

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT TATTOOS?

by Betty Miller

The Bible warns us against tattoos in **Leviticus 19:28 (Amplified)** which says, "**Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor print or tattoo any marks upon you: I am the Lord.**"

I know some will have a hard time receiving this teaching because tattooing has now become an accepted practice in our society. However, just because society approves of something does not make it right in God's eyes. Our society at large, also approves of abortion and divorce as well. However, the Bible makes it clear that God doesn't approve of these things.

In sharing this teaching, I am not trying to condemn anyone who already has a tattoo; but rather to warn those who are considering getting one. God loves us, and even when we make mistakes in poor judgment, He doesn't condemn us, but rather tries to help overcome the consequences of those mistakes. Having a tattoo will not keep anyone from serving the Lord. We know some very godly people who have tattoos and are serving the Lord and their tattoos do not interfere with what God is doing through them. Anything Satan tries to use for evil, God can turn and use it for good when we commit totally to Him. God takes us as we are and uses us if we will yield to His will. God will use any of us when we come out of the world and start serving Him with our whole hearts to do His will. Our past is under the blood of Jesus and the sins and mistakes of the past will not hinder our God in our serving Him. Only a hard and unrepentant heart keeps us tied to the old life.

There are many dedicated and sincere Christian people that have tattoos. This article is not meant to say they do not love the Lord. God not only *can* use them, but *does* use them. The issue is not whether God can use someone, but rather should Christians pursue getting tattoos? Just because something is popular does not mean it is right. We should always examine things by the "roots and the fruits" of the thing in question.

TATTOOING HAS WITCHCRAFT "ROOTS"

In addition to the above verse, Scripture also warns us not to disfigure our bodies in following verses:

1 Kings 18:28: "And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them."

Deuteronomy 14:1(Amplified): "Ye are the sons of the LORD your God; you shall not cut yourselves, nor make any baldness on your foreheads for the dead."

When it speaks here about doing this in relation to the dead; this was a witchcraft rite done to mourn or remember their dead. Therefore tattooing, cutting one's body and shaving one's head in defiance have their origin in witchcraft practices. Tattoos have their "roots" in witchcraft. Many young people today are doing these very things because of some evil witchcraft influences in their lives that they are unaware of. They do not realize that partaking of these can open the door to wrong and defiling influences in their lives. Evil videos, depraved rock music albums, wicked Internet games and violent movies are displaying evil trends in order to destroy our youth. Satanic tattoos, skin heads and other cultic rites are opening many of our children to demonization.

This is what makes it spiritually dangerous for people. People do not realize displaying a satanic mark or symbol can open the door for Satanic attack which allows the enemy entrance in their lives. It is not the mark itself, but rather the sin behind it. Today this practice is growing because of the spread of False Religions. Some people are so hideously covered with tattoos that their appearances look evil. Others, only have small tattoos that they believe are trendy or artistic.

Now this article is not meant to hurt or offend those that have tattoos, but rather to help people avoid getting tattoos that later on they might regret (especially young people). Many tattoos have evil and witchcraft themes

that are portrayed as devil faces, skulls, ugly demonic signs, vulgar pictures, etc. These things hurt the human spirit, just as satanic displays of any kind do. Some tattoos are obviously Satanic as they look devilish, while others may be flowers or innocent looking names or objects but it is the spirit behind this compromise that makes it dangerous for a Christian. God loves the person who has tattoos just as He loves all of us. However, He would rather we did not deface our bodies in any fashion.

Some people object to using Old Testament scripture as a reference to tattoos since the New Testament doesn't speak of these things. However, in the New Testament we are even called to a higher law. We are to have God's laws written in our hearts. When we remain close to the Lord and obey Him, He can direct us in things that are not good for us. For example although the Bible does not say, "Thou shalt not smoke" or "Drug addiction is bad for you;" we know that these things are destructive to the human body. In the New Testament, we are told to glorify God in our bodies. This would include not marring our bodies with tattoos, as the principles in the Bible clearly tell us it is wrong to defile our bodies.

OUR BODIES ARE A TEMPLE

When the Lord created man and woman and placed them in the garden along with His other creations. He spoke these words in **Genesis 1:31, "And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day."** When the Lord created the human body, He pronounced that the way He created it was very good. The Lord desires that our bodies be a reflection of His own beauty. When people tattoo their bodies they are tampering with what the Lord said was very good the way He made it. We should never mark our bodies as this is unnatural. Our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit and we are admonished not to defile them. Tattoos on one's body is like graffiti on a wall. Having tattoos on our bodies does not glorify God.

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."

What is it within man that makes us dissatisfied with the way the Lord made each of us? Most people are not happy with the way they look so they seek ways that will cause them to feel better about themselves or cause others to accept them. This is not wrong when it comes to having good grooming habits, but we need to understand true beauty comes from within, not from what we wear or how we look. When the emphasis is put on the outward appearance we can be ensnared in vanity, rejection, fear, pride and even racial discrimination. One of the most wonderful things about receiving the Lord is that He wants to deliver us from the outward things that we think we need to feel good about ourselves. When we are in sin we do not feel worthy or acceptable, but through Christ we are. When we can fully walk in the knowledge that we are acceptable before God through Christ, we are then free to be the person God made us to be without having to create a different image. Many people are consumed with trying to be different or become acceptable not only by getting a tattoo but by other things as well.

Some Christians argue that they have the name *Jesus* or some Biblical word or sign tattooed on their body so they can witness by the tattoo. However, God is more concerned how we are living our lives than by displaying a religious mark on our body. That is not the highest way He would have us witness. The Lord would rather us witness to others by the character of Christ being demonstrated in our lives than display Christian slogans that many times are not matched by the life of Christ. Certainly, the Lord can use a tattoo of a cross or other religious symbol when a Christian has one of these as God knows the heart of the one who truly wants to share Christ with others. However, it is not necessary to use any worldly thing to attract sinners. It is the Holy Spirit who draws people to Christ through any yielded vessel of the Lord. When we pray and witness to others the Lord will cause them to listen.

Just because a person has had a tattoo, it will not prevent God from using people to witness nor keep them from being a minister of God. God looks on the heart and can use different things to testify of Christ's love, even tattoos. However, well-meaning people can be deceived in their methods of evangelism.

THE YOUTH CULTURE AND TATTOOS

I really believe that one of the compromises we see today is parents allowing their children to mark or tattoo their bodies. Christians can look at someone who has tattoos all over them and know by discernment that it is not God, but the same Christians may get a small tattoo themselves or allow their children to have one without thinking anything about it. Toy makers today even sell washable ink transfer kits so children can mark their bodies with designs. This may seem like a harmless game but this is the enemy preparing or setting up our children early to receive real tattoos later on.

Many young people today do not realize that they may be sorry in the future that they chose to put tattoos on their bodies today. We know of many people who have said to us that they wish they had not been foolish when they were young as now they must live with the reminder of what they did when they were young. Only a few people have the money to have them removed by laser.

Years ago our young boys in the military had to go to foreign lands to get a tattoo, now tattoo parlors are everywhere because our nation here in the U.S.A. has opened its doors to many heathen practices and false religions. Another danger in receiving tattoos is a medical one through faulty procedures. One of the latest discoveries of another way AIDS is being transmitted is through contaminated ink or dirty tattoo needles. If fresh ink is not used, then the last person who was tattooed who had any kind of transmittable disease could leave behind that virus or bacteria. Not only Aids, but Hepatitis as well, has been traced to tattoo ink and needle contamination.

Some young people are having them done in defiance and rebellion to their parent's wishes because they want to be like their friends. This is displeasing to God as the Lord tells children to honour and obey their parents.

Colossians 3:20: "Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord."

The reason so many people are deceived on this issue, as well as others, is that there is a lack of knowledge in the things of God and a lack of discernment in the body of Christ. **Hosea 4:6a** says, **"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge."** Many have not been taught nor grounded in the Word of God. We as church leadership owe an apology to the youth of our day because many of us have failed in our responsibility to speak out on the issues of the day and have allowed the influences of the world to shape our society. Many Christian parents have failed in their responsibility also, as they have been too involved in chasing the American Dream instead of raising our children in the nurture and admonition of God as commanded in the Bible. **Ephesians 6:4: "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."**

One note of warning to the church on this subject of tattoos. We have a generation now of young people that love the Lord yet do not understand all of His ways. Soon we are also going to be seeing a great revival among the youth of the world. The youth of this day want a real cause to live and die for. Most have not seen true Christianity. However, when they do come to Christ many will be bringing their tattoos, dress, music and old habits with them right into the church. We must be sure that we do not despise them nor look down on them, but rather welcome and love them and gently teach them the ways of the Lord. We are called to love and pray for them and help them avoid making some of the mistakes we have made in our own walk with the Lord. We need to be true mothers and fathers to them. Yes, we must speak the truth in love, but let us make sure we are loving them and not condemning them. On the other hand, we must not accept all that they would desire to bring with them that would harm them and compromise the Word of God. We will all need God's grace to bridge the generation gap. We would recommend a great article written by a young Christian on this very subject.

If you, through ignorance, have received a tattoo or allowed your children to have one, you should pray against any evil or witchcraft that may have come through the circumstances when that tattoo was received. Some people receive tattoos before they are "born again" and after they are touched by the Lord, they wish they had never had it done. The Lord loves you, so do not come under any condemnation, just pray over them and ask the Lord to remove any spiritual influences denoted by the tattoo and He will do it. The Lord looks on our hearts and motives and judges us by those, not our outward appearance. However, if the tattoo bothers you and you cannot cover it, you can have it removed by laser surgery.

The bottom line for this issue would be to ask the popular youth slogan, *"What Would Jesus Do?"* I don't believe we will ever see Jesus with a tattoo. The only scars on His body are the ones put there by evil men that crucified Him. They were not self inflicted. Overcomers will put away anything that leads to bigger compromises.

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TESTIMONY REGARDING TATTOOS

When I was in high school I really wanted to get a tattoo and a body piercing. So, during high school I got a body piercing (in my bellybutton). Shortly after I graduated from high school I got a tattoo. Neither action was well thought-out, but more of a spur of the moment thing. In fact, I'm grateful that the man who did my tattoo wouldn't do what I originally wanted. He told me to go home and really think about it until I knew what I wanted and where I wanted it. If he would have done whatever I wanted at that moment, I would be even more regretful at this point. So, I ended up getting something I thought I would want for the rest of my life on my ankle. Now, about five years after I got my tattoo I have a scar where my body piercing was and a tattoo that I wish I didn't have.

I got a navel piercing and tattoo to be different and cool. After a while of having both, I didn't care much about showing them off. It really surprised me in a way when people would point to me and ask me about my tattoo. It started to annoy me that when certain people noticed my body piercing or tattoo, I suddenly had become more cool in their eyes. I felt like they liked me more, only after they had found out that I was the type of person who would have a body piercing or tattoo.

Shortly after I got my tattoo, I realized that a lot more people from many different groups of society were getting body piercings and tattoos. The trend of tattoos and body piercings was becoming popular among more and more people regardless of what "group" they were in (i.e. the "rebellious" crowd, as well as the more average straight-laced group of people).

After a few years I got sick of my body piercing because so many other people were doing the same thing. Then it came down to deciding whether I wanted metal or a scar. I chose the scar.

Here's why:

After I was touched by the Lord I was told by a friend that body piercing and tattoos were wrong because the Bible said so. I was immediately defensive and confused. I wanted to follow the Lord and do what was right in His eyes. So, while I was with my friend one time we decided to look it up in our NIV Bibles for ourselves. We found **Leviticus 19:28: "Do not cut your bodies for the dead or put tattoo marks on yourselves. I am the Lord."**

We couldn't find anything that directly said you should not pierce your body. In fact, I was surprised to see in certain parts of Scripture that women wore nose rings in the Old Testament. For instance, Abraham's servant gave Rebekah a nose ring as a gift when he knew he had found the right wife for Isaac (**Genesis 24:34-51 NIV**). I believe, however, that nose rings were common in their culture, just as common as earrings have been in American culture for a long time. Therefore, there is not the same reasons behind Rebekah wearing a nose ring as someone in America might have today. It would be as simple as her being given earrings today.

I decided to pray about whether it was right for me to have a body piercing and tattoo. During the time I was praying and seeking God about this the Lord led me to Scriptures such as **1 Corinthians 6:19 NIV: "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body."**

I was also convicted by **1 Corinthians 3:16 NIV: "Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is sacred, and you are that temple."**

I felt that I had harmed my body by tattooing it and piercing it. I passed out when I got my body pierced and came close to passing out when I got my tattoo. Basically, I went through a lot of pain to look cool. I felt that it was wrong for me to have pierced and tattooed my body, especially because of the reasons behind both--vanity and pride. Between vanity and pride and harming my body that the Lord had created I knew that I had sinned. Now I can see that I was not honouring God with my body by piercing it and putting a permanent mark on it. Although I was able to remove my piercing, my tattoo is not something that I can just wash away. It is on my leg to stay.

I know the Lord has forgiven me. His grace and love are so amazing. I was living a sinful, ungodly life and then I found the Lord. Jesus died for us all and God raised Him from the dead so that our sins can be forgiven and that we may be cleansed of our iniquities. Now, we can enter into an amazing love relationship with Him. God did this all through Jesus! The point of this testimony is to share how I was convicted of sin in my life. It doesn't matter what the sin was. We all need to repent and follow the Lord. If we love Him, we will obey Him.

John 14:15 NIV: "If you love me, you will obey what I command."

1 John 5:3-5 NIV: "This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God."

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Contributed by a young Christian girl who asked to remain anonymous.