifetime achievement.
6. To imitate a celebrity.
7. To just get a tattoo, no specific reason.

LEVITICUS 19:28

As we look at what the Bible says about tattoos there seems to be one main verse that people use against tattoos and that is found in Leviticus 19:28:

“Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor print any marks upon you: I am the LORD.” (KJV) “You shall not make any cuts in your body for the dead nor make any tattoo marks on yourselves: I am the LORD.”(NASB)

Views on this verse:

There are two views as to what this verse means:

1. The Lord is prohibiting the practice of getting a tattoo. He was impressing

upon the Israelites the need for reverencing the body which His creation.

2. The Lord is warning the Israelites to stay away from the practices of the pagan nations around them. One of the practices was cutting and tattooing the body during times of bereavement. This was considered to be a way of honoring the dead.

Context of this Verse:

As we examine Leviticus 19:27-31, Moses seems to be identifying pagan practices which were to be avoided by the people of God. These were pagan burial rituals (27-28), prostitution of one's daughter (29) and consulting mediums (31). In the context of this passage, it seems that this verse is talking about the pagan practice of tattooing one's body for burial.

Meaning of this verse:

Taking this verse in the context of Leviticus 19:27-31, it seems to be referring to the prohibition of pagan rituals of cutting and marking the body with tattoos in honor of the dead. Therefore, it can be assumed that, unless it is for pagan reasons, this verse is not a ban against getting a tattoo in today's society.

BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES FOR THOSE CONSIDERING A TATTOO

Even though the Bible does not condemn getting a tattoo, there are some other Biblical references that should be considered before doing so.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

“What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.”

The believer's body is the temple of God. Since the Holy Spirit resides in the body of the Christian, he should be aware of honoring the Lord with his body. One issue that must be grappled with when getting a tattoo is, “am I honoring God with my body?”

1 Corinthians 6:12

‘Everything is permissible for me’—but not everything is beneficial...(NIV)

Even though getting a tattoo may be permissible, one must ask the question, “Is it beneficial?” When looking at the benefits of getting a tattoo one must also consider the risks? Research demonstrates that there are significant risk factors associated with getting a tattoo.

Ecclesiastes 12:13-14

“God will judge us for everything we do, including every secret thing, whether good or bad” (NLT).

God looks at our heart and judges our motives. What is the motive for getting a tattoo?

- Because others are doing it (see Roman 12:2).
- It is my body and I can do what I want with it (see 1 Corinthians 6:19-20).
- To go against parents wishes (see Exodus 20:12).
- To be a witness for Christ (see Galatians 2:20).

1 Corinthians 10:31

“Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.”

Whatever we do should bring glory to God. The life-long commitment of the Christian should be to glorify God. If a believer is going to make a permanent change to his or her body, one question that should be asked is “how does this glorify God?” In addition, if a believer decides to get a tattoo, he should also ask, “does the image of this tattoo glorify God?”

Philippians 4:6

Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

As a believer, before getting a tattoo, I should ask myself “Have I prayed about getting a tattoo?” and “Do I have a peace from God that it is alright to get a tattoo?”

CONCLUSION

In our culture today we see a lot of tattoos that are done in good taste and with good motives. Even though the Bible does not say that such tattoos are wrong, the believer should not take getting a tattoo lightly. Only after careful meditation on the Word of God, especially the verses presented in this document, and prayer should a Christian make the decision to get a tattoo.

THE BIBLE AND TATTOOS



by
Dr. William R. Glaze