

What About Body Piercing?

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The earliest known mummified remains of a human whose body was pierced is said to be about 5,000 years old. This man had his ears pierced with large-gauge plugs. So, it could be that plugs in the ears is one of the oldest forms of body piercing that is known to man. What about body modification? Does the Bible have anything to say about body piercing? This is the subject that we want to address in this study.

We have seen a resurgence and interest in body piercings within the last ten to twenty years and they are becoming more and more a part of the mainstream Western culture. In the last hundred years or so, body piercings in the Western world have mostly been limited to the ears, which is a practice held over from the Elizabethan times. However, the Puritan and Pilgrim movement in our country did away with piercings and the wearing of earrings, and piercings didn't really regain popularity until more recent times.

Throughout the centuries various peoples of all races and cultures (Greeks, Romans, Jews) have practiced some form of body piercing which have ranged from conservative forms of piercing to the extreme, grotesque, and heathen approach to body piercing. Nose rings found new interest in our country when young people (they were called hippies) from the U.S. began traveling to India extensively looking for enlightenment in the 1960's.

Why did they do this? It's because they were looking for something that was not part of our mainstream culture and which would be considered a form of rebellion in our western culture. This is what the sixties were all about – Rebellion! The hippies noticed the nostril rings that most women had been wearing in India since the sixteenth century. In India, this was a form of traditional, accepted adornment and was often linked to an earring by a chain. But for the rebellious teens in America, it was promoted as a great form of rebellion.

During the sixties men with their longer hair also started to wear earrings and other feminine jewelry as a way to rebel against all traditional forms of

sexual distinction. All of this was an attack upon the accepted culture of the day and an attempt to break down sexual distinction even within the God-given natural distinctions of hair lengths that separated the sexes (1 Cor. 11:14).

It's interesting that at the early part of the 20th century, piercing of any body part was uncommon in the West. However, after World War II, it began gathering steam among the gay male subculture as a means of group identification. Gay men were tired of having their noses broken after flirting with straight Marines.

In the 1970s piercing began to expand as the Punk Rock Movement embraced it, featuring nontraditional adornment such as safety pins, fishing hooks, and live hookworms. Some trend setters began popularizing body piercings as a form of modern primitivism, with the tag line that basically said, "It's far-out groovy to look like a Neanderthal man."

After the hippies brought the nose piercings back to the U.S. in the sixties, the interest in body piercings of all kinds quickly caught on during the 1980's and 1990's. Celebrities, sports stars and singers all began sporting a variety of piercings. Soon, high school students and even stay-at-home moms were flashing new body piercings. And the rest, as they say, is history!

The world and culture increasingly says that we have the right to do anything to our bodies that makes us feel beautiful and accepted, which would include the piercing of our body without any limitations. One man in Nebraska holds the record for piercings and makes the boast that he has 135 piercings all over his body.

The culture says we should "Live and let live" and not place any restraints on our lives when it comes to adornment and body piercing. But what does God's Word say? Is body piercing something that is only cultural? Should there be some limitations placed on this cultural practice? It is important to put the practices of our culture through the filter of God's Word to see how they hold up.

God condemns the extreme practice of body piercing.

This truth is revealed by seven enduring principles.

1. Principle of culture and sexual distinction

It is always helpful when trying to answer a question, such as body piercing, that we check out the big picture rather than pulling a verse out of the Bible and hanging our hat on just one verse. For instance, sometimes people will go to the culture during Bible times and use some Old Testament references to support their use of nontraditional and non-cultural practices in the West. In other words, people sometimes rationalize that if something was part of an ancient culture, then it must be okay with our culture today. For instance, in Genesis 24, we read the story of Abraham's servant seeking a bride for Isaac. When he tells Rebecca's father about how he met the young woman, he says, that the Lord brought them together.

Genesis 24:47-48 records these words:

“And I asked her, and said, Whose daughter art thou? And she said, The daughter of Bethuel, Nahor's son, whom Milcah bare unto him: and I put the earring upon her face (nose or nostril), and the bracelets upon her hands. And I bowed down my head, and worshipped the Lord, and blessed the Lord God of my master Abraham, which had led me in the right way to take my master's brother's daughter unto his son.”

In these verses we discover that Abraham's servant gave Rebekah a nose ring as a gift when he knew he had found the right wife for Isaac. A ring in the nose! This cultural practice was certainly different than the historic American culture in our country even though today some are now wearing rings in their nose. However, nose rings were common in the culture of Old Testament times, just as common as earrings have been in American culture for a long time. Here's the point; there would be a different reason behind Rebekah wearing a nose ring and someone in America wearing a nose ring today. Some of these reasons will be revealed in the following points.

In Ezekiel 16:11-12, God speaks to Israel as if the country were his bride. It states: "I decked thee also with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon thy hands, and a chain on thy neck. And I put a jewel on thy forehead (nose or nostril), and earrings in thine ears, and a beautiful crown upon thine head."

Again, the practice of wearing nose rings was not culturally accepted in the West but was historically accepted in the East. Nevertheless, with the present-day craze of body piercing these ancient cultural practices are now being adopted in our own country. However, since it has never been the normal custom in our western society to engage in this type of display of jewelry (nose rings), one must wonder why the culture has suddenly accepted nose rings and many other piercings (many of them grotesque) as acceptable practices.

There is a deeper reason behind the cultural craze of body piercing that we will discuss later. For now, we must understand that just because a practice is acceptable for one culture does not make it acceptable in all cultures.

Exodus 32:2 also states:

"And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me."

Boys wearing earrings! This certainly was not a normal practice in the West until more recently when men started to wear earrings and change the long-time standing cultural expression that only women should wear earrings.

Exodus 21:6 gives another cultural expression:

"Then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an aul; and he shall serve him for ever."

Deuteronomy 15:16-17

"And it shall be, if he say unto thee, I will not go away from thee; because he loveth thee and thine house, because he is well with thee; Then thou

shalt take an aul (boring instrument), and thrust it through his ear unto the door, and he shall be thy servant for ever. And also unto thy maidservant thou shalt do likewise.”

This cultural practice referred to piercing the ear lobe of a person in order to mark him as a slave. Of course, there is no mention of actually wearing an earring in the ear of this slave. It only mentions about the ear being pierced. However, the wearing of earrings on both male and females was culturally practiced from the earliest times. Among the Greeks and Romans, as with western peoples in general, the use of earrings was confined to females only.

Our culture today has over time desensitized men to wearing jewelry that traditionally was only worn by women such as necklaces, bracelets, and earrings. There was a time when a man would not be caught dead wearing earrings but today it has become a common practice. Why? It’s because of the customary breakdown of the distinctions among the sexes.

We must remember that we are not living in the culture of Bible times. If we practiced everything that the children of Israel did we would have to eat locusts and all kinds of insects and bugs (Lev. 11:21-22). Again, just because a practice is acceptable in one culture does not make it acceptable in every culture. This is because there is symbolism and rebellious associations connected with some of the cultural expressions in our western civilization.

Paul taught that we should refuse to practice certain outward expressions in a different cultural setting and a specific society when they are deemed wrong for that particular culture. Sometimes we forget this. There are times when we should actually go with the longtime standing culture and not try and counteract what society deems as normal for the distinction among the sexes.

1 Corinthians 11:4 gives us one example:

“Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head.”

1 Corinthians 11:6

“For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered.”

This was a cultural distinction in Corinth that Paul was dealing with. He was arguing that the believers should follow the local customs that make a distinction among the sexes and which promote headship and submission among the people. Why? It's because of the unique cultural expressions of that time which sought to express distinction among the sexes. In Corinth (not in all societies over the world) it was proper and fitting for the Christians to follow these cultural expressions that differentiated the sexes. Even though there were natural expressions of masculinity and femininity (vv. 14-15) Paul did not try and undo in Corinth the cultural expression.

This reminds us that we should not be so fast to tear down the traditional expressions between men and women within a society. It seems that whenever the Hollywood stars and sports figures try and undo longtime and longstanding distinctions among the sexes by their dress and appearance that everyone else follows them. This is the problem in America. Instead of following traditionally accepted distinctions among the sexes, we can fall into the trap of embracing every new trend that takes another step in bringing the sexes closer together in both appearance and practice. What was once taboo in the culture in relationship to marking out a distinction among the sexes suddenly becomes okay in a culture that is moving closer to unisex.

Of course, we must be careful that we do not try and live during the “Little House on the Prairie” days, since certain cultural expressions do change over a period of many years, but we should not embrace the new fads that blur the distinctions among the sexes. This is a very unwise practice and Paul brings this out in 1 Corinthians 11. Only the feminists and prostitutes would refuse to veil in Corinth and various parts of East during the early days of Christianity. Therefore, it was necessary to keep the customary distinctions among the sexes in that specific culture. Men were not to wear anything on their heads and women were to wear an artificial covering.

What lessons do we learn from Paul's advice? How can we update this for today? This reminds us that Christians should never be the first to jump on the bandwagon when cultural changes begin to take shape in our society which breaks down the traditionally accepted distinctions among the sexes. Christians should remember to reflect the longtime standing expressions that differentiate the sexes and not try and take on effeminate or masculine expressions which were at one time practiced only by the opposite sex. God still demands the *natural* distinction among the sexes (1 Cor. 11:14-15) but we should also strive to maintain the *customary* distinctions which have also historically marked out a difference between the sexes.

Men never used to wear earrings or necklaces in our westernized culture but now it has become a common practice. Why has the culture changed? It's because of the unisex emphasis and the eventual acceptance of those things which were once deemed unmanly. It seems there is no end to how far cultural expressions will go when society is bent on expressing themselves in unisex fashion. Soon the men will be wearing nail polish, make up, and dresses in our culture, and I suppose some are already doing this. We must stop caving in to every new expression that seeks to break down the traditional distinction of the sexes. How far a culture goes in reversing its cultural distinctions among the sexes will determine how unisex a society will become.

How should a Christian react to cultural changes that seek to unify the sexes? The best advice is this; continue to make a clear distinction in your dress and overall appearance. Don't be the first to change and accept unisex cultural expressions. Don't be so hasty to remove the old landmarks that have distinguished the sexes for many years. I'm running away when the majority of men start wearing lipstick and paint their fingernails and toes! Of course, some already practice this but in doing so they not only cross the line of sexual distinction; they have lost their own sexual identity (Rom. 1:27).

As a man, we should be manly and not feminine, and as a woman you should be feminine and not manly within the traditionally accepted norms of culture. No, we don't live in the dark ages when it comes to certain

cultural expressions that differentiate the sexes, but neither should we follow Hollywood's extreme breakdown of the cultural expressions among the sexes that seems to be occurring today in our land at alarming rates. Deuteronomy 22:5 still teaches a relevant principle for any culture and the customs adopted in that culture which mark out certain distinctions among the sexes. "The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the LORD thy God."

In other words, in every culture where there has been a fixed sexual distinction, the cultural norm should be followed, which keeps sexual distinctions clear and does not blur the lines between masculinity and femininity. We should remember this as we convey our masculinity and femininity to both God and the world.

Questions:

- What longtime cultural distinctions have you abandoned in order to identify with the pop culture?
- How can you be more manly than feminine?
- How can you be more feminine than manly?

2. Principle of heathenism

There is definitely a heathen connection associated with the extreme forms of body modification and piercing. Today people in our country are piercing almost every part of their body including their very intimate or private parts. Let me tell you what this is; it's heathenism! The present obsession of many with this today is a revival of ancient tribalism which in some measure is still practiced today.



The Kacipo people in Sudan stretch their lower lips to fit a saucer-sized pottery and they stretch their ear lobes to create huge holes and long earlobes. Among the Nuba tribes in Sudan, multiple earrings, nose rings, body scarification and body painting



are prevalent. Elaine Davidson said, "When I was a little girl, I wanted to grow up to generate my own magnetic field." Well, I suppose you will have your own magnetic field with this many piercings all over your body!

Among the Hindus you find nose studs, belly rings, toe rings, tongue studs and eyebrow rings. Piercings among the Amazon tribes identify the various members of a given tribe and were part of their outward worship directed to false gods.

We know that extreme forms of body piercing were common among tribes in New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. In Papua New Guinea, all kinds of body piercing, scarification, tattoos and body mutilation distinguish the various tribes. Some of the materials commonly used for piercing were bone, tusks and feathers. Hundreds of years later, French fur trappers in Washington State discovered American Indian tribes who wore bones through their noses and called them the Nez Perce, meaning "Pierced Noses" in French.

In Central and South America, lip labrets were popular for aesthetic reasons, and women with pierced lips were considered more attractive. In fact, the holes were often stretched to incredible size as progressively larger wooden plates were inserted to emphasize the lips as much as possible. The Aztecs and Maya also sported lip labrets of gold and jade, many of them elaborately carved into mythical or religious figures or sporting gemstones. These were seen as highly attractive and are designed to enhance sexuality.

Today many refer to the extreme form of body piercing as "body art" but God calls it heathenism!

One woman wrote:

"I have my nose pierced and prefer nose bones. The pieces that screw in are uncomfortable for me personally. But if you can't stand the pain, then don't put a hole in your face!"

We must remember that man still bears part of the image of God and this truth relates to the body piercing issue.

James 3:9

“Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God.”

Since man in some manner still resembles the image of God, it becomes heathen to disfigure the body or cover the body with grotesque body piercings. This outward statement misrepresents the image of God. If Satan can cause man to defame his body through heathen, excessive, body piercings, a body that is designed to represent God’s image, then he can get man to outwardly defy God and misrepresent His image and likeness.

God’s image is to be represented through our bodies; therefore, we should not do anything to them (like excessive body piercings), which would demonstrate disrespect for the image of God that man is intended to portray and reflect. In short, if we are created higher than the animal world, then we should not live like the animal world, and do disrespectful things to others and our own bodies.

God’s ethical laws in both the Old and New Testament repeatedly call us to separate from heathen practices and customs which misrepresent God’s image. Extreme bodily piercing is one of these customs.

Deuteronomy 18:9 gives a timeless principle:

“When thou art come into the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations.”

Jeremiah 10:2 adds:

“Thus saith the Lord, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them.”

2 Corinthians 6:17 concludes:

“Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing (heathen practices and ways); and I will receive you.”

Today some of God’s saints are beginning to look more like cannibals than Christians! As Christians, we must stop the excessive body piercings and

remember that God has called us to be salt and light (Matthew 5:13-14) and different from the world (2 Cor. 5:17) which is lost in heathenism and going to hell. Unsaved people are not impressed by our similarities with them; they are curious about our differences. Only when we are salt and light can we make a positive impact on the lives of people. Instead of becoming like the heathen we should witness to them by sharing the glorious message of the Gospel (2 Cor. 3:3-4).

Questions:

- What message are you conveying by your excess body piercings?
- In what ways can you better represent the Christian testimony of being salt and light?
- Are the unsaved impressed with sameness of difference?

3. Principle of association

As mentioned above, there is more to the craze of body piercing than meets the eye. Behind this movement is the cultural breakdown of sexual distinction and the promotion of rebellion against God. For instance, in the United States, earrings for men in the 1960s and subsequent decades were a symbol of support for a counterculture movement symbolizing rebellion against societal standards. More often than not, the men who wore an earring were supporting antiestablishment ideals, homosexuality and the unisex movement.

The message that is being conveyed by excess body piercing is another reason why this practice must be condemned. Extreme body piercing is a message of rebellion against God. Why are people in our society piercing their bodies in an open and showy fashion? It's because they want to express their freedom to rebel against society, normally accepted standards of decency, and ultimately God Himself. Therefore, if a Christians wants to engage in this type of extreme practice, they are associating with that element within society that has historically promoted rebellion against guns, the government, and God.

Ephesians 5:7 declares:

“Be not ye therefore partakers with them.”

Ephesians 5:11 adds:

“And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.”

The idea behind the word “fellowship” means partnership and association. In summary, to fellowship or associate with the rebellious movement of excessive body piercing contradicts God's instructions to keep a clear distinction among the sexes, separate from movements of historical rebellion against God, and to avoid extreme disfigurement of the body which was created in God's image.

Today, piercing parts of the body that were not customarily pierced (tongue, eyebrow, navel, etc.) can also represent rebellion against parents (Eph. 6:1) and previous established standards, resulting in a Christian conforming to extremism and heathenism as our western cultural spirals downward. The Bible teaches we should separate from the practices and customs of people who are rebellious in society and not adopt their pagan lifestyles and mannerisms. We are called upon to represent Christianity in the best possibility light, living a life that (Eph. 5:3) “becometh saints” and expressing “behaviour as becometh holiness” (Titus 2:3).

Christians should seek to avoid taking on the appearance (1 Thess. 5:22) that they are identifying or associating (1 Cor. 10:20) with the questionable, extreme, radical, worldly, unbiblical, and rebellious movements within our society, such as outlaws, criminals, long hair on men, the rebellious rock culture, and sexual perversion (homosexuality, unisex philosophy, pornography). These types of people and movements represent rebellion to natural order and rebellion to God and what is righteous, by notoriously promoting things such as lust, sex perversion, drugs, tattoos, gross body piercing, and crime.

The Bible believing Christian should be willing to separate from these practices which are being promoted within a pagan and corrupt society and not associate with them in any fashion (Rom. 12:2). In light of the day in which we live *the believer should present the least questionable testimony before the world* and represent Christianity as a non-rebellious movement of people that are different than the world and its standards, which represent rebellion against God. Whatever happened to “clean cut”

Christians who want to resemble godliness instead of rebellion? There are many “cookie cutter” Christians trying to fit into the same cultural mold of the world.

Both men and women who want to model Christian values must be careful not to give others the impression that they reject authority, that they are following rebellious movements, that they support immorality, that they are immodest or that their goal is to conform to the world and its standards. Instead of reflecting these negative things within society, our appearance should portray Christian godliness and not the standards of the world.

1 Thessalonians 5:22 declares:
“Abstain from all appearance of evil.”

Someone might conclude that culture and society have changed; arguing that body piercing does not have the riotous and rebellious connotations it once had a few years ago. They might reason that society's view toward body piercing has changed just as society's view of women wearing pants has changed in the last century. If you look back to the 1940's and 1950's you will discover that most women did wear dresses within the culture as an expression of the distinction among the sexes. Yes, it's true that particular styles of attire do change over the years but what is important is that the styles continue to represent a proper distinction among the sexes and men and women continue to portray masculinity and femininity in overall appearance. This seems to be what the Bible teaches when it comes to the distinction among the sexes.

Of course, discrete body piercing such as tasteful female ear piercing has been considered to be an acceptable adornment in our western culture. Furthermore, the piercing itself is not associated with any radical movements. As long as the earrings do not represent or communicate something sinful, pierced ears have not professed radical departure from the norm. Therefore, tastefully pierced ears on a woman have been traditionally acceptable in society. In fact, jewelry on women has been the traditional cultural practice within our society and land. This will be brought out in our next point.

Questions:

- What are you associating with when you have excessive body piercings?
- What kind of testimony should we reflect as a Christians?
- Are you a clean cut or cookie cutter Christian?

4. Principle of excess

The advice columnist "Dear Abby" published a letter from a dentist warning people against tongue piercing and the problems with infection. He said, "Our mouths weren't made to work with metal banging around in them!"

How many piercings are too many? What is excess piercing? Most times the answer to this question is simple: Just one more.

1 Peter 3:3-4 is speaking to women and says:

“Whose adorning (beauty or attractiveness) 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.”

From this Scripture we discover that women in a specific way express their femininity through the wearing of jewelry. This has always been true in the different cultures. Even in different cultures where men would wear jewelry it was the women who were always known for wearing specific jewelry that enhanced their outward beauty and femininity. Jewelry has traditionally been worn by women as a way to adorn and accent their femininity or womanly traits.

The same is true regarding longer hair (“But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her” - 1 Cor. 11:15). Ladies, remember that your true beauty is not manifested by excessive gold or body piercings but by your longer hair length. Long hair is a feminine quality; it’s a mark of your God-given beauty and distinctiveness as a woman. This is what the Bible teaches. Furthermore, Peter adds that true and lasting beauty is inward (character) and not outward (adornment).

Now, I've heard people use 1 Peter 3:3 to support the theory that women should never wear jewelry because it's a form of worldliness. If this were the correct interpretation then women could not wear clothing because Peter also speaks about the "putting on of apparel." Are women worldly just because they wear clothing and must they get rid of their clothing? I don't think this is the correct interpretation!

Peter's subject here seems to change to women's apparel, but actually the real subject the apostle is dealing with is the best ways for a wife to please and serve her unsaved husband when she seeks to possess "a meek and quiet spirit." In other words, it's not the woman's outward appearance that will influence the husband for Christ as much as her inner life of holiness and submission. Peter emphasizes the importance of inward beauty or charm over a woman's outward adornment (beauty of body modification) and in doing so he teaches an important lesson on the principle of excess.

Three types of outward adornment are to be avoided by woman.

a. Arranging the hair

The "plaiting the hair" is speaking against the excess of being over stylish by possessing too many braids, which were popular in ancient Rome. Ladies, make your hair pretty for it is your "glory" (dignity and honor) as 1 Corinthians 11:15 declares; however, don't become a walking beauty pageant. Don't strut around like a peacock and overdo it!

b. Wearing gold

Peter is forbidding the showy and extravagant displays of jewelry and is once again speaking against excess. Some of the ladies in society and the local churches were beginning to go to extremes and were wearing way too much jewelry. They were overdoing it. This principle of excess adornment can certainly be applied to body piercings. Too many piercings become a distraction and no longer a mark of beauty and charm for a woman. Ladies, you must remember this. Excess is never right. More is not better. Instead

of highlighting your natural feminine beauty, excess actually takes away from it.

c. Excess apparel

Obviously, this is not referring to the actual wearing of clothing but to the wearing of ostentatious dress. In other words, it's overdoing it. When you try to present yourself as a beauty queen in society and church by becoming too fancy in your outward dress, you once again distract from your natural beauty that God has given to you. Ladies, balance is the key. Don't overdo it; at the same time, don't under-do it. You are a lady and dressing nice and ladylike is a natural expression of femininity. Read the Song of Solomon!

Ladies, your husband wants you to look feminine in your overall appearance. God has built this desire into a man. Men want to see femininity expressed in women. A man likes a soft, ladylike, feminine appearance instead of a manly appearance in a woman. Peter is saying dress like a lady, look like a lady, be feminine like a lady; just don't overdo it.

Paul similarly wrote in 1 Timothy 1 Timothy 2:9-10:

"In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works."

Once again, the Bible text is referring to excessive display of body modification. We need to be on guard and refuse to show off our bodies and display them as a spectacle before others.

I was paying for my gasoline at a local convenience store the other day and noticed that the cashier woman had a piece of jewelry pierced through her tongue. She was hard to understand when she talked because of this big piece of jewelry attached to her tongue. Ladies, this is not only heathenism but excess and this type of piercing is the type of thing Peter and Paul are talking about.

Isaiah 3:16–25 informs us what God thinks about all forms of excess and extravagant body modification or adornment which would include excess body piercings. Judah's proud condition was illustrated by the women of Jerusalem. Isaiah contrasted what they looked like then with what they will look like after God's judgment comes upon them.

Isaiah 3:16-25 reads:

“Moreover the Lord saith, Because the daughters of Zion are haughty (*filled with pride*), and walk with stretched forth necks (*trying to attract attention by the way they walked*) and wanton eyes (*blinking and flattering eyes*), walking and mincing (*taking short quick steps*) as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet (*rattling or noisy ankle ornaments*): Therefore the Lord will smite with a scab the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion, and the Lord will discover their secret parts. In that day the Lord will take away the bravery of their tinkling ornaments (*rattling ankle ornaments*) about their feet, and their cauls (*a netting for the hair*), and their round tires like the moon, The chains, and the bracelets, and the mufflers (*long veils*), The bonnets (*fancy head dresses*), and the ornaments of the legs, and the headbands, and the tablets, and the earrings, The rings, and nose jewels, The changeable suits of apparel, and the mantles (*cloak or garment*), and the wimples (*wide cloak*), and the crisping pins (*bags or purses*), The glasses, and the fine linen, and the hoods, and the veils. And it shall come to pass, that instead of sweet smell (*perfume*) there shall be stink; and instead of a girdle (*a belt*) a rent (*a rope*); and instead of well set hair (*very dressy and showy hairdos*) baldness; and instead of a stomacher (*an expensive robe*) a girding of sackcloth (*inexpensive material used for mourning*); and burning instead of beauty (*extravagant beauty*). Thy men shall fall by the sword, and thy mighty in the war.”

We can gather from this description that God is not pleased with excess. Ladies, you need to remember this when it comes to piercings. Within our culture the ostentatious, outward display of piercings in the nose, mouth, or lips do not highlight your natural feminine beauty. Instead, these types of piercings and body modifications become a mark of excess and actually take away from your natural feminine beauty. Therefore, body piercing (except for discreet piercings) is to be avoided by Christian women. The key

word seems to be “discreet” since putting pins and piercings in your nose, lips, eyebrow, and tongue are not being discreet about body piercing.

We know that in the 1990s, body piercing became more widespread. Piercings of the navel, nose, eyebrows, lips, tongue, lower bowel, Achilles tendon, upper cerebellum, left ventricle, bladder, spinal column, other private parts, and jugular vein became common place.

In 1993, a navel piercing was displayed in MTV Video Music Awards' (I didn't watch it!) where Alicia Silverstone was depicted with a navel piercing in the video. People were surprised at her reaction: "I can't believe that so many girls haven't got a brain in their head," said Silverstone. "I thought the idea was stupid. I only did it because Aerosmith paid me \$1.35 million. Then all these kids see it and go running off a cliff like a bunch of lemmings. This country is really in trouble if all our kids are this brain-dead."

Ladies, don't become “a piercing junkie” who is addicted to having more and more body piercings. Those who have a drinking problem often say, “Just one more.” Of course, they are only fooling themselves. If you think that you always need one more piercing then you are addicted to body piercing and will continue to pierce your body more and more. Stop the addiction right now. Did you ever stop and think where your body piercing will take you if you don't stop the piercings right now? We must remember that the Bible forbids the Christian to be addicted to anything. This would include body piercing.

1 Corinthians 6:12 says:

“All things are lawful unto me (non-sinful things which are within the bounds of righteousness and acceptable practices), but all things are not expedient (suitable or advantageous since they might give wrong impressions and be questioned by many): all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power (authority and addiction) of any.

Two principles are actually brought out in this verse: 1) Consideration and 2) Control. Sometimes we should not practice something simply because we want to be considerate of what others might think of our action and also what might happen if we begin to practice something repeatedly. It

may begin to overtake our lives and control us. Therefore, we must at times limit our liberty in certain areas. This brings us to another point in our study.

Questions:

- What is more important than body modification?
- How many are too many piercings?
- What or Whom is in control of your life?

5. Principle of offense

As a Christian, did you ever stop and think that your excessive body piercings might be offensive to others? Many times we only think about ourselves and forget about our brothers and sisters in Christ. Sometimes we must limit our outward expressions so we do not offend others in the local church and body of Christ.

1 Corinthians 8:13

“Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.”

1 Corinthians 10:32

“Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God.”

When you want to push for a greater display of outward body piercings you will likely offend other believers. This is because of their sensitivity to body piercings due to the history behind them in this country.

You might conclude that you have liberty in a certain area but your liberty always has limits. You might ask yourself these questions: Why am I doing this, what does it represent, and will it offend others? As a Christian, we should never live unto ourselves but out of love “serve one another” (Gal. 5:13).

Questions:

- Is it possible to offend fellow believers with too many body piercings?
- Is there a time we should limit our outward body expressions?
- What are some examples of this?
- Are you maintaining unity or causing division by your appearance?

6. Principle of pride

1 John 2:15-16 declares:

“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. 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.”

There can be no doubt that the extreme display of body piercing has become an issue of pride. What message are people conveying that have their bodies pierced in an extreme and grotesque fashion? They are saying, “Look at me. Notice me.” This is often an issue related to pride which the Bible clearly and repeatedly condemns. Proverbs 6:17 declares that God hates a “proud look.” This means that He also hates a proud look that originates from one’s body modifications or piercings. I’m convinced that pride is at the heart of much of the excessive, unconventional, and grotesque body piercings of today.

Proverbs 11:2

“When pride cometh, then cometh shame: but with the lowly is wisdom.”

Proverbs 21:4

“An high look, and a proud heart, and the plowing of the wicked, is sin.”

Proverbs 29:23

“A man's pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit.”

To draw attention to ourselves with these excessive fashion statements is hardly in keeping with the Biblical commands for humility and the desire to

not stand out and be noticed in society (1 Pet. 3:3-4). God is against the ostentatious and impressive display of the human body for it is something that is rooted in pride.

One lady said she pierces her body to express herself to others. Well, let's think about this for a moment. Why would you want to express yourself to others in this way unless your heart was filled with pride and you want to impress them? The issue of pride is related to the extreme forms of body piercing that we see in our country today.

God does not want us to be filled with vanity and pride over our appearance. Ladies, discreet body piercings is the key. However, a broad section of society believes that excess body piercings are the way to reflect or express themselves to others, but this idea is nothing more than pride. Also, some people who practice a more extreme form of body modification or piercing are dealing with issues related to their personal security and self concept. Sometimes they want to be noticed and one way to do this is to look different. I'm convinced that many modern trends in our land are rooted in pride and a lack of one's security and identity that they can only find in Christ.

Today's emphasis on appearance (extreme body piercings) and the lengths to which people are willing to go to be noticed are signs that our culture's values have drifted far from the security that comes from knowing God and submitting to His ownership. As a Christian, we should find our security and identity in Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:21; 3:10), the One who loves us and the life that we live and share with Him (Rom. 7:6; Gal. 2:20; Phil. 1:21). If we are in love with Jesus Christ and He is our Master, this will keep us from having an identity crisis in our lives.

Questions:

- What message are you conveying with too many piercings?
- Why do you want to be noticed?
- What will keep you from having an identity crisis?
- Are you secure in Christ?
- What makes your life meaningful and fulfilling?

7. Principle of God's glory

Many times we leave this principle for last but perhaps it should be first. If God does not get the glory in something that we do, then we shouldn't engage in the practice.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 asks:

“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.”

Here is a good question to reflect on. Does God really get the glory through excessive body piercing? Is His name and character upheld and correctly portrayed before a watching world when we dress ostentatiously, excessively pierce our bodies, and when using extravagant fashion in order to be noticed? The answer is obvious. No, God does not get the glory when we live to be noticed because this actually robs God of His glory.

We need to remember that our bodies, as well as our souls, have been redeemed and belong to God. They are not our own to do with as we please. We must remember the messages we are conveying to others when we promote various forms of body modification (piercings and tattoos) and the disunity it can bring to church fellowships. In relation to body piercings, a good test is to determine whether we can honestly, in good conscience, ask God to bless and use that particular activity for His own good purposes. “So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31). We need to ask “does it glorify God, or does it glorify man?” The Bible says that we must exalt Christ in our bodies! We must glorify God.

Philippians 1:20

“According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death.”

Is Jesus Christ really magnified or glorified when we glorify ourselves with excessive body piercing? When we draw attention to ourselves we are not drawing attention to our Savior and Lord. Of course, God has not called us to dress and display ourselves in a drab manner but neither is He pleased when we seek to have our bodies stand out and put on show, portraying ourselves as a fashion model, or someone who wants to be noticed. Our outward appearance should be that which professes and reveals godliness to others – not pride, heathenism, excess, offence.

2 Peter 3:11

“Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness.”

We are to only do and practice things that are honorable and respectable in the sight of men (Rom. 12:17; Phil. 4:8). Therefore, we shouldn't engage in questionable behaviors (Rom. 14:23; 1 Th. 5:21-22).

The young people are saying that body piercing is a “trendy” thing to do. Many of them are showing off multiple ears, nose, tongue, eyebrow and navel jewels and rings attached to their pierced flesh. Some even have this done on unspeakable parts of their bodies. Some of this is related to heathenism and others to prideful display. One thing is certain; God does not get the glory in excessive and grotesque body piercings.

As a Christian lady, you might be asking yourself, “What about a smaller piercing in my nose? What about one more piercing.” But you are not sure that it's the right thing to do and you are quite sure it might offend others. So what do you do? How can you make the right decision? 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).

Bottom line in regard to body piercings would be to ask the popular slogan, “What Would Jesus Do?” I don't believe we will ever see Jesus with any body piercings that He placed on Himself. I can't imagine Jesus with a tongue ring or a navel piercing. What God condemns is excess and the

extreme forms of body modification, such as body piercing, which still associates a person with the pop culture that has reverted back to heathenism, a culture that has historically rebelled against God and conventional distinctions among the sexes, a culture that is addicted to body modification, and one that does not care about God's glory.

Dear Christian, we should represent Christianity in the best possible light by our dress and the outward display of our body. We should strive to send the right messages, convey godliness, remind others of our security in Christ, and most of all give God the glory.

Here are some final questions.

- Does God really get the glory when you express yourself before others with excessive piercings?
- Are you ready to give God the glory with your body?
- What changes do you need to make in order to convey the right message to others and God?