

Tattoos

by Heath Rogers

A New York man named Joe Tamargo was recently in the news for coming up with a new way of making money with his body. He is selling to advertisers the opportunity to permanently tattoo their messages on his body. Others have sold their bodies for temporary tattoo messages, but Tamargo claims to be the first person to do it with permanent tattoos. He will only advertise products and messages that he endorses, and claims to be making around \$500 per advertisement on his arm.

What does the Bible say about this? Concerning tattoos, Leviticus 19:28 says, "You shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor tattoo any marks on you: I am the LORD." The pagans had mourning rituals in which they would mark their bodies by cutting themselves or with tattoos. The children of Israel were forbidden from taking part in this practice because it disfigured their God-given bodies and it identified them with pagans.

The New Testament does not specifically address tattoos, but some principles need to be considered. First, "What Would Jesus Do?" Would Jesus have a tattoo? No. Jesus kept the law of God perfectly (Matthew 5:17), which forbid the Jews from getting tattoos. So, we know Jesus never had, nor would have gotten, a tattoo. Secondly, tattoos need to be considered in light of the admonition to come out from the world and be separate. "Therefore come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you" (2 Corinthians 6:17). Tattoos are a worldly trend. Their popularity shows that they are a profession of worldliness, not godliness. Finally, the apostle Paul wrote that our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in us. "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?" (1 Corinthians 6:19). How is getting a tattoo on our fleshly temple any different from spray painting graffiti on the wall of a temple?

As far as using our bodies as space for advertising: God made our bodies and gave them to us. He owns the rights to our bodies, not us! "For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Corinthians 6:20). As such, our bodies are not to be sold to the highest bidder. They are to be an advertisement for the glory of God. This is not accomplished by tattoos, but by our good works and honorable conduct. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). "Having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation" (1 Peter 2:12). Think about it.

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