

# GLAD TIDINGS

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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## TATTOOS AND BODY PIERCINGS

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If you have been observant over the last few years, you have seen more and more people etch their bodies with various permanent markings called tattoos. It is no longer an occasional picture of an anchor or a “Love Mom” on the bicep or forearm of a sailor or soldier, but we see on ankles, calves, shoulders and backs a variety of markings. The markings vary from one’s favorite corporate insignia or a small butterfly from nature, to distinct social and religious symbols. Recent years have also witnessed more and more people piercing various parts of their body. Jeweled studs fill the pierced hole on the belly button and tongue, and fill up rolls of tiny holes on the eye brows and ear lobes.

This practice seems to be increasing in popularity among many in our society, especially among young people. Has God said anything concerning these practices? If so, are they approved, condemned or just a matter of indifference before God?

God gave His Law through Moses to distinguish His people from the nations that lived around

them. One of the laws clearly condemned the cutting and marking of the body as it pertained to customs of surrounding idolatrous nations: “*Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor print any marks upon you: I am Jehovah*” (Leviticus 19:28). God generally allowed His people to mourn for their dead (2 Sam. 1:17, 2 Chron. 35:25). Mourning for the dead was therefore not the issue, but to do so by cutting the body or printing marks on the body were practices of idolatrous societies which were not to characterize God’s people.

The New Testament, God’s Law for His people today, does not expressly condemn cutting or tattooing the body as the Old Testament does. Yet, there are revealed principles that should help us in our decision whether to pierce and tattoo or not.

The Christian is to glorify God in his or her body. Paul emphasizes this in the context of keeping our bodies pure from fornication. Paul writes, “*Or know ye not that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have from God? And ye are not your own; for ye were*

*bought with a price: glorify God in your body*” (I Corinthians 6:19-20).

God wants the body to glorify Him, not convey mixed messages. Are you not detracting from your purpose to glorify God in your body when you convey the latest symbol of a rebellious sub-culture with your tattoo or body piercing? Even if you pick a religious symbol or one of God’s creatures to mark your body with, where in God’s Word does God authorize this practice as a way to glorify Him? God authorizes us to glorify Him through “*works*” that are authorized by Him, therefore “*good works*”, not by marking and piercing our bodies (Matthew 5:16).

We must be careful to not allow personal dislikes to cause us to bind where God has not bound. However, we cannot justify practices that are not only unauthorized, but contradict principles revealed in the New Testament. We should always use our bodies to promote the cause of Christ, not permanently mark it with distracting messages and images.