

tattoo

What does the Bible say about tattoos / body piercings?

Question: "What does the Bible say about tattoos / body piercings?"

Answer: The Old Testament law commanded the Israelites, "Do not cut your bodies for the dead or put tattoo marks on yourselves. I am the LORD" (Leviticus 19:28). So, even though believers today are not under the Old Testament law (Romans 10:4; Galatians 3:23-25; Ephesians 2:15), the fact that there was a command against tattoos should cause us to question. The New Testament does not say anything about whether a believer should or should not get a tattoo.

In relation to tattoos and body piercings, a good test is to determine whether we can honestly, in good conscience, ask God to bless and use the particular activity for His own good purposes. "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31). The Bible does not command against tattoos or body piercings, but it also does not give us any reason to believe God would have us get tattoos or body piercings.

Another issue to consider is modesty. The Bible instructs us to dress modestly (1 Timothy 2:9). One aspect of dressing modestly is making sure everything that should be covered by clothing is adequately covered. However, the essential meaning of modesty is not drawing attention to yourself. People who dress modestly dress in such a way that they do not draw attention to themselves. Tattoos and body piercings most definitely draw attention. In this sense, tattoos and body piercings are not modest.

An important Scriptural principle on issues that the Bible does not specifically address is that if there is room for doubt as to whether it pleases God, then it is best to not engage in that activity. "For whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Romans 14:23). We need to remember that our bodies, as well as our souls, have been redeemed and belong to God. Although 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 does not directly apply to tattoos or body piercings, it does give us a principle, "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." This great truth should have a real bearing on what we do and where we go with our bodies. If our bodies belong to God, we should make sure we have His clear "permission" before we "mark it up" with tattoos or body piercings.