

HotSpot Journal – August 2007

San Tan Ink

By Mark Krenz

Ever wonder what's up with all the body art in the San Tan Area? Have you ever noticed how many people have tattoos? You see them at the pool, the grocery store, walking down the street, at work, and at church. You see butterflies, names, hearts, tribal designs, snakes, skulls, flowers – you name it, it's been tattooed.

I don't have any tattoos – although, I do have a black mole on my back that could pass for a small beetle. Maybe I could turn it into Mickey Mouse's left ear with the help of a tattoo artist?

I've been intrigued by all this body art. So I've talked to people and searched the web. Tattoos have been around as long as humans have been, spanning millennia, continents, tribes, races, and religions. The word tattoo, which means "to mark," comes from native Tahitian Tribes who called their body markings "tatau." Statistics say that as high as 30-40% of people age 18-40 have at least one tattoo. One tattoo parlor opens nation-wide every day. And, believe it or not, it was just nine months ago that Oklahoma became the last state to legalize getting tattoos. Now, aren't you smarter knowing all that?

Although tattoos are seen on athletes, Hollywood A-Listers, and Joe Shmo next door, they can be a divisive topic. It's like cat people and dog people trying to watch Animal Planet together. The controversy is seen in legislation, in the business world, in the medical field, and in religious organizations. That's what makes tattoos interesting.

Besides those tattoos gotten in a drunken stopper or after losing a bet for not being able to burp the whole alphabet, many tattoos have rich meaning and deep importance to the person embedded by them. Whether for meaning or simply for the art, beauty, and expression, tattoos give insight into a person's identity and story. As I've talked to people about their body art I usually find a quick openness to share the stories and meanings that their tattoos represent and the often fun scenarios that go along with the time of actually getting the tattoo. It's a quick insight into at least a part of a person's journey.

Permanence is what really gives tattoos their edginess and extremeness. Those lick 'em 'n stick 'em tats or Henna tattoos would never create such a stir. With real tattoos comes a real long-term commitment (or an expensive, extremely painful removal process).

Tattoos are many things: extreme, expressive, audacious, simple, bold, beautiful, scary, whimsical, rebellious, conformist, deep and meaningful. This is what makes them such a great metaphor for faith in God.

If we allow God to tattoo his fingerprint on our soul's canvas with the ink of his spirit, our lives will have an amazing new story to tell. It's a story of hope, restoration, and

freedom. Our lives of faith in Christ will reflect Jesus' "tattoos" - the scars of his passion lovingly displayed on his hands and feet from dying on a cross for each of our sins. A rich faith in Jesus Christ permanently marks our lives too. Truly living out of a tattooed spirit makes us bold, beautiful, extreme, committed, deep, and unique.

So whether you have a tat or not, you have a story that God is authoring. The canvas of your heart is waiting to be written with God's hope and promise. This is my tattoo, so if you see me around town, let's swap tattoo stories. You can also email me your tattoo story at mark@discoverONE.net.

Dr. Mark Krenz is the lead pastor of ONE Community Church – a "church for people who don't like church." The current teaching series is "San Tan Ink." ONE meets 9:30am on Sundays at Mountain Vista K-8 in San Tan Heights (1/4 mile behind the new Sonic on Hunt Hwy and Mountain Vista Blvd). Enter to win an iPod Nano and check out ONE at www.discoverONE.net.