

## Should Christians Get Tattoos Or Body Piercings?

(Are Tattoos and Body Piercings Unchristian)

by Tony Warren

*T*here was a time when permanent markings and drawings on the skin were only made by the primitive and heathen tribes that don't know God, or by sailors who had traveled to their countries and brought these customs back with them. Unfortunately, that time is long gone. There are a lot of "Frequently Asked Questions" on this site that are very popular, but I can almost guarantee you that this one will not be one of them. Tattooing has become almost as common as grass, and just as acceptable. There are very few people who want to delve very deeply into whether tattooing is a God glorifying act or not. This is because it might keep them from their heart's desire, or trouble them concerning something that they have already either done, or made up their mind to do.



The fact is, the worldly mores of today's modern society have become so ingrained within Christianity, that we have (*in effect*) become brainwashed to the precept of spiritual separation. Our thoughts are no longer in terms of what practices would be pleasing to God, our thoughts are of what would be pleasing to ourselves and how we can rationalize this spirit as that which is not carnal. **Proverbs 16:2-3**

- "All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but the LORD weigheth the spirits.
- Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established."

It is indeed a "sign of the times" that over the last few decades, body piercings and tattoos that were reminiscent of the unregenerate pagan nations, have become very popular in the Christian camp. So much so that today, it is not uncommon to find that people professing to be conscientious Christians are either in support of, or are defending the claim that there is nothing Biblically wrong with these practices. You can even search the internet and find so called '*Christian tattoo parlors*' and '*Christian body piercing studios*.' Indeed, the time is upon us where it is almost impossible to tell the difference between the people of the world and the people of the church because they both love the exact same things. Sadly, very few in the church seem to care that there is now almost "*literally*" no discernible difference in character, lifestyles and choices.

### **1st John 2:15**

- "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

Mind you, this is not to say tattooing is a bad thing "simply" because the world practices it (*a genetic fallacy*), it is to say that we as a church are **unquestionably** becoming drawn to the exact same carnal indulgences that the world has. Let's not mince words here. In general, the church today loves all the things that the world loves. As a result, it is in malaise of degradation in almost every aspect, just as the world. That includes socially, physically, morally and spiritually. Where once Christians were a people 'set apart' for the service of God where there was an earnest desire to do His will, and a distinct separation from the traditions that the world practiced, today there is no such distinction. Not in our speech, our indulgences, our desires nor our practices. There seems to be a race by many professing Christians to see how much like the world they can become, while still professing that they are following Christ. They have a spirit that is clearly drawn to the world's customs, gratifications, entertainments, desires, practices and traditions. The New Testament Greek word for church is [*ecclesia*], which literally means "*called out*." Far too many are not only living within the world, they are actually living "in" the world. I'll grant you that the modern church has been in doctrinal degradation and decay for over fifty years, but it now appears to be in total free fall where any exhortation to orthodoxy or adherence to Biblical mores, practices or principles is considered legalistic, judgmental or even un-Christian. This degeneration from historical church beliefs and practices has been well documented by many Theologians, but very few Pastors have either the will or the inclination to preach against it. They are so affected by the disease of exegetical hypnosis that they have no ability to discern between their right hand and their left. The result of this spiritual malaise is both predictable, and in many ways inevitable.

### **2nd Timothy 2:19-20**

- "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.
- But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of

wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour."

We have a mixture in the post modern church of God glorifying Christians and self-glorifying Christians. The later are blending the holy with the unholy, the spiritual with the carnal, all in the name of Christian liberty, open minded and progressive thinking. Many professing Christians today exhibit indignation against anyone daring to make righteous judgments concerning these worldly practices and indulgences. Their rationalization of or tacit support for tattooing and body piercings most often runs along the lines of allowances. As one Christian put it,

*"...by not preaching against these things, we are actually helping young people that wouldn't normally be drawn, **to find more things in common with Christ.**"*

The truth is actually contrary to this as what they actually end up doing is making Christ ***in common with them***. By unrighteous oxymorons like "Gay Christians," "Christian Divorce," "Necessary Evil," "Christian Liberty," "Christian Rock," "Carnal Christians," and yes, "Christian Tattoos," they effectively blur the line between the world and the church. So much so today that without name tags it is nearly impossible to tell where one stops and the other begins. What is wrong passes for what is right, and worldliness is spoken of charitably as Christian empathy. The question then becomes, shall those who do these things go blameless before God?

### **Isaiah 5:20**

- "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!"

God is not unaware that there are those who rationalize sin away as being righteous, and he is not mocked. This article is meant for those whose conscience has not been seared and are genuinely vexed by the troubling questions, "*is it a sin for Christians to get tattoos or body piercings*" or "*should Christians get tattoos?*" Most modern theologians will not answer the question directly either affirmatively or negatively. Instead they will navigate around Scripture, Christian distinctives, the history of God's people and common sense almost as easily as a politician navigates around tough issues. Nevertheless, this really isn't a gray area (*as those unwilling to tackle the question honestly allege*), because there are many Christian principles which would prohibit these actions. Not the least of which is that we are to live life as a new creature that is set apart as ***different*** from the world in lifestyle, faith and practice. We are to walk circumspectly and modestly, humbling ourselves--rather than look to ostentatious display wherein we look for ways to be adulated as the world does. We are not to despise righteous instruction, but act soberly in a way that becomes Christians professing conformity to the likeness of Christ.

### **Proverbs 15:32-33**

- "He that refuseth instruction despiseth his own soul: but he that heareth reproof getteth understanding.
- The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom; and before honour is humility."

## **Matthew 23:12**

- "And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted."

Tattooing and body piercing (*in the most basic, honest, definition*) is the vain marking, cutting or self-mutilation of the human body for the express purpose of pretentious display, adulation or admiration. Basically, you want others to see this portrait that you've had placed upon yourself, that you may in some way glory in it. Is that a harsh evaluation? Of course, because the truth is a harsh and often bitter pill. Nevertheless, what other reason is there for these actions except to stand out, for adulation, for rebellion or for the lust of the eyes? Along with idolatry, these are the same reasons that the world had for doing these things to the body. Are we to honestly claim that we have different reasons? As is illustrated in [1st John 2:15-16](#), this is the way of the world, not of those who are supposed to be "*set apart*" or sanctified from the world for the service of God. We don't need tattoos and body piercings to glory in, to attract converts, attention, to be prideful of, or to feel good about ourselves. We have the faith of Christ within us, the genesis of humility and selfless service. Even as verse 17 continues in this same vein:

## **1st John 2:16**

- For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.
- And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

Should Christians get tattoos or body piercings? Desiring to have body art and piercings is a classic example of the lust of the flesh or the desire of the eyes, rather than the thirst for the things of the Holy Spirit. This is something that we should not lose sight of in our deceptive justification. It is done to draw attention to ourselves, not to Christ. Those accepting these modern trends and mores are embracing dangerous practices that may seem to be innocuous, but are truly about as harmless as an viper. Just because something may appear anodyne to the naive Christian, doesn't mean that it actually is. There is the spirit of the world and then there is the Spirit of Christ, and only one is righteous and God glorifying.

## **Proverbs 16:2-3**

- "All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but the LORD weigheth the spirits.
- Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established."

In other words, a person's ways may seem inoffensive and innocent to him, but God doesn't look on the outward appearance of things, He sees what is the inward man. The hidden obstinacy, pride, ego, vanity, agenda and motives are all wide open and weighed by the LORD. Whether people do this because of peer pressure, to be like the world, to fit in, to glory in, to rebel against something or to stroke their ego, it is not hidden from the Lord. When we rationalize getting tattoos or body piercings, we may

deceive ourselves about the reasons, but we don't deceive the Lord. Tattooing is not just a new fad or trend, it is a symptom of a much greater spiritual problem in the world, which is getting worse and worse. With people getting multiple rings in noses, ears, in the tongue, eyebrow, navel and other unmentionable parts of their bodies, it is amazing to me that some Christians in superficial theologies can justify these acts as acceptable before God and protest against those of us who dare to look deeper? Body marring is not a Christian activity no matter how much justification you may hear from many. It is an abnormal, unseemly and *unnatural* practice for Christians. Branding ourselves with markings or tattoos is to pervert and deface the body that God has deemed "His" Holy Temple. We might go so far as saying that it is near to committing sacrilege against this Holy Temple, because these are examples of the pagan actions of the worldly unsaved people, not of God's people. As Christians, we are the visible representatives of God on earth, and thus are to walk circumspectly. Our body is not to be treated like the world's body because it is a representative Holy Temple, the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. Marring or disfiguring the body will not add one single thing to the glory of God or to the extension of the gospel. When God says that our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, the direct inference is that we should *honor* it rather than disrespect and desecrate it. For our body is God's living testament that we are fearfully and wonderfully made ([Psalms 139:13-14](#)). It's strength, symmetry, endurance and inherent beauty declare how wonderful a creator our God is. What can man's tattoos, sundry metals or eye and nose jewels add to this creation but ego, unChristian ritual or paganism. We should never attempt to make any non essential, non life-preserving permanent "improvements" to the body God created for us. For if we nobly consider this, it is clear this pagan conduct is done to be grandiose, or for reasons of show, vanity or pride. Too many in the church today have their eyes squarely on the world, and that is why they love to emulate what they see in the world. As a result, they have brought the world into the church, as illustrated by the proliferation of its views of marriage, divorce, dress, language, morality, music, entertainment and practices.

Of course, there are few that are going to actually "admit" to their own pretentiousness and vanity, so in an attempt to obscure the real reasons for wanting tattoos some have substituted worldly images with pictures of Christ, hearts, doves or crosses. Their conscience cleared, now they can claim that it was all done as a witness to their faith rather than the flesh. However, even a rudimentary examination of the motives will show these things are almost always done for self, and not for Christ. Christ is just a convenient excuse, the rationalization they need to appease their conscience. Moreover, where is that excuse for desiring lip, nose and body piercings? Can we say we got a nose ring as a witness to Christ? Well, not with a straight face we can't. Yet even that is rationalized today by professing Christians, as if God could be mocked or deceived by man's justifications.

### Hebrews 4:12

- "For the Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, *and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*"

God knows the heart of man is full of excuses, justifications and self-delusion and He is not fooled by it. This pride and lust of the flesh is not something new, even for Christians. We should be able to understand that when people want something bad enough, they can rationalize away almost anything that the Bible has to say. So, should Christians get tattoos? The truth is, tattoos and body piercings are really a witness to worldliness, rather than to faith in Christ. It would be a witness to Christ if it were indeed Biblical. For Christ is "not of this world," and as Christians we should also take up our cross in denying ourselves the same lusts of the world. For Christ's sake if not for our own. The church today seem to want to have one foot in the world and the other in the kingdom of God.

### **Titus 2:12-15**

- "Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;
- Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;
- Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.
- These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee."

Denying ourselves these worldly lusts demonstrate that we are a distinctive, a peculiar people, a special people set apart from the world. Children of God are to handle their sanctification with all modesty, gravity and sobriety, taking special care that they do not expose themselves or their profession (*by any inappropriateness*) to contempt. We should not subject Christianity to disparagement or contempt because of actual or perceived hypocritical carnal actions or lusts. We must not fall into attempting to justify ourselves with self-serving platitudes about what "*good it could do as a pictorial witness to unsaved people.*" Even as one professed Christian rationalized it to me in saying:

*"The tattoos I have provoke conversation and questions about Christianity."*

I would think that it would, but for all the wrong reasons. His problem here was that he concluded, "*therefore, it was good for me to have a tattoo.*" Using this same logic, we could say that because a person from Iran heard of Christ in a mosque, that proves God uses mosques to provoke people to come to Christ and therefore they are a good place for Christians to witness. Again, this would be an inaccurate conclusion based on the same bad assumptions. The ends "never" justify the means. We cannot do what is both unlawful and a bad witness, in hopes that the end that might come would justify the means. Did Lot assimilate and start emulating the practices of the unrighteous who dwelt around him, or was he "set apart" and "different" in that he was vexed or troubled daily by the degradation of his society?

### **2nd Peter 2:6-7**

- "And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live

ungodly;

- And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked."

The world's conversation (conduct or behavior) vexed and troubled Lot because he was Spirit filled, a different creation of God in manner of life. He was chosen of God and thus had a heart that was vexed by the carnal ways of the world, rather than one that desired to join their vain practices.

If we are honest or more noble in ourselves (as the Bereans [Acts 17:11](#)), then we will try ourselves by scripture to make our calling and election sure. Answer these questions honestly. Could any of us "**honestly**" imagine Christ piercing His nose and putting rings in His ears because that was the worldly fad of His day, or because that might draw young people to Him? Could we imagine Christ having a cross, the Temple, olive trees, or grapevines tattooed on His arms and body as a witnessing tool? Of course we couldn't. Knowing Christ (*which true Christians do*), the mere suggestion seems outright ludicrous. Aren't we supposed to seek to be Christ-like? As Christians, we inherently know that this is not a Godly practice, but a vain one. It's only of the flesh that professing Christians feign that it is not an unbiblical thing to do. It is both disappointing and disheartening to see professing Christians intentionally stain, mar, deface and deform the body that the Lord made so perfectly. God specifically instituted laws to make the children of God different and separate from the heathen nations and their worldly traditions to emphasize this. From not mingling two different kinds of seed in a field to not mixing different livestock, these were all Old Covenant laws and types to "signify" that God's people were to be different and separated from the unbelieving lifestyles of the people of the world around them. They were not to mingle with the unbelieving just as God said one seed was not to be mingled with another. That included embracing the traditions of markings in their flesh for the dead, which characterized the practices of these ungodly nations.

### **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."

The objection by some Christians concerning this passage is that it was the stipulation of piercings or cuttings in the flesh specifically "**for the dead,**" which is true as that was a heathen custom. However they were also not to have "any" marks put upon them either. Moreover, this idea would have us believe that God permits them to make any cuttings in their flesh so long as it was not for the dead. That is absurd reasoning, since it is perfectly clear from the context that God is forbidding Israel from mimicking these practices done by the heathen nations, not merely those customs concerning the dead. There is a whole list of things there that the heathen did that God forbade His children to do in those verses. He was specifically instructing His People not to tattoo, or do any of these carnal or worldly things as a way of separating them from that larger culture. God's purpose for instituting these laws was to warn His people not to follow any of these ungodly and vain indulgences or practices of the heathen nations that were around them. God says, "nor print any marks upon you." That means in addition to cutting for the dead because they were to

be a "separated" people, a "called out" people, a "particular" people from those of the world around them. That is the point that so many Christians today don't seem to comprehend in their lust for assimilation into worldly society.

### **1st Peter 2:9**

- "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, ***a peculiar people***; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath ***called you out*** of darkness into his marvellous light."

We are a peculiar or acquired people, specifically to be set apart for the service of God. That's why the whole motif and theme of Leviticus was to have His children live a lifestyle of holiness that honors God, rather than live like the world in honoring man. We are a chosen people, a people purchased of God, peculiar, who have been called out of the world of darkness, into the God glorifying light. Shall we who have been called out of the darkness of the world world, continue our desire to live carnally as the world does? God forbid! For we are a people who serve the true God, having been translated from the world's kingdom into a different kingdom. We cannot be content to lust after the old ways, as Lot's wife who spiritually looked back to the behavior of that city she had left.

Of course those objecting to what Leviticus teaches are quick to point out that chapter 19 also forbids cutting your hair off around the sides, rounding the beards and mixing different seeds. However, far from supporting their contention, it ***confirms*** that what I have been saying about this separation precept is absolutely true:

### **Leviticus 19:26-28**

- "Ye shall not eat any thing with the blood: neither shall ye use enchantment, nor observe times.
- Ye shall not round the corners of your heads, neither shalt thou mar the corners of thy beard.
- Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor print any marks upon you: I am the LORD."

Note how they often leave out God's precept of "*not eating blood, using enchantments and observing times*." Why would that be except they understand perfectly that they should continue to keep *these* ordinances, while having joy in pointing out these *other precepts* as if they stand alone. In their zeal to justify themselves, they neglect to see that ***all these laws*** were clearly written to keep the children of God from emulating the heathen customs of the ungodly people around them. Customs like eating blood soaked meats, using enchantments, heathen customs of cutting their hair to leave a plot on top, or cutting the corners of beards and branding themselves with what we today call tattoos. They ***all*** represented things that God's people were not to do ***because*** these ungodly nations around them did them and they were set apart to be a different people. These laws were not to prohibit a specific type of hair cutting for the dead, they were given to prohibit Israel from becoming just like the world. They were given that they would remain a people set apart from the nations, sanctified for the service of God. This caveat starts in the preceding chapter



18, where God said Israel must not be like the world that He brought them out of, which was Egypt. They must not be as the land that they were going into (Canaan) whom He judged, but were to honor His judgments and keep His ordinances. It was illustration that were a chosen people and He is the one Lord, their God.

Unquestionably God is instructing His children not to act, mimic or adorn themselves like the unsaved world. So how can these Scriptures in Leviticus be used today in support of doing the exact same thing that they clearly teach against? Namely, going after the same ungodly traditions of those "outside of the camp" of God's people? How can these Scriptures be used to support doing exactly as the world does in tattooing and the cutting and piercing the body? Far from proving their point that it was based on cultural norms and doesn't apply today, these Scriptures are another strong prohibition to God's people against following after these traditions of the ungodly, such as tattooing and diverse piercings. The ungodly Gentile world is exactly where these practices came from, not from the Lord's congregation. They didn't come from an earnest desire unto Godliness, they didn't come from a Christ centered outlook, they came from a world centered outlook. This law stands today that we (as Israel) are not to become enamoured with the same things the unbelievers around us do, that we take on their customs of tattooing, cutting our flesh or putting rings in our noses and eyebrows. It is indeed a telling indictment of the man when he can reject the cutting round the corners of the hair, and not reject the other prohibitions rejecting eating blood, using enchantments and cutting for the dead found in that exact same context. Christians want to have it both ways where they can pick and choose which laws in a sentence they should keep, depending upon what is their desire of the latest style, custom or fad. The classic case of "*situation ethics*," or obedience dependant upon the convention, practices, or times in which we live.

### **Malachi 3:6**

- "For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed."

The Lord God is immutable so that just as He didn't want His Old Covenant congregation Israel mingling with the world to learn their customs and mimic their lifestyles, so He doesn't want His New Covenant congregation mingling with the world and learning their customs. For such indulgences will inevitably *adulterate* His congregation. When we face the facts honorably, tattoos and body piercings are not in any way a good testimony for Christians. When even an unbeliever will tell you it appears unseemly, seems strange and out of place for a Christian to have tattoos, then we should inherently know that something is not right. Certainly we are not to appear gaudy or tawdry in ways that attract attention to our body or dress, nor walk after the flesh. The Scriptures command us to present a modest appearance and to walk after the Spirit in meekness, and that we not to be conformed to the likeness of this world. Tattoos do not fit the command of God in any sense. We are to live as far from the way that the world lives as we can, not see how close to the world we can live. When you're walking along a precipice or steep cliff, if you have wisdom you don't see how close you can get to the edge without falling off. On the contrary, you stay as far away from the edge as possible. Likewise, we are at enmity with the ways of the world. We

are two 'distinct' kingdoms that should retain their distinctiveness. Carnal Christians, Christian Rock and Roll, Biblical Divorce, Christian Tattoos, White Lies, Christian Body Piercings, etc., these are all oxymorons. These are not things that should go together, they are things diametrically opposed to each other. The laws God instituted in Leviticus were designed "specifically" to keep the children of God and the children of the world separate in their customs, traditions, desires, patterns, deeds, practices, gods and appearances. Unfortunately, this unadulterated truth is conveniently forgotten in our modern day lust to be just like the world. To dress like them, to covet like them, to talk like them, to tattoo like them and to even live like them. Pride, arrogance, rebellion and vanity are the hallmark of those who mark, cut and pierce their bodies. Are we not spiritual adulterers when we abandon Godly virtues in fleshly lust after the things of the world? In attempting to be like the world, are we not yet carnal? For it is written, friendship with the world is enmity with God.

### **James 4:3-6**

- "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.
- Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.
- Do ye think that the Scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?
- But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble."

Humility is the opposite of pretentiousness, rebellion and arrogance. Don't kid yourself, people do not get tattoos for Christ's sake. ***No one does, no matter how much they've convinced themselves or how vociferously they protest this truth.*** We all know that Christians preached the Word of God very effectively without tattoos for the last 2000 years. This "line" that some people are using that it is "*their witness*" to Christ is without merit. It is an excuse rather than a Biblical reason, argument or warrant. People get tattoos and body piercings for their own glory, not for the glory of God. In doing so, they are not walking in the Spirit, but in carnality.

### **Romans 8:4-7**

- "That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.
- For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.
- For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.
- Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."

If you mind the Spirit, you know it isn't telling you to go to a parlor and get a tattoo, it is the flesh that is telling you that. Nevertheless, a kingdom divided against itself

cannot stand. If we are neither hot nor cold, then we are lukewarm and thus under warning of God to repent of this confusion. God rejects lukewarm because He is a jealous God. We are not to care about the things of the world, but set our hearts on the things from above. When we are 'born from above' we are a new creation in Christ where our desire is no longer to fulfill the lusts of the flesh. It is to surrender to the will of God, in the spirit. Having been made a different creation from the children of the flesh, we walk circumspectly according to the Kingdom, rather than the world's traditions. These ungodly markings on the Temple of God have no redeeming value. True Christianity is different because it is a state of mind, a personal relationship and a new way of life. It is not merely a label that we call ourselves so that we may feel justified in doing our own will.

### **Philippians 3:15-20**

- "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: ***and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.***
- Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.
- Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.
- (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ:
- Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.)
- For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:"

Our conversation, citizenship or place of our communing together, is in the Spirit. We should understand His will based upon a careful scholarship of the Word of God, without imposing our own personal opinions upon it. Our citizenship is in heaven, not communing with those who are of the flesh, earthy. The most curious thing about these unnatural practices is that most professing Christian don't even try to defend them "*Biblically*," rather their defense is in humanistic reasoning that we are not actually hurting the body, therefore there is no harm in doing it. I would submit that the harm is to the body of Christ. When we are disobedient and prideful to go our own way in refusal to heed God's will of separation, honor, and being of the Spirit and not the flesh, we do harm to the body of Christ. Moreover, our bodies are the Temple of the Lord, and we should no more consciously mark or disfigure the flesh, as we would paint graffiti on the walls of our church buildings. What conscientious Christian would do that? Are not our bodies of greater import than a church building? For our builder and maker is God.

### **1st 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."

We should honestly ask ourselves, "*is tattooing ourselves and placing body piercings all over our body, glorifying to God?*" If not, then why are we doing it? We are not our own and so we simply do not have the right to do anything we want with our life, our spirit or our body. It all belongs to God who purchased it. That is what many professing Christians (*consciously and unconsciously*) neglect. Again, would we paint graffiti on someone else's building? It is interesting that in man's justification of this behavior (*his weakness*) many professing Christians say that they should have the free will or catch all, "*Christian liberty*," to do whatever they chose with their own body. Indeed this sounds perilously close to the justifications of those who support the so-called "right to choose" in the abortion rights issue. I'm not saying that people who want tattoos and body piercings are akin to abortionists, but I am saying that the carnal self-serving mindset is the same. It is one of narcissism where they desire what is their will, rather than have the love of God to desire what He wills for us. It is truly a lack of surrendering ourselves and our will fully to the will of God. We are living in the "*Me Generation*" where there is a marked and growing disdain for Godly selflessness, sacrifice and denial. As long as they can do whatever they want, they will joy in being Christlike. However, if there are any restrictions, then they want no part of that kind of Christianity. This is so because all law is by nature judgmental, and that's considered a violation of so-called Christian liberty. Yet there truly is no such Christian liberty that excuses Christians to do such things. It is a Christian myth that has been perpetrated upon the church for years.

### **1st Corinthians 3:3**

- "For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?"

If you are yet carnal, then you are not yet Christian. You may go to church, read your bible, say a prayer, but the carnal mind is enmity against God.

Others attempt to justify these practices by introducing "*straw man*" arguments or giving various scenarios about surgery on the body. One person quipped, "*isn't someone who has had an arm amputated defaming the Temple of God in cutting his flesh to save his life?*" Of course this is a half-sarcastic question, but the answer is no. For his mindset isn't to feign that cutting off his arm is an act that we can do to glorify God or to suppose that joining in with the carnal practices of the world is a good witness to unbelievers. His mindset is not to deliberately mar the building that is the Temple of God, his mindset is to preserve it. By contrast, if someone were to say that "*I'm going to cut off my arm, brand myself with ink, or cut a hole in my ear the size of a silver dollar, because I think it makes me look cool,*" then yes, that would be sin. We can't righteously equate someone needing an amputation in order to live, to someone putting rings in their nose to glorify themselves. This is a pitiful defense for indulging in these worldly customs. They are not becoming like the world for their own glory and so this is an example of the proverbial "*mixing apples and oranges.*" It seems people have their eyes so trained on themselves, that they aren't even addressing the fundamental questions. Our body is the 'perfect' creation of God, and so why would we mar that because we desire to be familial or tribal with the world? Shall we carve a hole into God's temple for our own fleshly eyesore, or draw caricatures upon it that

we might improve its appearance in man's eyes. The passage of [1st Corinthians 6:19-20](#) declares that we are merely tenants of God's house, we don't own the building. That truth is not getting through to many Christians because it's contrary to their own carnal desires. Our body is not ours to simply do with it as we please, we have been bought with a price and should not forget that we are to be faithful conscientious Christians. In our vain and egotistical rantings about how "*it belonging to us,*" we forget that we should also be concerned about the impression that we give to other people by these piercings and tattoos. For even an unbeliever knows something is amiss and will give a double take when he sees a person full of tattoos or piercings who claims to be a Christian. He can discern that it is out of place (*and so do we all*) because Christians are 'supposed' to be different from the world. Our body is part of our witness, a living testimony to how we live our lives set apart from the world.

### **1st Thessalonians 5:21-22**

- "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."
- Abstain from all appearance of evil."

So many professing Christians simply choose to ignore the pertinent Scriptures that have a bearing on the subject in order to continue doing whatever "*they want*" in all areas of their life. They have not really made Christ their "Lord" by surrendering their life to Him. Instead, they are fighting to hold on to their worldly life, and that should be a scary thought for the child of God. Why would we even do something that might give the appearance of evil, just to make our body a billboard? For example, would I live with a woman without being married, even though there was no immorality going on? No, I would not do that because I understand that it would "*still be sin*" by my giving the appearance of evil. We are **commanded** not to even give the appearance of evil, so we should not act in any way that would lead people to conclude that we were involved in something unbecoming a Christian. Even if we were too stubborn and prideful to see the truth and realize the inherent sin of the act, we should still not do it for the sake of others. Give no appearance of evil by following after every new trend or flavor of the month that the world will come up with. We should be constant, a lighthouse always shining with the same light, always grounded, not blown about with every new wind. The child of God shouldn't get caught up in trends, fads or traditions of the world for the simple reason that they are not part of it. Christians should think upon what God would want him to do rather than upon what's going to make him feel good about himself, or what's going to look good 'to the world.' Rather than seek a tattoo or piercing to glorify ourselves, we should seek how we can glorify God by making our bodies a living sacrifice. We do that by denial, in giving our body in service to the Lord, not as a billboard for ungodly traditions. And the Word of God does give us sound Biblical principles that should be applied.

### **1st Corinthians 10:31**

- "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or *whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.*"

Should we adopt styles and fads that will cause offense to other Christians who understand these practices 'clearly' identify with carnality, unseemly behaviors, heathen practices, not to mention unregenerate morals and attitudes? I find it hard to believe that any true Christian would think that He is piercing his tongue, lips, nose, or putting markings on his skin, all to the glory of God. Likewise, I find it hard to believe that any believer truly thinks that he can glorify God in his body by cuttings in the flesh or by placing pictures in his skin. When God said that our body is not our own, "*For ye are bought with a price,*" and therefore we are to glorify God in our body and spirit, which is God's ([1st Corinthians 6:19-20](#)), you can be sure God is not saying we should feel free to draw pictures in our skin or cut holes in our tongues and lips. He's not saying go mark up your body and pretend you're doing it for me, as this thinking is the delusion of those who have taken their eyes off the prize and placed them on themselves. Christian liberty (*contrary to popular teaching*) does not mean that we can go back into the carnal bondage of the world thinking that Grace means nothing is forbidden. Grace means that we are under God's unmerited favor, free of condemnation for sin. It doesn't mean we can become caught up in the world of sin, rather that with our new freedom comes the Spirit to hold fast the commandments of God.

### **Galatians 5:1**

- "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage."

It means that our sins are forgiven, evidenced by the Spirit wherein we are no longer enslaved by Satan to the ways of the world. There is a big difference between freedom to sin because grace is bountiful ([Romans 6:1-2](#)), and freedom from sin because Grace is bountiful. We are free from that bondage wherein Satan once ruled us to act in the same manner as the ungodly around us. The modern day encroachment of the carnality of tattooing and body piercings into the church is yet another test of our Biblical resolve. Will the church patiently keep the faith, or will God's people again turn away from the faith to the pleasures of unrighteousness in the way of the world? The Christian mind should not even be on the flesh, but upon things that are of good report, where there is virtue and praise of God. Our thoughts should be on the gospel, on evangelism, on the brethren and on walking in the Spirit rather than in the flesh.

### **Philippians 4:8**

- "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, *think on these things.*"

Does tattooing and body piercing conform to this command? Every man and woman looking deep into themselves must answer this question in Christ. The willful and unfaithful desire to do what is pleasing to the flesh, and they will feign lack of knowledge that these things are unlawful or against God's wishes. They imagine they cannot discern God's clear Word on divorce, remarriage, modesty, fornication,

morality, obedience, adulterating the body or even the appearance the Christian should present. Yet God is not mocked. If we can discern that God hates divorce, Christ paid for our sins, we were raised up with Christ's resurrection, or that when the wind blows from the south, heat will follow, but somehow cannot discern that God means 'exactly' what He says, then there is something Spiritually wrong.

### **Luke 12:56-57**

- "Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern this time?"
- Yea, and ***why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?"***

A very good question. The point is, why can't we (*even of ourselves*) judge what is right and what is wrong? The very thought of mutilating, disfiguring or marking up our bodies should be against the very nature of a new creation in Christ. Christ is our example, and just the thought (*whoever would honestly even bother to think*) of Christ wearing pierced nose rings or having images or writings permanently inked in His flesh, of the Spirit 'should' be enough to settle the issue. People who have never even read Scripture know *inherently* that it's wrong to kill. As Christ asked, "Yea, and why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?" Again, particularly for conscientious Christians, it is a very good question.

We have seen that when most people attempt to justify Christian tattoos, they usually embark on a lesson in their Christian liberty, the irrelevant cultural periods of old, the sociology of today or the secular history of Israel. However, the correct approach is to allow the Scriptures themselves and allow them to address whether it is God glorifying or not. Rather than presuming to know God's motives, we should open our hearts to receive the Spirit of His authoritative word. Let Him tell us whether He would approve of our markings, indulgences and piercings. Many insist that "*pierced noses and tattoos open doors,*" and that "*this is the best way to reach young people in our modern culture.*" They say this "*as if*" we must become just like the world in order to get people out of the world. Misapplying Paul's, "*I become a Roman to win the Romans,*" they are truly deluding themselves. Paul didn't imply marking up the body because the heathen around us do it. This passage is taken totally out of context with relationship to this question. Did Solomon bring the wicked to God by marrying women who worshipped false gods, or rather were they a problem to his faithfulness? So it is clear that this logic is as unsound as the thinking that tattoos will win souls. Our path is not in the way of the world, but in showing them there is another way that is "***different***" from the path they are taking. Tattoos are the physical equivalence of outwardly adorning ourselves, showing a spirit of exaltation. It is the spirit of the unbeliever, not of the believer. If God warns about outward adorning in temporal dress, how much more about permanent tattoos, nose rings and other disfigurements.

### **1st Peter 3:3-5**

- "Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel;
- But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even

the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.

- For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands:"

Let our adorning be a spiritual adorning, a crown which no man can take away from us. Let it be a robe of righteousness that is a far better witness than a worldly robe of ink, or trinkets and jewels in our lips and ears. Our mark is the name of God spiritually written within our foreheads, where the only way people can see it is by the evidence of our lives. Our adorning is the crown that Christ has given us, which is so different from the adorning of the world that there is no earthly comparison. Let us glory in this, and not in being assimilated into the practices and customs of the world.

### **1st John 4:4-6**

- "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.
- They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them.
- We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error."

Finally brethren, this is not an article claiming that it is absolutely unbiblical to ever cut the skin. Obviously, there are many good examples of such acceptable practices, such as operations, amputations, even plastic surgery in many cases. Tattoos and body piercings are really not the main issue here. I'm sure that there will be many Christians in heaven who have gotten tattoos or had earrings. The issue here is arrogance, love of Christ, separation from the world, and our earnest desire to do the will of God. Rather than an article saying those who cut their flesh or mark their skin are not going to heaven (God Forbid), this is an article stressing the very same precepts that God was stressing when he told Israel not to sow its field with two different seeds, and when He commanded that they could not plow with an ox and a jackass together, or when He declared that they could not wear a garment made of two different threads like wool and linen ([Deuteronomy 22:9-11](#)). These laws to prevent different kinds from mingling together were a "*vivid sign*" to God's people designed to be a portrait illustrating the Israelites were not to follow the worldly practices, not be unequally yoked together with the heathen nations around them. They were tokens designed to keep them as a Holy and separate people. The same reason that we are not tattoo and cut ourselves as the world around us does. Christians are to be a peculiar, sanctified, distinct, set apart holy people.

### **1st Corinthians 10:23-24**

- "All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.
- Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth."

We should not seek to find our own pretentious, ostentatious or grandiose glory, let us seek for the exaltation and glory of others. All things are possible where there is



grace, but not all things are advantageous and beneficial to the body. Should Christians get tattoos? The answer is no. As I've said, it's not that the tattoo itself is the real problem, rather it is what is in the heart of a professing Christian that moves him/her to want something like that on their bodies. It is **"not"** done seeking another's glory, or seeking another's edification, or because it is an example of them loving God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength. The Law of God prohibited cutting oneself for the dead, and printing drawing in our flesh (tattoos). The context of Leviticus 19 is clearly one of warning God's people not to go after the pagan practices, idolatries and practices there, and these are the same gaudy behaviors that we see today in our society. It is all part and parcel of the mindset to worship ourselves, to glorify ourselves, to joy in carnality instead of in the Spirit of God. We are bought with a price and are not our own. This may be contrary to the prevailing "Christian Liberty," and "Self-rule" mentality of modernistic Christians who want tattoos and body piercings, but our earnest desire should be to do God's will, rather than our own. That is to say, if we are the Lord's faithful stewards and servants. Truly, what could you place in your skin that would give you more beauty, witness or self-worth than the body God has provided? So let the true Christian be content in his own skin, with his God given appearance.

May the Gracious Lord, who is rich in mercy, by the gift of His Holy Spirit, guide us all into the truth of His most blessed word concerning this issue.

Amen!

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Created 11/21/01 / Last Modified 08/14/14  
The Mountain Retreat / [twarren10@aol.com](mailto:twarren10@aol.com)

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