

So I was studying and listening to stuff today and i come with clearer understanding of open/closed handed issues. Open handed issues are that of method usually and closed handed issues are principles.

Word of the day: Hapax Legomena (hop-ox leg om-men-a): words in the bible that are used once.

Ex: Leviticus 19:28 You shall not make any cuts on your body for the dead or **tattoo** yourselves: I am the LORD.

The word tattoo is found only once in Scripture and the lexicon (bible dictionary) can't give a complete definition. I bring this up because rarely should you ever build your entire theology off of one word that is used only once in scripture. And let's look at the verse in its context. Leviticus 19:2 begins with "Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them, You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy." and from there God goes into a monstrous lists of do's and don'ts. If you take 19:28 to be your definitive verse, then what about vs 26? "you shall not eat any flesh with blood in it" or 32? "You shall stand up before the gray head and honor the face of an old man?" But i wouldn't want to argue for tattoos based of a process of negations. In addition to all of this...you can pick up any systematic theology book and "tattoos" will not be found at all. Is this imperative for salvation? No. Do historical figures deem it worthy to talk about? No

Principles: Surely you have to take into context Jesus right? Matthew 5:17 "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill." So what's the principle here? What's the heart motive behind this text? ESV commentators say "These are all practices of the Canaanites. Holiness requires Israel to act like the pagans in any area of life." You also have commentators like Gordon Wenham that says "God created man in his image and pronounced all creation very good. Man is not to disfigure the divine likeness implanted in him by scarring the body. The external appearance of the people should reflect their internal status as the chosen and holy people of God (Deut. 14:1-2). And furthermore Paul says in 1 Cor 6:20 The body of the believer belongs to Christ, therefore glorify God in your body. Ok...so now what? Can't you use this verse to prohibit piercings? Dental surgery? Lasik? Plucking your eyebrows? But you say, "Well all that stuff is external"...but so are tattoos. And to make matters more confusing you have God saying in 1 Samuel 16:7 But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart."

Here's the question: "Is having a tattoo a sin?" Well shouldn't people be "above reproach"? Doesn't the bible say "don't cause another person to stumble?" In order to answer the first question you gotta do a lot of research and a lot of studying and even when you get there...i think it's extremely crappy exegesis to draw out a theology that says "Yes, getting a tattoo is a sin". I find it that when people do make that statement, it's usually not about the tattoo at all but more on personal preference (be careful how you judge lest your heart betray you). What about "above reproach"? Being "above reproach" does not mean you do not sin. It simply means that the person is currently in the process of sanctification and working towards a repentance and forgiveness of that sin. It never means you have to be perfect. It

means they recognize the sin and are actively, with vigor, wanting more of Christ therefore asking the Lord to pry their hands away from that destruction. "What about stumbling?" I get this question a lot... "well doesn't getting a tattoo cause someone to stumble?" I always reply...stumble into what? My parents think "People with tattoos hate their parents, smoke crack and worship Satan". If you get a tattoo...you're telling people you worship Satan while you smoke crack. Wait...what? Where does that parallel come from?

Warnings: To those who agree that tattoos are alright...you have to be careful about this because there are factors that are involved. At the end of the day, you are not better than those without tattoos. You don't deserve higher treatment or the right to brag. Essentially, you are still a child of God, part of the body, and still subject to the laws of God. You got to ask yourself, "What is my motive?" Why are you getting one? What's the purpose of it? "well because it's cool" ok...well, what about long-term? Is this going to hinder your chances for a future job? What if you get a tattoo on your forehead (albeit, a tattoo of a flaming holy spirit in the form of a dove)? You might want to think about the future on this one. And here's an obvious one...are you breaking any laws getting one. Are you old enough? Are you doing it illegally without your parent's permission? If so, then that's sin friends. You can't justify getting a tattoo biblically and deny the 5th commandment. It's the principle that God has given us parents to symbolize his discipline & love towards us. And "while you're under their roof, you must obey by their principles". If you are going "well I don't care about my parents" then I'm sorry but you have a lot more issues to deal with rather than this tattoo. And lastly, you must be wise about this whole thing. Like Ecclesiastes continues to warn us...there's a path for wisdom, and a path for fools. Wise people plan, wise people do their research, and wise people seek counsel. Fools don't care enough to read this message. And please...before you get one, if you decide to get one, please for the love of wisdom, make sure you know what you're putting on your body. If it's a foreign language, do your research outside of wiki. Last thing you want is a tattoo that says "I'm an idiot" in Italian.

To those who still disagree i have a warning for you too. Your command is Ephesians 4:15 but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ. If you don't agree with them, and this is NOT a point to die over or lose salvation over...you are to humbly, and patiently walk with all (1 Thessalonians 5:14) You are not better than them, you do not have the righteous judgment to beat them. They are still the sheep of God, they are to be laid at the feet of God and let the Lord deal with them. If bitterness begins to take root because "they are not like you" you better start evaluating your own heart...and YOU need to repent, not them.

Final thoughts: If this is a "gray area" in scripture let us still take stock in the whole counsel of God. Here is what I leave you with...chase the things that draw you closer to God and shun the things that pull you away from him. You and I are different when it comes to "neutral" things...but let us find more of Christ in how we live life.