

“Dad, we gotta get us some tattoos!”

I had the same conversation with two different people in two different cities – people I deeply love and respect, Mike in Santa Cruz and Jean in Pacifica. I said...

“I’m going to get on a bus, go to Mexico, and stay as long as I want.”

“No you’re really not.”

“I’m not - Why not?”

“Because, it’s stupid and you’re in no condition to be alone for long periods of time right now. You’re too messed up. You need people around you.”

I love friends who tell you what you *need* to hear, not necessarily what you *want* to hear. They were both right. I was so freaked out by losing my wife that I didn’t need to isolate myself from friends who were much more objective than I.

So, a few days later I walked into my son’s apartment and said, “If someone (looking right at Luke) would go to Spring Training with me, I’d go.” He was reeling and suffering nearly as much as I was about the breakup of his parents. It didn’t take a second for him to say, “I’m in!” He called his boss and told him that he had a family crisis, and that he needed to take some time off to drive his dad to Arizona! His boss said, “Go!” and not many hours later we jumped in the car and went.

Besides all the angst we were feeling about how bad things were and the frustrated banter that we had on the trip, we had a ball. We drove into Scottsdale where the Giants play their Spring Training games, got out of the car, and Luke said, *“Dad we gotta get us some tattoos!”*

OK, first of all you have to know that Luke was already tattooed up pretty well. He’s got them on several body parts already. He’s got robots and canaries and music symbols and Chinese lettering. One of his best friends, Dan, is a tattoo artist, who lives 2 doors down from them in the same apartment building. I like Dan a lot. He’s a solid follower of Jesus and leads a Bible Study in their apartment that my kids attend. One Sunday I was attending church with the kids and was sitting between Luke and Dan. I turned to Dan and said something like, “Hey, we’re gonna be here for an hour or so worshipping Jesus and all. And I don’t really want to get up from here with any tattoos. OK?” He replied, “Well, don’t turn your back on me then!” I haven’t since.

Anyway, back to Arizona and Luke’s angst-filled declaration, *“We gotta get us some tattoos while we’re here.”* No way. Not gonna happen. So we went to the motel. Our plan was to camp. Really. But all the campgrounds were full since it was the opening of Spring Training. So we went to Motel 6. It’s like camping if you stay on the first floor (you know, close to the earth).

Again, Luke says, “We really gotta get some tattoos. It’ll make us both feel better.” “Not in a million years, Son.” We went to a couple of games and had a great time. A third time he says, “I’m telling you Dad that this is our hour. Let’s get some tattoos together.” Now I’m beginning to picture in my mind what I’d get if he knocked me out and drug me into a tattoo parlor. Is that what you call them, “parlors?” That’s a strange word for it, don’t you think? Anyway, I tried to think if there were any anti-women symbols that I could get on my bicep. Then I thought, given the size of my biceps, the image would have to be so microscopic, that it wouldn’t be worth the money or the pain. Besides, do I really

want to be bitter about all women – or any women for as long a tattoo lasts? Anyway, I dismissed the thought again until he brought it up a fourth time. “Let’s do it, Dad. It’s a father-son kinda thing.” By this time, I’m starting to cave in, and even though I’m saying, “No,” I’m thinking, “Maybe it would make me feel better to rebel against – well, rebel against whatever I want to rebel against and have a total stranger poke permanent ink into my skin. OK, I am 54 years old. I’ve lost my wife, ministry, and my future. (I wasn’t even sick yet, except in the head.) If he asks me one more time, I’m gonna do it!” He didn’t and I didn’t.