Is Polygamy (Polygyny) Biblical? Does God Allow it?

Berean Patriot December 6, 2021 Marriage 81 Comments

Is polygamy biblical? We'll take an exhaustive, in-depth look at all the biblical arguments both for and against polygamy (*technically polygyny*) and see. Many Christians wouldn't even ask the question because it's not an issue in the West. However, it can be a serious question in Muslim countries.



Consider a Muslim man with two wives (*and young children from both*) who converts to Christianity. Some Christians insist that he must divorce one of the wives, abandoning her and his children from her. These men often seriously and genuinely want to know if the Bible/God permits polygamy because they don't want to abandon their wives and children.

(*By the way, I have a very complete article on divorce and remarriage that covers verses on the topic that I've literally never seen another Bible teacher deal with.*)

Serious questions about what God forbids or permits deserve serious answers. Therefore, we will examine this topic carefully and in the light of scripture. The Bible is very clear on some things *(like all sex outside of marriage being wrong*), but less clear on other things. Fortunately, this is one of the clear things.

A clarification of terms before we begin:

- **Polygamy** is the practice of one person having multiple spouses. It's a broad "umbrella term" for every possible arrangement of multiple spouses.
- **Polyandry** is the practice of one woman having multiple husbands. Biblically, this is clearly wrong as Romans 7:2-3 plainly says.
- **Polygyny** is the practice of one man having multiple wives. That's what we'll examine today.

We'll look at the most common arguments both for and against polygamy (*polygyny*), and examine all of them thoroughly. Here's a brief summary of the arguments we'll look at:

Arguments *against* polygyny:

- Doesn't polygyny mean the husband is committing adultery?
- Doesn't "Two shall become one flesh" preclude multiple wives?
- Israel's kings were commanded not to "multiply wives"
- 1 Cor 7:2 says wives should have "their *own* husband"
- Elders are required to be the "husband of one wife"
- Even if it was allowed/tolerated by God in the Old Testament, some say it's either:
  1. Not tolerated in the New Testament or for Christians
  2. Not His ideal, while monogamy is His ideal

Arguments *for* polygyny

- In three places in the Bible, God commanded polygyny (*once to a specific person, twice in the Mosaic Law under certain conditions*)
- King Joash "did what was right in the sight of the Lord", and that included marrying two wives.
- God rewarded a woman for helping her husband get an additional wife
- God describes himself as a polygamist, married to two women.
- Jesus describes Himself as a polygamist (*in a parable*) as marrying five women.
- King David was a polygamist, but the Bible says that he was blameless "*except in the matter of Uriah the Hittite.*"
  - God said that He would've given King David additional wives if he had wanted them.
- God says the "sexually immoral" will end up in the lake of fire, but many polygamous men are in the Hebrews 11 "faith hall of fame".

We'll look at all these points – both for and against – one at a time, starting with the arguments *against* polygyny.

Contents [show]

Arguments *Against* Polygamy (*Polygyny*)

It's important to realize that there's no scripture that specifically and clearly prohibits polygyny by saying something like: "*you shall not take more than one wife*". There's also no verse which clearly calls it sin by saying something like: "*if a man takes a second wife, he has sinned*".

However, that doesn't mean that the Bible is silent on the topic. Therefore, we'll look at the verses that both sides use to support their positions. But remember, **it's important not to read our thoughts into the Bible**. That's adding to His commands, which we shouldn't do.

God said this:

> **Deuteronomy 4:2**
>
> **2** "You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you

And few will forget the warning at the end of Revelation, which is in the same vein.

> **Revelation 22:18-19**
>
> **18** I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book;
>
> **19** and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book.

God **hates it** when people twist, add to, or take away from what He has said. We talk about this at length in my article on What's the Best Bible Translation? And More Importantly, Why? So while we will examine this issue in-depth, we

won't make any passage say something that it doesn't. (*Like the Pharisees did when adding to the law.*)

Doesn't Polygamy (*Polygyny*) Mean The Husband Is Committing Adultery?

This might seem like an easy and obvious problem. In fact, it's one of the most common objections to polygamy (*polygyny*).

However, the way we define adultery today isn't the same as it was originally defined. Adultery is a ***very*** specific sin with a ***very*** specific definition. We'll get to that definition in a moment, but the verse below indicates that a man who has multiple wives ***must*** have sex with all of them because God Himself **commanded** it.

If God commanded it, it can't be a sin.

> **Exodus 21:10-11**
>
> **10** If he takes another wife to himself, he shall not diminish her food, her clothing, or her conjugal rights.
>
> **11** And if he does not do these three things for her, she shall go out for nothing, without payment of money.
>
> (*Note: This verse is only one chapter after the Ten Commandments, which obviously include not committing adultery*.)

God said that a man who takes a second wife must have sex with all of them. In fact, a man denying sex to a wife was cause for her to divorce him. This verse contains the *only* explicit reasons that God gave in the Mosaic Law that women could divorce their husbands.

Therefore, a man who has sex with multiple wives must *not* be committing adultery because God commanded men to do it, whereas He commanded us *not* to commit adultery.

But that begs an obvious question: what is adultery?

The answer lies in the definition of the Greek and Hebrew words, which have a different definition that our English word "adultery". In English, "adultery" means a man or woman having sex with someone who isn't their current spouse. Even by this definition, polygyny isn't technically adultery since the

man is still having sex with his wife. Our English definition of adultery assumes monogamy, which the Greek and Hebrew words don't. (*We'll look at them in a moment*)

However, the Greek and Hebrew words have a more specific and clear definition:

The definition of the Greek and Hebrew words that we translate "adultery" are the same: Biblical Adultery is when a man has sex with another man's wife (*or betrothed*).

That's it.

Nothing else is adultery according to every relevant Greek and Hebrew word. Here they are with their meanings, and links to the lexicons so you can double-check if you like.

Greek words:

- "μοιχαλίς" (moichalis) meaning "adulteress" (female). The technical definition is: "*(a) an adulteress (that is, a married woman who commits adultery), (b) Hebraistically: extended to those who worship any other than the true God*"
- "μοιχός" (moichos) meaning "adulterer" (male). The technical definition is: "*an adulterer, that is, a man who is guilty with a married woman*"
- "μοιχεία" (moicheia) a noun meaning "adultery". The technical definition is also "adultery", with nothing further given from the lexicon. However, it's related to the following Greek verb, so it shares the same idea (*again requiring a married woman*).
- "μοιχεύω" (moicheuó) a verb meaning "I commit adultery". The technical definition is "to commit adultery with, have unlawful intercourse with another's wife"
- "μοιχάο" (moichaó) a verb meaning "to commit adultery". The technical definition is: "*to have unlawful intercourse with another's wife, to commit adultery with*"

Hebrew Words:

- "נָאַף" (naaph) a verb meaning "to commit adultery". Technical Definition is: "*literally commit adultery; usually of man, **always with the wife of another**; with accusative woman*". **This is the Hebrew word used in the Ten Commandments.** Therefore, whenever "You shall not commit adultery" is quoted, this is the command, and it requires another man's

wife.

- "נִאֻפִים" (niuph) meaning "adulteries". No Technical definition given, but related to "naaph" above, so sharing the same definition.
- "נְאֻפוּף" (naaphuph) meaning "adultery". No Technical definition given, but related to "naaph" above, so sharing the same definition.

And for more proof, here's the Easton's Bible Dictionary entry on adultery:

> conjugal infidelity. An adulterer was a man who had illicit intercourse with a married or a betrothed woman, and such a woman was an adulteress. Intercourse between a married man and an unmarried woman was fornication. Adultery was regarded as a great social wrong, as well as a great sin.

If a married man has sex with an unmarried woman, that's called "fornication", not adultery. Both are serious sins, and the Bible is crystal clear that all sex outside marriage is wrong. Biblically speaking though, it's the marital status of the ***woman*** – ***not*** the man – that determines if it's adultery or fornication. Both are serious sins, and God promised that He would judge both in Hebrews 13:4. Nevertheless, biblical adultery *only* occurs when a man has sex with another man's wife.

Since adultery *only* occurs when a man has sex with another man's wife, it therefore does *not* occur when a man has sex with *his own* wives, no matter how many he has.

This is confirmed by God commanding husbands to have sex with all their wives in the Old Testament, as we've already seen. Further, the above definition fits with every single usage in the Bible, with no exceptions.

But someone will say: "*But that's the Old Testament Law, so it doesn't apply*." Yes and no; don't forget Paul's statement:

> **Romans 15:4**
>
> For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

While we don't need to obey the law, it was written for our instruction. The passage in Exodus "instructs" husbands to have sex with all their wives. From that, we can learn that God doesn't consider a man having sex with multiple wives adultery.

More importantly, God commanded a man with multiple wives to have sex with all of them in Exodus 21:10-11. Unless you want to take the position that God Himself commanded such a man to commit adultery (*one chapter after prohibiting it in the Ten Commandments*), then having multiple wives doesn't equal adultery.

"Two Shall Become One Flesh"

One of the most common verses used to say that polygyny is wrong is Genesis 2:24, and especially Jesus' quotation of it in the Gospels. It makes some sense at first glance. However, using this verse that way is twisting things a bit, as we'll soon see.

> **Matthew 19:4-6**
>
> **4** And He answered and said, "Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE,
>
> **5** and said, 'FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH'?
>
> **6** "So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate."

The argument goes that it doesn't say "three fleshes" and one man can't become "one flesh" with two women. However, with a little more Biblical context, you'll see that's not the case. Jesus is quoting Genesis 2:24, which is only talking about the *physical* act of sex. This can be easily proven by Paul's quotation of it in 1 Corinthians.

> **1 Corinthians 6:16**
>
> Or do you not know that the one who joins himself to a prostitute is one body with her? For He says, "THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH."

So then, a man becomes "one flesh" with a prostitute in the ***exact same way*** that he becomes "one flesh" with his wife. We know this because Paul is quoting Genesis. The only way in which sex with a prostitute is the same as sex with a wife is the physical act itself.

According to Paul, an (*immoral*) man could become "one flesh" with

as many prostitutes as he could afford.

Basically, God says in Genesis 2:24 that "they'll get married then have sex".

In reference to polygyny, a man could absolutely have sex – that is, become "one flesh" – with two different women. "One flesh" is just a Hebrew idiom for sex, otherwise the 1 Corinthians verse doesn't make sense.

Another argument based on this verse says: "*But this verse reveals God's original plan for marriage, so we should follow it and practice monogamy-only*."

Yes, God's plan was that people should get married and have sex afterward. However, this verse isn't about polygamy (*polygyny*) and doesn't even touch on this topic. As we've already seen, it was also God's plan – and commandment – that a man have sex with all of his wives.

> **Exodus 21:10-11**
>
> **10** If he takes another wife to himself, he shall not diminish her food, her clothing, or her conjugal rights.
>
> **11** And if he does not do these three things for her, she shall go out for nothing, without payment of money.

God said that if a man marries a second woman, he ***must*** keep having sex with the first wife. So yes, God's plan was for married people to have sex. By God's command, a husband was *required* to have sex with all of his wives; plural. And yes, this was a command from God. Not having sex with *all* your wives was breaking the Mosaic Law and therefore a sin. (*While the Law was in effect, which it isn't anymore of course.*)

Paul reiterates this in the New Testament too:

> **1 Corinthians 7:3-5**
>
> **3** The husband must **fulfill his duty** to his wife, and likewise also the wife to her husband.
>
> **4** The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; and likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.
>
> **5** Stop **depriving** one another, except by agreement for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer, and come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

The word translated "fulfill his duty" is the Greek word "ὀφειλή" (*opheilē*), which means:

> **Cognate: 3782** *opheilē* (a feminine noun) – a *specific* (applied) kind of indebtedness, implying an "applied obligation" due to the debt (what is owed). See 3781 (*opheiletēs*)

And the word translated "depriving" in verse 5 is "ἀποστερέω" (apostereó), which means:

> **650** *aposteréō* (from 575 */apó*, "away from" and 4732 */stereóō*, "deprive") – properly, keep *away* from someone, i.e. by ***defrauding*** (depriving); **to cheat**, taking away what rightfully belongs to someone else.

The King James Version gets verse 5 right by translating it "defrauding". A husband depriving his wife of sex – regardless of the total number of wives – is defrauding the wife, which is sin.

"He Shall Not Multiply Wives"

The passage below refers to restrictions that were put on the King of Israel.

> **Deuteronomy 17:16-17**
>
> **16** "Moreover, he shall not multiply horses for himself, nor shall he cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses, since the LORD has said to you, 'You shall never again return that way.'
>
> **17** "**He shall not multiply wives for himself**, or else his heart will turn away; nor shall he greatly increase silver and gold for himself.

The words I've highlighted in red are all the same Hebrew word, which is "רָבָה" (rabah). It means:

Strong's Concordance:

> **Definition:** to be or become much, many or great

Brown-Driver-Briggs Lexicon:

> I. [רָבָה]225 verb: be, or become, much, many, great

Notice, the same limitation – with the same word – is also applied to the king's gold, silver, and horses. If this verse means that the king can't have more than one wife, then wouldn't it also mean that he couldn't have more than one horse or more than one gold or silver coin either?

That's ridiculous.

The instance above where "rabah" is translated "greatly increase" captures the word better. The idea here is about hoarding; kings shouldn't hoard gold, silver, horses, or wives.

A king can:

- have multiple horses, but not a ton of horses
- have multiple gold coins, but not a ton of gold
- have multiple wives, but not a ton of wives

A king could have multiple wives, just not hoard them. (*Though God doesn't give a specific limit.*) The stated reason is that too many wives will turn the king's heart from God.

That's exactly what happened to Solomon.

He had 700 wives and 300 concubines (*concubines in the Bible were wives – actual and true wives who were married to the man – that were also slaves*). They led his heart away from God just as the law predicted. Personally, I'm not sure how you could maintain an actual relationship with more than two or three wives.

Plus, we know for an absolute fact that this verse doesn't prohibit polygamy (*polygyny*).

How?

Because King David definitely practiced polygyny.

> **2 Samuel 5:13**
>
> Meanwhile David took more concubines and wives from Jerusalem, after he came from Hebron; and more sons and daughters were born to David.

David is especially notable because of what the Bible says about him. Besides being the "*man after God's own heart*", it also says this:

> **1 Kings 15:5**
>
> because David did what was right in the sight of the LORD, and had not turned aside from **anything** that He commanded him all the days of his life, except in the case of Uriah the Hittite.

David had at least seven wives and ten concubines that we know of. However, according to 1 Kings, David also didn't sin by marrying multiple wives. We'll return to this point later in the article.

The "Husband Of One Wife"

The following verse is from a passage where Paul describes the required qualifications for elders

> **1 Timothy 3:2**
>
> **2** An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach,

The argument goes like this:

> The "husband of one wife" is *technically* only required for elders in this passage, but like the rest of the items on the list, it should be a goal for all Christians. Therefore, having more than one wife is wrong.

That's an interesting point, but it misses something: **what about having *less* than one wife?** (*Being unmarried*.) Seriously. Please take the above argument to its logical conclusion.

If this list is something that ***all*** Christians should aspire to, then by that logic, **wouldn't remaining unmarried be just as wrong as having multiple wives?**

Remember that Paul himself was unmarried, and he said that was an acceptable way for a man to live in 1 Corinthians 7.

> **1 Corinthians 7:7-9**

> **7** Yet I wish that all men were even as I myself am. However, each man has his own gift from God, one in this manner, and another in that. **8** But I say to the unmarried and to widows that it is good for them if they remain **even as I**. **9** But if they do not have self-control, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn *with passion.*

Paul certainly allows for a man to remain unmarried, even though it would disqualify him from being an overseer. Paul even goes so far as to imply that him being single is a gift. Jesus said something similar about singleness:

> **Matthew 19:10-12**
>
> **10** The disciples said to Him, "If the relationship of the man with his wife is like this, it is better not to marry."
>
> **11** But He said to them, "Not all men can accept this statement, but only those to whom it has been given.
>
> **12** "For there are eunuchs who were born that way from their mother's womb; and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men; and there are also eunuchs who made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. He who is able to accept this, let him accept it."
>
> (*Note: the Greek word for eunuch there – "εὐνοῦχος" {eunouchos} literally means "alone in bed", and can refer to someone who voluntarily abstains from marriage. Jesus wasn't talking about Christians mutilating themselves*.)

So while someone might use 1 Timothy 3:2 to say a man with multiple wives can't become an elder, it can't be used to say that having multiple wives is wrong. It also can't be used to say that "the husband of one wife" is the ideal for all Christians because God called some men to not have wives at all.

This is also reinforced by the requirement "able to teach".

Not all Christians can, and this is by God's design.

> **1 Corinthians 12:27-31**
>
> **27** Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it. **28** And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, *various* kinds of tongues. **29** All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they? All are not teachers, are they? All are not *workers of* miracles, are they? **30** All do not have gifts of

> healings, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they? **31** But earnestly desire the greater gifts. And I show you a still more excellent way.

The fact that teaching is a gift is also mentioned in Romans 12:6-8 and Ephesians 4:7-12. Again, not all men are given the same gifts, and teaching is explicitly stated to be a gift. Some men aren't given that gift, meaning those men can't be elders.

- Not having the gift of teaching isn't a moral failure.
- Likewise, not getting married isn't a moral failure.

Thus, since there are not one, but *two* items on this list of requirements that aren't moral issues, you can't say that the entire list is a moral ideal because it isn't. To be sure, most of the list is about character and moral requirements because they are of supreme importance in leaders. However, "husband of one wife" is clearly ***not*** a moral requirement because it's 100% moral to have ***less*** than one wife.

Additionally, it's 100% moral to not be able to teach.

Now, some Christians take this list of qualifications for elders and see this as the highest ideal, and thus something that every Christian should strive for.

However, that's why we looked at "able to teach".

God Himself decided that not all Christians would be "able to teach". Thus, being "able to teach" literally *can't* be the ideal for all Christians because God made it impossible. Likewise, the "husband of one wife" is explicitly stated to *not* be the ideal for all Christians because God gifted some men with singleness.

It's a bad idea to take qualifications that aren't moral in nature and say that they are moral qualifications.

This is especially true because we actually know why the elder must be the "husband of one wife:

> **1 Timothy 3:2-7**
>
> **2** An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, **3** not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of

> money. **4** *He must be* one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity **5** (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?), **6** *and* not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil. **7** And he must have a good reputation with those outside *the church,* so that he will not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

Notice verses 4 and 5. In order to morally have children, a man needs a wife. Those children and their behavior are a good indicator of whether he will be a good leader because if a man can't raise children well, he likely won't be a good leader.

I don't think I need to explain why "able to teach" is important for a church leader because it should be obvious.

Again, these two requirements aren't moral in nature.

So while you can certainly legitimately say that a man with multiple wives can't be an elder, you can't use this verse to say that it's immoral or that exactly one wife is some kind of ideal for a Christian.

(*As for the reason, it could simply be an issue of time. A man with more than one wife who treats all his wives as the Bible commands wouldn't have a lot of free time for being a church leader.*)

Addendum: Is It An Idiom?

In 1 Timothy 3:2, we have the phrase "husband of one wife". Just 2 chapters later, we have the gender-reversed version of that phrase:

> **1 Timothy 5:9**
>
> **9** Let a widow be enrolled if she is not less than sixty years of age, having been the wife of one husband,

Now, neither Christianity nor Judaism has ever allowed a woman to have more than one husband. Ever. Thus, some take this to be an idiom that means "to be sexually moral". Part of the reason for this is that there's no requirement for sexual morality on the list of requirements for elders in 1 Timothy 3. That seems conspicuous by its absence, unless "husband of one wife" is an idiom.

That doesn't necessarily change the plain meaning of 1 Timothy 3:2, but it's additional context worth mentioning for completeness.

Moving on.

Each Husband Should Have His Own Wife, Each Wife Her "Own" Husband

The verse below is one of the most commonly cited to argue that polygyny is wrong.

> **1 Corinthians 7:2**
>
> **2** But because of immoralities, each man is to have his own wife, and each woman is to have her **own** husband.

The argument from this verse goes like this:

> The wife is said to have her "own" husband. Therefore, since the husband is "her own", he must not be anyone else's husband, thus prohibiting polygyny.

This is 100% true, but only in English. There's more than one word used for "own" here in Greek, but you can't tell by reading most English translations. Please feel free to double-check the following by looking at 1 Corinthians 7:2 in an interlinear Bible.

There are two **different** Greek words in this verse that are translated "own"; one for the husband, and a *different* one for the wife.

Spoiler: the word "own" for the husband *requires* exclusivity, while the word "own" for the wife allows for non-exclusivity. (*It doesn't require non-exclusivity, which is good because of monogamous marriages, but it certainly allows for non-exclusivity.*)

We'll look at those words now.

The word used for the husband is "ἑαυτοῦ" (heautou).

> **1438** *heautoú* (reflexive pronoun of the 3rd person) – 1438 /*heautoú* ("**himself**, herself, itself," etc.) is the *3rd person*

reflexive (singular, plural) form which also functions as the reflexive for 1st and 2nd person

I highlighted "himself" because it's the masculine singular reflexive pronoun in English. Likewise, in 1 Corinthians 7:2, it's in the masculine singular form. English has exactly one masculine singular reflexive pronoun: "himself". Notice that "himself" is listed as a definition above.

1 Corinthians 7:2 literally reads "the of himself wife", which would read: "the wife of himself" with English word order. That's terrible English but good Greek. Usually it's (*accurately*) translated "his own" to indicate possession because of the grammar (*Greek genitive for those who've read my Greek 101 article or know Greek*).

In most cases, "his own" is a *perfect* translation. However, in this case it's less ideal because the word translated "own" later in the verse is a *different* word. Translating them both as "own" gives the mistaken impression that they are the same word, yet they aren't (*more on that in a minute.*) So, how do we indicate the difference while keeping the emphatic sense of possession? As an admittedly imperfect solution, and I'll have another lower down, I suggest translating "of himself" as "to himself" because it retains the emphatic sense of possession in Greek while being readable in English.

So what would that look like in this verse?

> **1 Corinthians 7:2**
>
> **2** But because of immoralities, each man is to have ~~his own~~ the wife to himself, and each woman is to have her own husband.
>
> (*Note: I also added back an untranslated Greek definite article {"the" in English} which is often omitted for readability's sake.*)

Not a lot different, but definitely different. Notice that the husband's "having" of the wife is very exclusive; "to himself" is very exclusive, excluding all other men from "having" that man's wife. That is like the Greek construction, though expressed in a slightly different way (*"to" versus "of"*).

However, the word that's translated "own" for the woman is a **completely different word**. It's the word "ἴδιος" (idios). Oddly, the lexical definition is slightly at odds with the Biblical usage. So in lieu of quoting the lexicon, we're going to look at a few other places that it's used.

> **Matthew 9:1**
>
> **1** Getting into a boat, Jesus crossed over the sea and came to His **own** (idios) city.

> **John 4:44**
>
> **44** For Jesus Himself testified that a prophet has no honor in his **own** (idios) country.

> **Acts 2:6**
>
> **6** And when this sound occurred, the crowd came together, and were bewildered because each one of them was hearing them speak in his **own** (idios) language.

Notice: all of these instances allow for non-exclusive ownership.

I repeat: **non**-exclusive.

These are just a few examples of many places with this usage. It's also used of multiple people speaking "on their own", again indicating shared/non-exclusive ownership. It doesn't *always* mean non-exclusive ownership, but it quite often *does* indicate non-exclusive ownership.

That's important.

Now, this non-exclusive component is often ignored or downright contradicted to twist this passage. That's why I quoted the verses so you could see for yourself. There's a popular article from "Never Thirsty" which does this twisting in a typical fashion to 'prove' this verse doesn't allow for polygamy (*polygyny*). Ironically, I can simply quote the article to refute that same article: (*yes, the case is that weak*)

> The Greek word *idios* is a possessive pronoun and also has the sense of ownership. Ceslas Spicq and James D. Ernest state,
>
> > *Idios, idia* are similarly used for persons in a way synonymous with a **simple possessive**, notably with regard to members of a family: one's own brother and sister, mother, father (John 5:18; Josephus, *Ant.* 1.230; 9.99), spouse, son or daughter.[1]
>
> Some Greek lexicons state that *idios* means "being the exclusive property

> of someone—'one's own, one's property." However, **at the time 1 Corinthians was written, *idios* was weakened**.
>
> > Whether used as adjective, noun, or adverb, this term means "peculiar to, particular, private," but its sense is weakened in the Koine, where it is usually equivalent to a possessive.

In English, simple possessives are "his", "hers", and "its". **Ironically, I completely agree that Idios indicates simple possession – like his/her/its does in English – and simple possession definitely allows for nonexclusive possession.** So let's look at the passage with idios translated as a simple possessive, which I agree is how it should be translated. (*Irony*)

> **1 Corinthians 7:2**
>
> **2** But because of immoralities, each man is to have ~~his own~~ the wife to himself, and each woman is to have her husband.

The husband is supposed to have the wife exclusively "to himself", but the wife merely has "her husband" (*which can definitely have a non-exclusive sense*). You could also translate it "*…each man is to have his own wife, and each woman is to have her husband*", but I like that less because it obscures some of the elements we've just covered. Basically, it doesn't show the force of the contrast in Greek.

Properly understood, this verse seems to specifically ***allow*** for polygamy.

That "Never Thirsty" article goes on to list a verse where "idios" refers to Jesus' "own (*idios*) disciples" (*Mark 4:34*), and then says that based on that one verse, "idios" must *always* be totally, 100% exclusive.

No joke.

This next quote from that "Never Thirsty" article is an example of **truly terrible** ~~exegesis~~ eisegesis: (*reading your own thoughts into the text:*)

> Jesus' disciples were His disciples. They were not the disciples of another teacher. Therefore, the husband is the exclusive property of the wife. No other woman owns him.

…except they ignored the definition they repeatedly listed previously in the article (*simple possession, which allows for non-exclusive possession*), and

didn't mention all the places where it's used non-exclusively. It's bad when you can refute an article simply by quoting that same article, translating as they suggest you translate, and looking at a few Bible verses they didn't mention.

Even the "Never Thirsty" article agrees that "her husband" with simple possession is the right understanding. (*And it can be non-exclusive possession as other verses indicate*) We've also seen that the husband gets "the wife to himself". That allows for polygamy (*polygyny*) quite clearly.

Paul didn't need to write it this way. He could've used the same words for wives as he did for husbands and thus closed the door on polygamy (*polygyny*) forever.

He didn't.

Under God's inspiration, he chose words that specifically *allow* for polygamy (*polygyny*).

If "all scripture is God breathed", then that includes the words used here. Again, God could've closed the door to polygamy (*polygyny*) easily by also using a reflexive pronoun for the wife (*"to herself"*).

But He didn't.

Instead, the words God chose ***specifically allowed*** for polygyny in this passage.

If God doesn't do things by accident, then wouldn't it be safe to assume He did that on purpose?

It's worth considering.

Jesus On Divorce, Remarriage, And Adultery

I'll give two answers to this verse: a short one and a long one.

> **Matthew 19:9**
>
> "And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, ***and*** marries another woman commits adultery."

The short answer is that Jesus says there are two conditions to meet for

adultery here: divorce **and** remarriage. If you don't meet both conditions (*divorce and remarriage*), then you aren't an adulterer. If you just get divorced, it's not adultery (*pretty much everyone agrees on this*). So if you just get married again (*without a divorce*), it's also not a sin.

However, I realize this answer won't satisfy many people.

I wrote another article on this topic that explains the full and complete historical and cultural context which most people *completely miss*. If you want to fully understand what Jesus was saying here, I recommend you read my article on What Jesus Meant by Adultery in Matthew Chapters 5 & 19. (*Fair warning, it's ~4700 words long*)

Once you've read that, you'll understand why Jesus' words here ***can't*** refer to polygamy (*polygyny*). It's actually impossible.

(*Hint: remember how adultery requires another man's wife to be involved? In the Gospel's divorce passages, the woman he (re)marries is still married to another man because of an improper divorce, which is clear in Greek but obscured in English.*)

"*Okay, Maybe Polygyny Was Fine In The Old Testament, But God Has Changed That For The Church*."

That's a truth claim, and the Bible is clear what we should do with those:

> **1 Thessalonians 5:21**
>
> But examine everything carefully; hold fast to what is good;

The question then becomes: where's the scriptural basis for that? Where's the verse that says it was acceptable then but isn't acceptable now? God said we shouldn't "add to the words of the book". To make a unilateral statement like "*God permitted XYZ then, but He doesn't now*" is a **very** bold claim unless you have chapter and verse to back it up.

I have never seen that passage.

The verses above are the only places you can go to say that God doesn't allow polygamy (*polygyny*). I hope you see the arguments are obtuse at best and downright silly at worst. Put simply, there is simply no Biblical evidence that God's opinion on polygyny has changed.

"Okay, Polygamy (Polygyny) Might Be Allowed, But It's Not God's Ideal."

Again, this is a true claim, so we should test it. The trouble is, we've run out of verses to argue that polygyny isn't acceptable to God, and none seem to indicate that it's not His ideal either.

There aren't any more verses to go to.

However, there are verses that argue that polygyny is acceptable to God. Here's just a short sampling of the content of those verses:

- In three places in the Bible, God Himself **commanded** polygyny
- God rewarded a woman for helping her husband get an additional wife
- God describes himself as a polygynist, married to two women
- Jesus symbolically describes Himself as a polygynist (*in a parable*) who marries five women
- King David was a polygynist, but the Bible says that he was blameless "*except in the matter of Uriah the Hittite*"
    - God said He would have given King David additional wives if he had wanted them
- God says the "sexually immoral" will end up in the lake of fire, but many polygamous men are in the Hebrews 11 "faith hall of fame".

We'll get to the evidence that God approves of polygyny now, and I think you'll find it more compelling than the arguments against it.

Biblical Arguments *For* Polygamy (*Polygyny*)

There are many arguments used to support the idea that polygamy (*polygyny*) is still 100% acceptable in God's eyes. We'll look at each in turn.

King Joash Was Righteous With Two Wives

This argument also applies to other kings, like King David, but this verse is clearer because it's so concise.

> **2 Chronicles 24:1-5**
>
> **1** Joash *was* seven years old when he became king, and he reigned forty years in Jerusalem. His mother's name *was* Zibiah of Beersheba. **2** Joash did *what was* right in the sight of the Lord all the days of **Jehoiada** the priest. **3** And **Jehoiada** took two wives for him, and he had sons and daughters.
>
> **4** Now it happened after this *that* Joash set his heart on repairing the house of the Lord. **5** Then he gathered the priests and the Levites, and said to them, "Go out to the cities of Judah, and gather from all Israel money to repair the house of your God from year to year, and see that you do it quickly."

There is relatively little to comment on in this verse. Joash is clearly stated to have done "what was right in the sight of the Lord" as long as Jehoiada was alive, and Jehoiada was the one who got Joash's two wives for him.

Thus:

- If Joash did "what was right in the sight of the Lord" all the days of Jehoiada the priest
- And if Jehoiada the priest got his two wives for him
- Then Joash married two women while Jehoiada was alive
- Thus, Joash marrying two women was "right in the sight of the Lord" because he married them while Jehoiada was alive, and Joash "did what was right in the sight of the Lord all the days of Jehoiada the priest".

That's a very strong argument.

In fact, it's the second strongest argument in scripture for the position that polygamy (*polygyny*) is "right in the sight of the Lord". (*We'll look at the strongest passage next.*) I literally do not see how this verse can be avoided by those who say that polygamy (*polygyny*) is wrong.

(*There is one counter-argument based on a misunderstanding of Hebrew grammar. That argument says it should read: "Joash did what was right in the sight of the Lord all the days of Jehoiada the priest. 3 [but] Jehoiada took two wives for him". However, even though "and" can normally also mean "but" in biblical Hebrew, that's not the case with the construction in this verse. If you see someone making that argument, that person likely doesn't know Hebrew grammar.*)

This seems like a clear statement that polygamy (*polygyny*) is "right in the

sight of the Lord".

Anyone who wishes to say that God does not allow polygamy (*polygyny*) ***must* deal with this verse, yet most ignore it completely.**

Of those who do address it, I've never heard a convincing explanation. It might exist, but I haven't heard it yet. (*Please drop it in the comments if you've heard one.*) That makes this passage the second strongest one in the entire Bible to support the idea that polygamy (*polygyny*) is "right in the sight of the Lord".

We'll look at the strongest passage next.

God Commanded Polygamy/Polygyny – Round #1

Under two specific circumstances, polygamy (*polygyny*) was not only *allowed* by the Mosaic Law, it was also ***required/commanded by God***. We'll look at the first instance first:

> **Exodus 22:16-17**
>
> **16** "If a **man** seduces a virgin who is not engaged, and lies with her, he must pay a bride-price **for her *to be* his wife**. **17** "If her father absolutely refuses to give her to him, he shall pay money equal to the bride-price for virgins.

Question: **What if the seducing man was already married?** Was he less required to marry the girl he had seduced?

There's no exception in the text to indicate that he was less require to marry her. God was incredibly clear when there were exceptions to a law. Just look at the preceding verses in the chapter to see how God accounted for various nuances. For that matter, look throughout the Mosaic Law and you'll see that God often makes a law and then adds a few exceptions to it.

He didn't here.

Thus, if a married man seduced a virgin, he was still required to marry her.

That's even clearer if you look at the Hebrew word translated "man". It's the word "אִישׁ" (*ish, pronounced "eesh"*), and it's used 376 times in the Old

Testament. But get this: almost 20% of the time it's used (*nearly 1-in-5*), it's translated "husband".

No joke.

For example:

> **Genesis 3:16**
>
> To the woman He said, "I will greatly multiply Your pain in childbirth, In pain you will bring forth children; Yet your desire will be for your husband (ish), And he will rule over you.

The word simply means "man".

It means *any* man, *whether he was married or not*.

The man was required to marry the girl he had seduced, regardless of whether he was already married or not. Again, God commanded polygyny here because he used a word that means any man — even a married one — and added no exception clause for married men. God could've used the word "אָדָם" (adam) which simply means "man", without the nuance of also meaning husband, but He didn't.

He chose a word that means any man, including a *married* man.

Thus, it would be entirely appropriate to understand the verse in the following way:

> **Exodus 22:16** (*modified*)
>
> **16**"If a **married man** seduces a virgin who is not engaged, and lies with her, he must pay a bride-price **for her *to be* his wife**.

You don't need to like this, but it seems clear.

Further, God does not tempt us to sin:

> **James 1:13**
>
> Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone.

If God doesn't tempt anyone to sin, then He clearly also doesn't command us

to sin.

God commanded polygyny here.

Therefore, polygyny by itself cannot be a sin.

Thus, if God issued a standing, ongoing command to engage in polygamy under certain circumstances, then polygyny simply can't be wrong because God doesn't command us to sin. This isn't the only place where God commanded it either. There's one more standing command, plus God commanded Hosea to take two wives as well, but we'll get to that after a common objection that people raise.

"But God Commanded Slavery, Divorce, And Genocide, Which Are Wrong, So Why Can't Polygyny Also Be Wrong?"

We'll look at each in turn.

Biblical "Slavery"

God never, not even once, commanded slavery. Not once.

You might respond: "But He allowed slavery". To that I'll respond: "*You keep on using that word. I do not think it means what you think it means… in a biblical context.*"

For starters, consider this:

> **2 Chronicles 12:8** (*God letting someone defeat Israel to teach them a lesson*)
>
> But they will become his slaves so that they may know the difference between My slavery and the slavery of the kingdoms of the countries."

The "slavery" that God allowed isn't *anything* like what we would consider slavery today. For starters, kidnapping (*necessary for forced slavery*) was punishable by death, so no one could be forced into it.

> **Exodus 21:16**
>
> "He who kidnaps a man, whether he sells him or he is found in his

possession, shall surely be put to death.

This applies to both the kidnapper and to anyone the kidnapper sold the kidnapped person to.

Thus, God's "slavery" was 100% voluntary on the part of the "slave", and it was of a limited duration; 7 years or until the Year of Jubilee. (*Whichever was sooner.*) Further, when he went free, he was given a bunch of "stuff" to help him start his life again.

> **Leviticus 25:39-42** 'If a countryman of yours becomes so poor with regard to you that **he sells himself to you**, you shall not subject him to a slave's service. **40** 'He shall be with you as a hired man, as if he were a sojourner; he shall serve with you until the year of jubilee. **41** 'He shall then go out from you, he and his sons with him, and shall go back to his family, that he may return to the property of his forefathers. **42**' For they are My servants whom I brought out from the land of Egypt; they are not to be sold *in* a slave sale.
>
> **Deuteronomy 15:1-13**
>
> **12** "If your kinsman, a Hebrew man or woman, is sold to you, then he shall serve you six years, but in the seventh year you shall set him free. **13**"When you set him free, you shall not send him away empty-handed. **14** "You shall furnish him **liberally** from your flock and from your threshing floor and from your wine vat; you shall give to him as the LORD your God has blessed you.

Further, it was forbidden to return a runaway "slave" to his master, and when the 7 years were up:

> **Deuteronomy 23:15** "You shall not hand over to his master a slave who has escaped from his master to you.

So no, God did not command "slavery" the way modern man thinks of it. Further, God didn't command it at all. Ever. Not even once. He allowed it, but never once commanded it.

By contrast, He did command polygyny under certain conditions.

Biblical Divorce

God never, not even *once*, commanded divorce. Now, your first thought will probably be the Israelites "putting away" (*divorcing*) their wives when they came back from exile in Ezra chapter 10. However, please read that passage again because it was **not** God's idea. In fact, they didn't even consult with God on it!

Seriously.

Please go read Ezra chapter 10 again. It was the idea of "*Shecaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam*", not God. They didn't even consult the prophets first! The idea was proposed, they swore an oath to do it, and then they did it. Now, remember Joshua 9 where Israel got in trouble for doing the exact same thing. (*swearing an oath without consulting God*)

The other passages in the Bible that talk about it aren't commands, and in fact discourage it. I have an article on divorce where I go through all of them, if you are interested.

So no, God didn't command divorce even though He allowed it. By contrast, He did command polygyny.

Genocide

Now, in contrast to slavery and divorce, God did actually– Oh wait, no He didn't… sort of. The typical example of this is the conquest of Caanan, but it's never mentioned in its proper judicial context:

> **Leviticus 18:21-25**
>
> **21** 'You shall not give any of your offspring to offer them to Molech, nor shall you profane the name of your God; I am the LORD.
>
> 22 'You shall not lie with a male as one lies with a female; it is an abomination.
>
> 23 'Also you shall not have intercourse with any animal to be defiled with it, nor shall any woman stand before an animal to mate with it; it is a perversion.
>
> **24** 'Do not defile yourselves by any of these things; for by **all these the nations** which I am casting out before you have become defiled.
>
> **25** 'For the land has become defiled, therefore I have brought its punishment upon it, so the land has spewed out its inhabitants.

That first item of "*You shall not give any of your offspring to offer them to Molech*", which refers to child sacrifice. They would take a living infant and put him or her on a fire as an offering to Molech, burning the infant alive.

No joke.

There is a difference between God using man to execute His righteous judgement and man killing because of hate.

They are ***not*** the same.

Not even close.

But more importantly for this article, there was no standing command like there is for polygyny.

There is a standing command (*actually two, we'll get to the second one next*) in the law where a man was required/commanded to have more than one wife. By contrast, God spoke through His prophets to execute judgement *on specific people at specific times*. There was no standing command for this. By contrast, there was a standing command for polygyny.

Actually, there were two standing commands for polygyny, and we'll look at the second one now.

God Commanded Polygyny – Round #2

Here is the other circumstance where polygyny was ***required*** by the Mosaic Law.

> **Deuteronomy 25:5-6**
>
> 5 "When brothers live together and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the deceased shall not be married outside the family to a strange man. Her husband's brother shall go in to her and take her to himself as wife and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her.
>
> 6 "It shall be that the firstborn whom she bears shall assume the name of his dead brother, so that his name will not be blotted out from Israel.

This is called "levirate marriage".

At first glance, you might not see the command for polygamy (*polygyny*). Consider: what if all the widow's brothers were already married? That's the essence, and you'll see that this applied when the brother was already married based on the following verses. Also, notice the use of the Hebrew word "אִישׁ" (*ish*) in the following passage, which is the word we just looked at that's often translated "husband" and means any man, including a married one.

> **Deuteronomy 25:7-10**
>
> 7 "But if the **man (ish)** does not desire to take his brother's wife, then his brother's wife shall go up to the gate to the elders and say, 'My husband's brother refuses to establish a name for his brother in Israel; he is not willing to perform the duty of a husband's brother to me.'
>
> 8 "Then the elders of his city shall summon him and speak to him. And if he persists and says, 'I do not desire to take her,'
>
> 9 then his brother's wife shall come to him in the sight of the elders, and pull his sandal off his foot and spit in his face; and she shall declare, 'Thus it is done to the **man (ish)** who does not build up his brother's **house**.'
>
> 10 "In Israel his name shall be called, 'The **house** of him whose sandal is removed.'

A man could refuse to marry his brother's widow, but God was clearly not very happy with him if he did. (*The widow was supposed to spit in his face in public; that's shaming, which would be devastating in that culture.*) **Notice, there is *no exception* if the husband's brother already had a wife.** The Jews were a polygamous (*polygynous*) society ever since their inception with Abraham.

Some have said that because the husband's brother could opt out, he was expected to refuse if he was already married. To put it bluntly, that's silly. For 500+ years before the Law and nearly a thousand years after Christ, polygyny was a normal, common, and accepted practice among God's people.

Not once did God correct them for it.

That alone should tell you something.

And in this case, the ***assumption*** is that the husband's brother was ***already*** married.

The word translated "house" is the Hebrew word "בַּיִת" (bayith). The literal definition is "house", but it's more typically used to indicate a household; i.e. a house and everyone who lives there. Several of the possible meanings are:

> - of house as containing a family, hence in phrase of slaves belonging to household
> - ordinary sense, those belonging to the same household
> - family of descendants, descendants as organized body
> - house, including household affairs, persons, property, etc.

It's used this way all over the Old Testament. For example:

> **Genesis 7:1**
>
> 1 Then the LORD said to Noah, "Enter the ark, you and all your household, (*bayith*) for you alone I have seen to be righteous before Me in this time.

> **Genesis 18:19**
>
> "For I have chosen him, so that he may command his children and his household (bayith) **after him** to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice, so that the LORD may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him.".

> **Deuteronomy 26:11**
>
> 11 and you and the Levite and the alien who is among you shall rejoice in all the good which the LORD your God has given you and your household (bayith).

Those are just some of the many, many examples where bayith means "household", as in the people and/or descendants of those who live in a house. I would like to point out, in order for a man to have his house/household called "*The house(hold) of him whose sandal is removed*", he must first ***have*** a house(*hold*). **So it definitely means a house, as in a household with people/descendants**.

Some people say that the brother must be single because of the phrase highlighted below.

> **Deuteronomy 25:5-7**
>
> 5 "When brothers **live together** and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the deceased shall not be married outside the family to a strange man. Her husband's brother shall go in to her and take her to himself as wife and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her.

The argument is that since they "live together", the husband's brother isn't married. However, the book of Ruth answers this objection quite handily. You can read this article on levirate marriage for some context. As you read below, remember that they called the relative who would marry a widow a "kinsman-redeemer".

> **Ruth 2:20**
>
> **20** Then Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, "May he be blessed by the LORD, who has not withdrawn his kindness from the living or the dead." Naomi continued, "The man is a close relative. He is one of our kinsman-redeemers."

> **Ruth 3:9**
>
> **9** "Who are you?" he asked. "I am your servant Ruth," she replied. "Spread the corner of your garment over me, for you are a kinsman-redeemer."

However, if you read the book of Ruth, you'll see that Boaz wasn't living anywhere near Naomi, Ruth, or Ruth's (*deceased*) husband for at least ten years. So "together" doesn't necessarily mean "living together in the same house" or even the same town.

Therefore, we now have a second place where God commanded polygamy/polygyny.

That's notable because:

> **2 Corinthians 13:1**
>
> This *will be* the third *time* I am coming to you. "By the mouth of two or

three witnesses every word shall be established."

We have three scriptures that testify that God commanded polygamy/polygyny. Thus, if God doesn't command us to sin, then polygyny can't be wrong. And there's yet more evidence, including God telling the prophet Hosea to take a second wife. However, we need more context before we look at that.

We'll look at that context in the next section.

God Describes Himself As A Polygamist/Polygynist – Twice

It's true.

> **Jeremiah 3:6-9**
>
> **6** Then the LORD said to me in the days of Josiah the king, "Have you seen what faithless Israel did? She went up on every high hill and under every green tree, and she was a harlot there.
>
> **7** "I thought, 'After she has done all these things she will return to Me'; but she did not return, and her treacherous sister Judah saw it.
>
> **8** "And I saw that for all the **adulteries of faithless Israel**, I had sent her away and **given her a writ of divorce**, yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear; but she went and was a harlot also.
>
> **9** "Because of the lightness of her harlotry, she polluted the land and **committed adultery** with stones and trees.

And again:

> **Jeremiah 31:31-32**
>
> 31 "Behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel ***and*** with the house of Judah,
>
> 32 not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which **they** broke, although I was a **husband** to **them**," declares the LORD.

In these two passages, God describes Israel and Judah as being His wives – ***plural*** – and in Jeremiah chapter 3, He says they both committed adultery against Him. They couldn't have committed adultery against God if they weren't "married" to Him (*symbolically/metaphorically*). He calls Himself their husband and gave them a writ of divorce, so you know marriage is the metaphor here.

The argument here is that God obviously wouldn't do anything that was wrong, and wouldn't portray Himself doing something that was wrong either. If polygamy (*polygyny*) was wrong, God wouldn't have pictured Himself (*even symbolically/metaphorically*) as being married to two "wives" because then the picture is of God doing something that's wrong.

We are told to imitate God all over the Bible. If He had two wives (*symbolically/metaphorically*), why would it be wrong to imitate that?

That goes double because Jesus described Himself the same way. (*sort of*)

Jesus Describes Himself As A Polygamist/Polygynist

To be clear, I'm ***not*** saying that Jesus married, much less that He married more than one woman. Jesus didn't marry and the following is a ***parable***.

> **Matthew 25:1-12**
>
> **1** "Then the kingdom of heaven will be comparable to ten **virgins**, who took their lamps and went out to meet the **bridegroom**.
>
> **2** "Five of them were foolish, and five were prudent.
>
> **3** "For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them,
>
> **4** but the prudent took oil in flasks along with their lamps.
>
> **5** "Now while the bridegroom was delaying, they all got drowsy and began to sleep.
>
> **6** "But at midnight there was a shout, 'Behold, the **bridegroom**! Come out to meet him.'
>
> **7** "Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps.
>
> **8** "The foolish said to the prudent, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.'
>
> **9** "But the prudent answered, 'No, there will not be enough for us and you too; go instead to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.'

> **10** "And while they were going away to make the purchase, the **bridegroom** came, and those who were ready went in with him to **the wedding feast**; and the door was shut.
>
> **11** "Later the other virgins also came, saying, 'Lord, lord, open up for us.'
>
> **12** "But he answered, 'Truly I say to you, I do not know you.'
>
> (*Note: the NLT and a few obscure translations have "bridesmaid" instead of "virgin". However, "bridesmaid" is a blatant, heinous, and intentional mistranslation of the Greek word "παρθένος" (parthenos), which means "virgin".*)

The ten virgins here are clearly betrothed to the bridegroom, and the bridegroom is clearly Jesus.

Notice that in the parable, Jesus takes the virgins (*brides*) into "the marriage feast", so a wedding is definitely in view. In this parable, Jesus described Himself as marrying five women (*the virgins/brides*).

The customs of 1st century Jewish weddings confirm this:

> - According to Jewish wedding customs at the time of Jesus' earthly ministry, the bridegroom came at a day and hour that his bride did not know. As he came, the friend of the bridegroom went before him and shouted, "Behold, the bridegroom comes."
> - This shout would be accompanied by the blowing of a shofar—a trumpet made from a ram's horn. As the shout was heard, **the bridegroom would get his bride** and take her back to his father's house, where the ceremony and celebration would take place.
> - These customs sound a lot like Jesus' description of His second coming from the parable of the ten virgins (Matt. 25:1-13).
>
> (*Source: The Jewish Wedding System and the Bride of Christ*)

The obvious and clear meaning of the parable is indeed the obvious and clear meaning of the parable: Jesus was telling a parable about Him marrying multiple women.

Now, some say that the virgins here were bridesmaids, not brides.

We'll get to the data and historical context in a minute, but first, let's do a "common sense check". Remember that the virgins were waiting for the

groom. Remember also that – according to the quote above and other research I've done – "*the bridegroom came at a day and hour that his bride did not know*". Okay, so if the Bridesmaids were waiting with the bride, then here's a question: **how long would the bridesmaids need to wait with the bride for the groom?**

> The Jewish marriage ceremony had two parts that began with the betrothal… ...This period could last up to a year before the wedding and covenant.
>
> (Source.)

Up to a year?

Hmm.

Does it make sense to you that the supposed 'bridesmaids' would hang out at the bride's house **every day for up to a year?** Remember that just dashing to the store to get oil delayed them enough to miss the wedding. There's simply no way that ten bridesmaids would live with the bride for up to a year. That strains credulity. In fact, it breaks it completely. It wouldn't happen.

In fact, we know it wouldn't happen.

How?

Because there were no bridesmaids in 1st century Jewish weddings!

Seriously.

Do some research and see if you can find a *scholarly* source that says they existed. I mean more than tiny article stubs from wedding magazines/blogs. I'm talking about a *scholarly* and *reputable* source that confirms the existence of bridesmaids in 1st century Jewish weddings, or even before that. I haven't seen it and spent a long time looking.

(*Ironically, something close to groomsmen did exist in the 1st century. Their job was to help the groom prepare the wedding, see Matthew 9:15. However, since the bride had zero say in the wedding, she wouldn't even need bridesmaids for that.*)

Since bridesmaids didn't exist in the 1st century, we can be sure that the virgins in this parable are ***brides***; not bridesmaids.

Bridesmaids didn't exist back then, and even if they did, it requires a near total suspension of disbelief to think they would wait in the same house as the bride for up to a year. Therefore, this parable is about the bridegroom marrying ten virgin brides.

One man marrying multiple women is the very *definition* of polygyny.

That's how Jesus describes Himself here.

True it's in a parable – not an actual event because Jesus didn't marry – but parables are designed to make a point using a story. If a man marrying multiple women was wrong, why would Jesus set a bad example by picturing Himself as a polygamous (*polygynous*) man?

It makes no sense…

…unless polygamy (*polygyny*) isn't wrong.

Further, to remind you yet again, God actually *commanded* polygamy (*polygyny*) on more than one occasion. We'll look at the third example next.

God Commanded Polygyny – Round #3

God commands the prophet Hosea to marry a woman in chapter 1.

> **Hosea 1:2-3**
>
> **2** When the LORD first spoke through Hosea, the LORD said to Hosea, "Go, take to yourself a wife of **harlotry** and have children of harlotry; for the land commits flagrant harlotry, forsaking the LORD."
>
> **3** So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son.

Hosea marries Gomer at God's command. But then in chapter 3, God tells Hosea to marry another woman. (*Note: the chapter heading added to Hosea 3 in the NASB 95 is: "Hosea's Second Symbolic Marriage"*)

> **Hosea 3:1-2**
>
> 1 Then the LORD said to me, "Go ***again***, love a woman who is loved by her husband, yet an adulteress, even as the LORD loves the sons of Israel, though they turn to other gods and love raisin cakes."

> 2 So I bought her for myself for fifteen shekels of silver and a homer and a half of barley.

Hosea was commanded to love (*marry*) a woman, yet she would be an adulteress even though he (*Hosea*) loved her. Symbolically, this represented God's longing after Israel and Judah. As we've already seen, God describes Himself as a polygamist (*polygynist*) married to two unfaithful women (*Israel and Judah; God repeats this distinction in 1:6-7, saying He won't have compassion on Israel but will on Judah*).

Some have said that the second woman in chapter 3 is Gomer again, but that's simply not possible. We know the second woman was a slave because Hosea bought her. However, Gomer wasn't a slave, otherwise Hosea would've committed a sin.

> **Leviticus 19:20-22**
>
> 20 'Now if a man lies carnally with a woman who is a slave acquired for another man, but who has in no way been redeemed nor given her freedom, **there shall be punishment**; they shall not, however, be put to death, because she was not free.
>
> 21 'He shall bring his **guilt offering** to the LORD to the doorway of the tent of meeting, a ram for a guilt offering.
>
> 22 'The priest shall also make atonement for him with the ram of the guilt offering before the LORD for the **sin** which he has committed, and the sin which he has committed will be forgiven him.

Unless you believe that God ordered Hosea to commit a sin by "laying carnally" with another man's slave, Gomer was a free woman.

Therefore, we can be 100% certain that Gomer was a free woman, but the second (*unnamed*) wife was a slave that Hosea bought in order to marry her.

I've even heard people twist this passage by saying that Gomer sold herself into slavery and Hosea had to buy her back. However, that idea is found *nowhere* in the book of Hosea. Absolutely nowhere. It's completely made up. In fact, it's coming perilously close to adding to the Bible, which is a very bad idea as we've already seen.

(*Further, it's simply not possible for Gomer to sell herself into slavery, even if*

she wanted to. She simply wasn't able to in that culture. There's no provision for it in the Mosaic Law. Even if Gomer found herself indebted through being unable to pay a vow, Hosea could've simply annulled the vow when he found out about it; see Numbers chapter 30.)

The point remains:

In Hosea, God ***commanded* a man to marry multiple women.**

Commanded.

It's there in black and white.

Therefore, God directly commanded Hosea to engage in polygamy (*polygyny*).

James 1:13 tells us that God does not tempt people to sin. It follows logically that He doesn't command them to sin either. **So if God commanded Hosea to engage in polygyny – and He did – then polygyny itself must not be wrong.**

(*Unless God commands people to sin.*)

Some have said Hosea divorced Gomer before marrying the second wife. However, there is *no mention* of a divorce from Gomer. None. Any attempt to say that Hosea divorced Gomer before marrying the second wife is pure conjecture at best, and doing outright violence to God's prophetic picture at worst.

Remember that God described Himself as married to two faithless women (*Israel and Judah*). Likewise, He told Hosea to marry two faithless women to represent the faithlessness of Israel and Judah. If Hosea only married one woman, it would destroy the symbolic parallel, ruining the prophetic picture.

In order to be a true picture of God being "married" to two faithless women, Hosea must've been married to two faithless women.

Anything else isn't a true picture.

God Rewarded Leah For Giving Her Husband (*Jacob*) An Additional Wife

This goes beyond merely commanding someone to engage in polygyny, God rewarded someone for ***voluntarily*** assisting her husband in getting an additional wife.

> **Genesis 30:9 and 17-18**
>
> **9** When Leah saw that she had stopped bearing, she took her maid Zilpah and gave her to Jacob as a wife.
>
> **…**
>
> **17** God gave heed to Leah, and she conceived and bore Jacob a fifth son.
>
> **18** Then Leah said, "God has given me my wages because I gave my maid to my husband." So she named him Issachar.

God actually ***rewarded*** Leah for giving her maid to Jacob to be his wife.

Interesting no?

I don't believe there's a single bible verse in which God rewards a non-righteous act. It might be in there, but I haven't seen it. Therefore…

King David, Was A Polygamist (*Polygynist*) And Didn't Sin When Doing So

We've touched on this before, but it's worth looking at in more detail. We know that King David was a polyginst who had multiple wives.

> **2 Samuel 5:13**
>
> Meanwhile David took more concubines and wives from Jerusalem, after he came from Hebron; and more sons and daughters were born to David.

David is especially notable because of what the Bible says about him. Besides being the "*man after God's own heart*", it also says this:

> **1 Kings 15:5**
>
> because David did **what was right** in the sight of the LORD, and had not turned aside from **anything** that He commanded him all the days of his

life, **except** in the case of Uriah the Hittite.

David had at least seven wives and ten concubines that we know of. However – according to 1 Kings – David also didn't sin by marrying multiple wives. If David was sinning by marrying 17 women, then 1 Kings couldn't say that he hadn't turned aside from **anything** that God commanded.

Further, if marrying multiple women and taking them to bed is a sexual sin, then here's what God says about that.

> **Revelation 21:8**
>
> But for the cowardly, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and **sexually immoral persons**, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, their part *will be* in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

Unless you think that King David was committing a sexual sin which would land him in the lake of fire, polygamy (*polygyny*) isn't a sexual sin. It's 100% certain that he wasn't sinning that because of 1 Kings. 15:5. Therefore, polygamy (*polygyny*) isn't a sin.

(*We can be more sure because of the verse in Exodus that requires a man to have sex with all his wives.*)

God Would've Given David Additional Wives?

Speaking of King David, God said He would've given more wives to David if he had been dissatisfied with the ones he had. We're going to look at two translations, because all modern ones mistranslate a word that only the original KJV gets right.

(*Note: this is Nathan the prophet rebuking David after the incident with Bathsheba.*)

> **2 Samuel 12:7-8** (NASB)
>
> **7** Nathan then said to David, "You are the man! Thus says the LORD God of Israel, 'It is I who anointed you king over Israel and it is I who delivered you from the hand of Saul.
>
> **8** 'I also gave you your master's house and your master's wives **into your care**, and I gave you the house of Israel and Judah; and if that had

been too little, I would have added to you many more things like these!

The phrase "into your care" is a single word in Hebrew and every modern translation mistranslates it. That's probably because of what it would mean for polygamy (*polygyny*) if it was properly translated. Here's the KJV's correct translation, and then we'll look at the word itself.

> **2 Samuel 12:7-8** (*KJV – because it translates more literally than all others in this passage.*)
>
> And Nathan said to David, Thou *art* the man. Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul;
>
> And I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy **bosom**, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if *that had been* too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things.

The Hebrew word there translated "bosom" is "חֵיק" (*cheq, pronounced "khake"*). Here is the word's definition from multiple lexicons:

Strong's Concordance:

> Definition: bosom

Strong's Exhaustive Concordance

> bosom, bottom, lap, midst, within
>
> Or cheq {khake}; and chowq {khoke}; from an unused root, apparently meaning to inclose; the bosom (literally or figuratively) — bosom, bottom, lap, midst, within.

NAS Exhaustive Concordance:

> **Word Origin:** from an unused word
> **Definition:** bosom

Brown-Driver-Briggs:

> 1. of fold of garment, at breast

2. carry (נָשָׂא) in bosom,
3. bosom as part of body:
    a. a. external, lie in bosom, of **wife**
    b. b. internal, anger resteth

Here are some of the other places that it's used:

> **Micah 7:5**
>
> Do not trust in a friend; Do not put your confidence in a companion; Guard the doors of your mouth From her who lies in your bosom.

> **Genesis16:5** (*KJV*)
>
> And Sarai said unto Abram, My wrong *be* upon thee: I have given my maid into thy **bosom**; and when she saw that she had **conceived**, I was despised in her eyes: the LORD judge between me and thee.

> **Proverbs 5:20** (NASB 1995)
>
> For why should you, my son, be exhilarated with an adulteress And embrace the **bosom** of a foreigner?

> **Deuteronomy 28:54** (NKJV)
>
> The sensitive and very refined man among you will be hostile toward his brother, toward the wife of his bosom, and toward the rest of his children whom he leaves behind,

> **Deuteronomy 28:56** (NKJV)
>
> The tender and delicate woman among you, who would not venture to set the sole of her foot on the ground because of her delicateness and sensitivity, will refuse to the husband of her bosom, and to her son and her daughter,

> **1 Kings 1:1-4** (NASB 1995)
>
> **1** Now King David was old, advanced in age; and they covered him with clothes, but he could not keep warm.
>
> **2** So his servants said to him, "Let them seek a young virgin for my lord the king, and let her attend the king and become his nurse; and let her lie in your **bosom**, that my lord the king may keep warm."
>
> **3** So they searched for a beautiful girl throughout all the territory of Israel, and found Abishag the Shunammite, and brought her to the king.
>
> **4** The girl was very beautiful; and she became the king's nurse and served him, but the king did not cohabit with her.

Notice that 1 Kings 1:4 actually had to clarify that although she laid in his "bosom", she wasn't having sex with him. The assumption from the verses we've seen is that – in this context – bosom directly implies sex/marriage.

Now, looking back consider what this means:

> **2 Samuel 12:7-8** (NASB)
>
> **7** Nathan then said to David, "You are the man! Thus says the LORD God of Israel, 'It is I who anointed you king over Israel and it is I who delivered you from the hand of Saul.
>
> **8** 'I also gave you your master's house and your master's wives into your ~~care~~ **bosom**, and I gave you the house of Israel and Judah; and if that had been too little, I would have added to you **many more things like these**!

God said that if David had been dissatisfied with his palace, and **wives** – plural – and the kingship over Israel and Judah, then God would've given David "many more things like these". That would include wives.

God literally said that He had no problem giving David more wives.

Thus, how could having multiple wives be wrong?

The Hebrews 11 "Faith Hall Of Fame" Includes Many

Polygamous Men

Most of the heroes of the faith in the Old Testament had multiple wives. The Faith "hall of fame" in Hebrews 11 includes many polygamists (*polygynists*), including Abraham, Moses, Gideon, and King David. (*Who we've already talked about*)

How could these men be included in the Faith "hall of fame" in Hebrews 11 if having multiple wives was a serious sin?

"*But There Are No Healthy Polygynous Marriages In The Bible!*"

…and there are so many healthy monogamous marriages in the Bible?

Frankly, if you only look at the examples of marriage in the Bible, you might come away with the idea that marriage itself is very unhealthy because the Bible doesn't portray healthy ones; monogamous or polygynous. The only real exception is Mary and Joseph, and they don't really count for obvious reasons.

Doesn't Polygyny Degrade Women?

This is one of the most common objections and the short answer is no. Polygyny doesn't degrade women or even devalue them (*it actually increases their value for reasons that will become obvious in a yet-to-be-published follow-up article*). However, polygyny does fundamentally change the relationship between men and women in a very important way. I'm currently working on an article that explains these changes, and will update this article when it's published.

Now, the immediate reaction of many women is something like:

> "*Why would he want a second wife?! Am I not good enough for him?*"

And they feel hurt. For those women, I have an analogy that might help. I will admit that the following is an absolutely ***terrible*** analogy — for multiple reasons — but it's the best one I have.

Consider some parents who have one child and they like having that one child so much that they want another child. There isn't anything wrong with the

first child that makes them want another one, they simply want another one. Perhaps the first child even makes them want another one because the first child is such a delight. Again, *it's a bad analogy for several reasons* (*women aren't children for starters*), but I hope it gets the point across.

Polygyny is (*sort of*) like this for men.

Ladies, it's not like something is necessarily wrong with you or that you "aren't enough". A husband wanting multiple wives is much like a mother wanting multiple children. Parents don't want more children because there's something wrong with their current children. (*Often it's the reverse and they like their children so much that they want more of them.*) Likewise, a man doesn't necessarily want another wife because there's something wrong with his current wife.

Polygyny isn't an attack on a woman's value any more than a mother wanting a second child is an attack on the child's value. (*And again, it's a bad analogy, but it's the best I have.*)

Addendum 1: some history

Martin Luther said this:

> "I confess that I cannot forbid a person to marry several wives, for it does not contradict the Scripture. If a man wishes to marry more than one wife he should be asked whether he is satisfied in his conscience that he may do so in accordance with the Word of God. In such a case the civil authority has nothing to do in the matter."
>
> (*Letter to Chancellor Gregory Bruck, January 13, 1524*)

It should be noted that Luther wasn't polygyny's biggest fan though, and in other places he argued that Christian men shouldn't take multiple wives except under certain circumstances. Ironically, what he spoke of isn't far off from what Pope Gregory II said in a decretal in 726 AD:

> "When a man has a sick wife who cannot discharge the marital function, he may take a second one, provided he looks after the first one."

The Catholic Church then officially denounced polygamy in the Council of Trent.

Addendum 2: A common question on the topic

The question goes like this: "*So… if I can have two wives and must have sex with both of them, can I have sex with both of them at the same time?*" (*a polygynous threesome.*)

This question often comes up when polygamy is discussed and there is an answer. However, it's too long to get into here. I'm planning to write an addendum to this article which tackles the topic in depth. Until then, the only guidance I can give is to suggest that you read my article: The Bible on Gay and Lesbian (Homosexual) Sex. It's relevant for obvious reasons, and the "P.S." at the end might give you a clue to what I think the Bible says.

Addendum 3: Does a husband need his wife's permission to take another wife?

In short, no; a husband does not need his wife's permission to take an additional wife… but. (*read addendum 4 for the "but"*)

Many people will think of Sarah "giving" her slave Hagar to Abraham as evidence that a man need his wife's permission. However, that's not why Sarah "gave" Hagar to Abraham. Marriage in the Bible is transactional, with the bride being "given" to the groom, almost always in exchange for a "bride price"; aka money. Sarah owned Hagar (*since Hagar was Sarah's slave*), so Sarah was the one who had to "give" Hagar in marriage to Abraham.

For more information on how Biblical marriage is supposed to be contracted, please see my article: What is Betrothal in the Bible? Is it the Same as Modern Engagement? The article also covers the issue of Sarah and Hagar in more depth than the short summary above.

Addendum 4: "*So I can have a second wife?*"

Maybe, but there is a potential issue with vows. If a man has promised not to, then according to Numbers 30:

> **Numbers 30:2**

> **2** If a man makes a vow to Yahweh or swears an oath to bind himself with a binding obligation, he shall not violate his word; he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth.

I have yet to hear a wedding service where the vows didn't include a vow of monogamy. Thus **if a man has made such a vow, he can't take a second wife.** Now, two people in a contract could change the terms of the contract, so if the wife was okay with it perhaps he could. That's a sticky situation though, and there isn't time to cover it fully.

Suffice to say that if you're already married and your wife isn't on board, Numbers chapter 30 almost certainly prevents you from taking another wife because of your vow.

(*Note: in most modern cultures, taking an additional wife probably isn't wise if your first wife isn't on board because she has legal recourse that could make your life hell. Further, there's also the issue of legality; it's illegal in much of the world today.*)

Conclusion

There is only one verse that can reasonably be used to argue that men can't have multiple wives (*1 Tim 3:2, the "husband of one wife"*). However, this verse only applies to elders, not the rest of Christians. Further, saying "husband of one wife" is God's ideal discounts men who are called to be single. Additionally, an understanding of Greek makes it nearly impossible that it's referring to polygyny because it's an idiom.

The other verses simply don't support a "monogamy-only" position at all.

On the other hand, God commanded polygyny several times. This includes a direct command to a prophet and two standing situations where polygyny was commanded by God in the Mosaic Law. Further, God pictures Himself as a polygynist married to two unfaithful wives (*Israel and Judah*), and Jesus likewise pictures Himself as marrying 5 women in a parable. (*Though obviously He didn't marry and it was just a parable.*)

Further, God rewarded Leah for helping her husband get an additional wife, and God said he would've given David more wives if he had wanted them. Additionally, God explicitly stated that King David hadn't turned aside from the Lord except in the matter of Uriah the Hittite… even though David was a

polygynist. There's also the fact that many of the members of the "Faith Hall of Fame" had multiple wives.

The evidence that God allows polygyny is absolutely overwhelming…

…but it must be done as God commanded it to be done.

The Bible gives many instructions to husbands that ***still must be followed*** with two or more wives, just as they must be followed with only one wife. Adding wives doesn't eliminate a husband's God-given requirements on how he treats his wife/wives. Further, given God's commands in the NT, it would be nearly impossible for a Christian man to have more than two wives – perhaps three at *the absolute maximum* – and obey the New Testament's commands about how wives are to be treated.

Further, **unless your income is about double the median income where you live, don't even *consider* getting a second wife.**

We'll look at these things in a follow up article (*that I'm still writing*), plus look at how allowing polygyny causes some very significant changes in a society.

Marriage Series Index:

- How Crucial are Women to a Biblical Household? Very! (*This article was written later, but serves as an excellent, balanced intro to gender roles in marriage. I highly recommend reading this article before the others.*)

1. How Getting Marriage 'Wrong' Destroyed Every Great Civilization in World History
2. Gender Differences and the Biology of leadership
3. The "Why" Behind God Telling Wives to Submit to their Husbands in Marriage
    - Does 1 Corinthians 11 Require Women To Wear "Head Coverings"
4. The Bible on Authority & Submission in Marriage
5. Does God View Women as the (*Social/Political*) Equals of Men?
6. Biblically, What's the Role of Women in Society and Marriage?
7. Gender and Attraction: What Men vs Women REALLY Want
8. Biblically, What's the Role of Men in Society and Marriage? (*still writing it...*)
9. Is Polygamy (Polygyny) Biblical? Does God Allow it?
10. Follow up articles coming...

- Appendix A: Biblical Reasons for Divorce, When Remarriage is Allowed, and How Adultery Figures In

---

Want to be notified of new articles? Become a free member on Patreon. (*which, being free, doesn't cost anything*.)

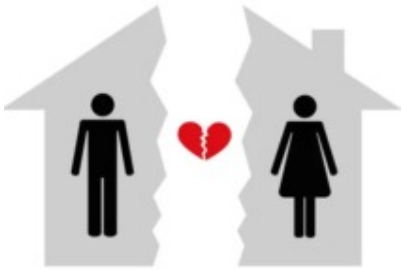
Want to support this ministry? Become a patron on Patreon.

Share 77 Post Save 8

Related Posts



The Bible on Authority & Submission in Marriage



Biblical Reasons for Divorce, When Remarriage is Allowed, and How Adultery Figures In

How Getting Marriage 'Wrong' Destroyed Every Great Civilization in World History

81 Comments

41A2E DECEMBER 6, 2021

Noting what you mentioned about God's covenant with Israel AND Judah, I'm curious how you view the New Testament marriage of Christ and The Church. I'm not trying to pick your arguement apart, I'm just interested on what your view is; is the NT covenant monogamous, or polygamous(i.e. is "the church" one bride, or multiple)? I wonder if this would be something to address in your next article, since you mentioned the practicality

of taking more than one wife under the "new law" of Christ.

Reply

Berean Patriot (admin) DECEMBER 6, 2021

I'd say the church is "one bride" (singular) since the word bride is singular. But then you get into the priesthood of all believers and the parable of the ten virgins which skews polygamous. I don't like to make too much out of the whole "Bride of Christ" thing because in the middle ages, there was an idea going around for ~100 years that every believer *individually* was the bride of Christ, which led to some… interesting views. Frankly, some of the poetry that idea produced was mildly homo-erotic, and thus it scared men out of the church for obvious reasons. The church never fully recovered from that in terms of male participation. (*Most Western churches today are usually 2/3 – 3/4 female.*)

So while you can make an argument for a polygamous from the priesthood of all believers and the parable of the ten virgins, I tend to stick with bride singular to avoid repeating that historical mistake.

Sota de Bastos DECEMBER 7, 2021

It is obvious that polygyny was forbidden, not by Scrpture (OT or NT), but by Indoeuropeans (2.000 years b. C.) and that the Christian churches prohibited it gradually, in order to accommodate to the Roman world. The key of this prohibition is not protecting women, since it entails 1. Throwing women into convents 2. Throwing other women into prostitution; but keeping money and power in the hands of the ruling classes.

Reply

Righteousness Lover DECEMBER 7, 2021

Something I can't figure out is the question of legality. It's the last objection people have, at least some people, and I don't know how to reason through it. In places like the USA, it's apparently simple enough to forego a marriage license. In some other places, such as Canada, having two ongoing relationships is considered bigamy, and is illegal, whether it is made official through the system or not. I'd like to agree with Martin Luther

and say “the civil authority has nothing to do in the matter”, but I’m uncertain of the biblical basis for that.

Often the stance for obedience to the government is to obey except when the law commands sin, or forbids obedience to God. For something like polygyny, which is neither commanded nor forbidden by God (except in the few instances you mentioned), the conclusion is to obey earthly authority. After all, marriage itself is not forbidden, only marriage to multiple parties simultaneously.

That conclusion, however, feels wrong. But even if it feels wrong, what’s the truth?

Then I stumbled upon another thought: what if the number of children parents could have were restricted to one? Should we obey then? This isn’t an unrealistic thought experiment, since China had (has?) such a restriction. Even in this situation I have no answer, since the number of children is never commanded by God.

My gut feeling continues to say the government does not have to be obeyed in these matters, but I have no truth to back it up.

I have heard the idea that the government often has the power to enforce some law, even if they do not have the God-given authority to do so, and such laws we do not need to obey since they are outside the realm of authority God has given them. I like this idea, and would like it to be true, but I do not know if it is.

Considering that we are supposed to go with the Roman soldier two miles when only required to go one, and that many of us would likely feel such a thing to be outside of the realm of authority God has given them, I’m not sure I could reliably distinguish between these realms, and I’m not even sure whether there is a separation between them (with the exception of clear matters of obedience to God, of course).

Have you given much thought to this matter? Is the way of polygyny closed to those who have no way to follow it without breaking the law?

Reply

> **Berean Patriot (admin)** DECEMBER 9, 2021
> Like you said, in America (*where I live*) there are states which simply don’t care and you can be married to 2+ women in every way except legally. Like you,

I'm divided when it comes to when it's forbidden by the government. I certainly see the argument for the government having no say, and I also see the argument for obeying since polygyny isn't commanded anywhere for Christians. Your point about China's one child policy is a good point too.

Ultimately, I'm divided and will probably remain so for some time while I puzzle this out.

JasonH JANUARY 18, 2022

In the section "Jesus Describes Himself As A Polygamist/Polygynist", you might want to delve into the the etymology and history of the "virgin"/"bridesmaid" from both the Greek and Hebrew perspectives. I would also advise you to list out which bible versions use the word bridesmaid instead of virgin and which says virgin instead of bridesmaid.

Reply

Andrea APRIL 4, 2022

Question: If a man promises a monogamous marriage to his bride then changes his mind later in the marriage, could his wife divorce him for breaching their marriage covenant since he had vowed to be only her husband or could she say "no" to adding another wife into the family?

Reply

Berean Patriot (admin) APRIL 5, 2022

A husband marrying another wife – regardless of if he promised monogamous marriage – isn't cause for divorce, and the Bible is actually quite explicit about this. Please see my article on divorce, since something very close to that topic comes up.

Now, is it allowable for a man who's promised monogamous marriage to take a second wife? I'm actually of two minds about that. In Numbers 30:2, God seems pretty concerned that men should stand by their word. However, covenants are different. Again, please see my article on divorce since it obviously touches this topic. Here's the short version A true covenant is between a greater party and a lesser party, and the greater party (*God*) sets all the

conditions. As such, entering into a marriage means that you are entering into a covenant that God Himself created and set all the conditions for. Men (*as the lesser party*) aren't allowed to add anything to the covenantal agreement. So adding the restriction that the man can't take a second wife seems impossible, or at least illegitimate if done.

However, Numbers 30:2…

Like I said, I'm of two minds.

Raphael Tisserand APRIL 5, 2022

I hope that in your promised followup article on the societal changes that polygamy will bring you end up addressing the fact that widespread polygamy creates a surplus of young single men with no stake in society, who turn to anti-social behaviour. Countries that where polygamy is practiced today, such as in Africa and the Muslim World, have this very problem. Those unmarried young men are usually the ones who join jihadist groups. Polygamy correlates quite strongly with instability. If polygamy is allowed in North America and Europe then prepare for whole gangs of Elliot Rodgers to form. How do you avoid this?

Reply

Berean Patriot (admin) APRIL 5, 2022

I devote a significant portion of the article to that particular topic.

Raphael Tisserand APRIL 5, 2022

The traditional method of dealing with that surplus of unmarried men was to send them to pillage the neighboring tribes/countries so they wouldn't cause trouble at home. The biblical story where the men of the tribe of Benjamin have no women to marry and then go kidnap brides from a neighbouring tribe is an example of this. Similarly, the ranks of Viking raiders and Spanish conquistadors were mostly made up of young unmarried men. You can have a surplus of single men even in a monogamous society, it's just that polygamy is going to almost guarantee you'll have one.

In the Ancient Near East it wouldn't have been as much of a problem because there was a favourable sex ratio. Many men died

in wars. Hebrew men around the time of the conquest of Canaan could marry a captive Canaanite woman and that would have largely solved the problem of there not being enough women to go around.
Needless to say, we now have an even ratio of men to women and I don't think sending young men out to pillage and raid for wives is a viable option in this society. I think the police might have some objections to that.

The African Kingdom of Dahomey had a different solution. Most of the women were married to a relatively small number of men. A few unmarried women were selected and forced into being "public whores" to placate the unmarried men. Essentially it was a form of communal sex slavery where they were forbidden from refusing any man. Payment wasn't even mandatory, although the men that used them often left some payment as a "tip".
I really, really don't think that forcing women into communal sex slavery is a road that anybody wants to go down.

As it is, our society already practices de facto soft-polygamy. For instance, on dating apps like Tinder the top 20% of men are competing for the top 80% of women. That leaves the bottom 80% of men to compete for the bottom 20% of women. Because of female hypergamy, a small number of men are monopolizing the majority of women. This happens either through hookups or through serial monogamy. What you're proposing is to formalize this and make it even worse.

Reply

Berean Patriot (admin) APRIL 5, 2022

Spoiler: it's already worse in the West. The rates of unmarried men (*in the US anyway*) are already FAR higher then any polygynous society. Monogamy-only also leads to the same surplus of men, but it's always **worse** in the late stages since feminism alone pulls more women off the marriage market than polygyny does. Among Muslims worldwide, the percentage of men who have more than one wife is 1% – 2%, and most of those only have 2 wives. Welfare (*which is basically state-sponsored prostitution since it pays women to have children if there isn't a man around*) removes even more women from the marriage pool.

Again, feminism + welfare removes a FAR greater

number of women from the marriage market than polygyny does. Polygnyy would actually **reduce** the number of unmarried men compared to what we have today. It's not like polygyny is creating a problem; we already have that problem and polygyny would improve on it.

It's a matter of perspective.

Polygynous societies are also more stable than monogamy-only societies long-term. They tend to remain very stable culturally and not change much. Look at Islamic culture, which has remained essentially identical for 1400 years. There's really good evidence for this in the historical record too, but I'll get into that in the follow-up article.

Raphael Tisserand APRIL 6, 2022

The practice of polygny correlates very strongly with increased rates of crime, warfare (both expansionist and civil war), and other forms of instability. The 20 most fragile countries in the world all practice polygyny to some degree. In South Sudan, 40% of marriages are polygamous and if you look at their recent history you'll see they aren't a beacon of stability. In Muslim countries, it's the young unmarried men who become jihadists not the married ones. As for Muslim culture remaining stable, well I don't think Muslim culture is worth emulating and I wouldn't call their constant civil wars and problems with terrorism very "stable" to begin with. Lest we forget that in those countries they kill each other almost as much, if not more often, than they kill "infidels".

Polygamy almost always results in a few rich men with many wives and a much larger number of poorer men with none.

Michel Houellebecq describes our present society this way: "It's a fact…that in societies like ours sex truly represents a second system of differentiation, completely independent of money; and as a system of differentiation it functions just as mercilessly. The effects of these two systems are, furthermore, strictly equivalent. Just like unrestrained economic liberalism, and for similar reasons, sexual liberalism produces phenomena of absolute pauperization . Some men make love every day; others five or six times in their life, or never. Some make love with dozens of women; others with none. It's what's known as 'the law of the market'…Economic liberalism is an extension of the domain

of the struggle, its extension to all ages and all classes of society. Sexual liberalism is likewise an extension of the domain of the struggle, its extension to all ages and all classes of society".

What you're proposing will only widen that gulf between the haves and have-nots.

Interestingly, Houellebecq also has a novel called Submission which is about an Islamic takeover of France. Among other things, polygamy becomes legal. There's a scene where the protagonist and his colleague talk about how much thus will benefit them, since they are both university professors and their prestige will allow them to attract multiple wives. They offhandedly mention that polygamy will leave a lot of men without a wife, but they don't stop to think through the implications….

Reply

> **Berean Patriot (admin)** APRIL 6, 2022
>
> I have a few thousand words on these practical points, but I'm not nearly finished the article yet. So for now we'll reduce this to a more important and simpler issue than whether it's a good idea: are we as Christians going to attach "thus says the Lord" to something He hasn't actually said? For me, that's the whole debate. It begins and ends there. If God says "don't", then we shouldn't.
>
> God never said "don't" regard polygamy, but He did say "don't" about adding to his words. Even if Christian polygamy would have disastrous consequences (*and in the article I'll make a strong case that it won't*), it's still wrong for Christians to say that it's wrong. You could argue it's a bad idea (*which you're doing*), but it's certainly not immoral, and thus — in my opinion — shouldn't be illegal.

Raphael Tisserand APRIL 6, 2022

I think it's morally permissible but a bad idea. Under the circumstances we have today (namely an even sex ratio) the civil authorities should outlaw the practice because it has negatively consequences for society.

I liken it to smoking cigarettes. If a person smokes one cigarette then it won't kill them. But many cigarettes have disastrous consequences over time. Best not to even start. Similarly, if one

man has multiple wives then it makes little difference. But if many people do then it has disastrous consequences. Society is a body. And polygamy is unhealthy for it.
And, before you object, it is well within the government's rights to outlaw things that aren't inherently immoral. Jaywalking is not inherently immoral but its a bad idea to do it and the local authorities will rightly give you a ticket if they catch you doing it, so as to discourage the practice.

Strict monogamy and the reversal of feminism is the best way to distribute wives. Every man gets one, whether you're in the top 20% of men or not. Normal men who aren't rich or look like supermodels have a chance at finding a wife that way.
Because of female hypergamy, women always want to marry the most successful men (or at least men more successful than them). Remember how I said that on dating apps, the top 20% of men monopolize 80% of the women? It will be just like that if polygamy is allowed. Thanks to Tinder, the dating economy is more unequal than the monetary economy of 95% of countries. Do you really want to make it worse?

Reply

Berean Patriot (admin) APRIL 6, 2022

Unfortunately, Strict monogamy and a reversal of feminism can't coexist, or at least not for long. In societies which enforce strict monogamy, feminism always rears its ugly head. Always. I'd devote some space to proving this in the follow-up article, but the historical record is clear on this point. (*Check out the section I added to the very end of the first article of my marriage series*) You can't have a strictly monogamous society that's patriarchal for long. Before long, Feminism always rears its ugly head. From a purely practical "pick your poison" perspective, you will either have polygyny or feminism.

Assuming I'm right, you can either have (1) Strict Monogamy and feminism, or (2) Polygyny and Patriarchy. As far as I'm aware, there is no 3rd option. #2 has the approval of God, while #1 is sin twice over (*adding to His prohibitions + feminism*).

I do think that God has our best interest at heart. I think a Christian society that was polygynous would

exhibit much lower levels of unmarried men (*and certainly lower than they are now*). I trust that if we follow God's prescription, it will turn out for the best. But even if it doesn't, I would still prefer to follow His plan because He is God and I am not.

Raphael Tisserand APRIL 6, 2022

I really wonder what historical record you are studying because the historical record shows that polygamy correlates with higher crime, warfare, and instability.

I see you don't have any answer for the fact that dating apps show that 20% of men monopolize 80% of women. We already have de facto soft polygamy. It would be just as bad or worse if not worse there was formal polygamy.

You also can't provide a response to the fact that monogamy is much more likely to ensure that almost everyone gets a wife. You haven't demonstrated how polygamy would accomplish this. Each time a man takes an addition wife, that is one less wife for someone else. This is simple math. Female hypergamy ensures that richer men would get more wives while many poorer men would have zero.

Finally you have not provided any solution for what the inevitable surplus of unmarried men are supposed to do. All you've done is deny that it would exist. Which is laughable because the historical record shows that polygamy always leads to a surplus of "lost boys". Do you really want there to be gangs of Elliot Rodgers running around?

Your entire argument is based on a single book from the 1930's. Well I have books of my own.
Read Sexual Utopia In Power by F Roger Devlin. Read Michel Houellebecq's novels (especially Whatever, The Elementary Particles, and Platform). Read Political Theology by Carl Schmitt (not a book on sex or marriage but an important book about law, including biblical law).

Who said anything about adding to God's word? Polygamy is permissible. But it is not required. And the government has the authority to outlaw something that is otherwise morally permissible if allowing it would lead to a bad outcome.

Reply

Berean Patriot (admin) APRIL 6, 2022

I said the historical record is clear that strict monogamy always results in feminism, not that polygyny turns out better.

I think we're talking across each other a bit. I'm saying: "This is what God wants, and I have reasons to think that it would turn out well". (*And I'll go into some detail as to why in the follow-up article, but not here and now.*) You seem to be saying: "Who cares what God wants; doing things God's way would cause too many problems". If I recall correctly, we had a similar disagreement on sex outside of marriage some time ago.

Allow me to be clear: I think that doing things God's way **in a Christian polygynous nation** (*which has never happened before*) would reduce the issues you mentioned to the point where they are less problematic than the strictly monogamous/feminist society of today. **But even if I'm 100% wrong about that, I would still rather live in a society that honors God's plan for marriage and allows for polygyny.** Yes, even if it results in all the problems you point out, or even worse problems.

My primary concern is what God wants, including not adding to his prohibitions. For me, **all** other concerns are secondary.

Again to be clear: I don't care if it *seems* like the consequences would be dire; I want to be pleasing to God first, and let the chips fall where they may. I trust that if we obey God, the chips will fall where they should fall. They might actually fall exactly as you suggest they will fall. But if that's where God wants them to fall, then so be it. (*and I think they would fall FAR better than you think*)

Raphael Tisserand APRIL 7, 2022

"You seem to be saying: 'Who cares what God wants; doing things God's way would cause too many problems'".

No I'm not. Polygamy is merely permissible. It isn't required. In a polygamous society, even you admit that many people would have just one wife whether that's by choice or by circumstance.

Polygamy isn't "God's way". Some cultures are polygamous, some aren't. God allows cultures to practice it but also allows monogamy.

The ruling authorities have the prerogative to outlaw something that is otherwise permissible if allowing it would lead to a bad outcome for society.

Polygamy only works if there are far more women than men. Do you have a plan to reduce the male population? Do you suggest we send them off to war to reduce their numbers? Or perhaps we should just kill or exile all the unmarried men. I really don't think that's something you would want to do.

You simply can't get around the fact that polygamy correlates with crime, warfare, and instability. This happens even in culturally Christian societies. Remember the example of South Sudan? That's a majority Christian country.
How do you propose to deal with the crime and antisocial behaviour that men who are shut out of the marriage market will engage in.
This ALWAYS happens when polygamy is practiced and there is an even sex ratio. Even if there are a larger number of women than men, the ratio evens out after a few generations. You can't just deny that this will happen. At least not without demonstrating why it won't happen this time when it has happened every other time.

You really should read Michel Houellebecq's novel Submission. I think you'd enjoy it, since you like to praise the stability of Islamic culture.

Reply

> **Berean Patriot (admin)** APRIL 8, 2022
> God says: "This is a fine thing to do, and is required under certain circumstances" (*Under OT law, which we obviously don't need to follow. However, Ex 22:16-17 is a good precedent that's made impossible in some cases if you outlaw polygyny*)
>
> You say: "This is **not** a fine thing because it leads to terrible outcomes, and it should never be allowed."
>
> So yes, you are saying "I don't care what God allows, I know better." I consider that a dangerous place to be. (*Much like your opinion that sex outside of*

marriage is permissible if the church says it is; you seem to have no trouble with men overriding God's commands.)

There is cultural solution that would likely make a HUGE difference, and yes even in the case of places like South Sudan. However, I simply don't have time to go into here. My time for writing articles on Berean Patriot has all but vanished lately. I'll finish the follow-up article eventually and publish it, and then we can disagree there. Rest assured, you haven't considered all the factors. It was once unthinkable to have a successful nation without slavery, and yet… The case is similar with polygyny.

Raphael Tisserand APRIL 10, 2022

Why do governments have regulations around hunting and fishing? So that there will be enough animals to hunt and fish in future years. Let's say a government sets the limit on deer at 2 per person. Is it inherently immoral to shoot 3 deer instead of 2? No it isn't. Does it make a difference in the long run if one person shoots more deer than allowed? Also no. But if you let people shoot as many deer as they want then deer stocks fall victim to the Tragedy Of The Commons. Deer are overhunted, with negative impacts on the ecosystem as well as ensuring that deer numbers aren't sustainable.

So it is with polygamy. Just as governments regulate hunting and fishing for the common good, so must governments regulate marriage. Governments outlaw many things that are otherwise moral if allowing them negatively impacts the common good.

You can't get around the fact that polygamy ALWAYS corellates with increased violence. You can't demonstrate why it will be different this time. All you've done is assert that it won't happen without any evidence to back it up.

As for overriding God's laws: who decides on the exception?

Reply

Berean Patriot (admin) APRIL 10, 2022

Sigh. Okay then, explain the countries that allow polygamy and have among the lowest crime rates in the world. There's more going on than just polygyny; culture has a HUGE impact too. Again, I'll unpack this

in the follow-up article when I get time to write it.

Further, there is no biblical command to fish or hunt, but there is one to engage in polygyny under certain circumstances. (*In the OT*) And my whole point is that overriding God is wrong, no matter who does it.

If you want a legislative solution that's analogous to your deer and fish analogy, it would be limiting the number of men who could have multiple wives. I'll get into the natural limiting mechanism that the Bible provides in the follow-up article. It's almost like an all-knowing and all-wise God thought of a solution before anyone realized that we needed one. Imagine that. 😉

Jake APRIL 19, 2022

Thank you for the article. I have a question on the 1 Corinthians 7:2 concerning the word "own". What about those passages in the New Testament where the Greek "idios" is used in an exclusive sense. For example Mark 4:34 "..and He did not speak to them without a parable; but He was explaining everything privately to His own disciples." The Greek doesn't actually say "HIS own disciples" but rather "THE own disciples" and it sounds weird in English when transliterated so robotically, but the "own" is still modifying the noun "disciples" and they definitely weren't anybody else's disciples besides Jesus' (unless I'm missing something in that verse.. I'm all ears if I am). But if 'idios' can be used that way, who is to say it isn't also used this exclusive way in 1 Corinthians 7:2 passage? I read this in a "Never Thirsty" article responding to this argument for polygamy. They say the reason for the two different word choices of "own" was to simply reflecting the headship that man has over the wife in marriage, but that both words still communicate exclusivity in the marriage. Thank you in advance for a response.

Reply

Berean Patriot (admin) APRIL 20, 2022

Because of your comment I went looking for the article, read it, and then decided I had to include some quotes from it in the article… **because it made the case for polygyny stronger.**

Oh, the irony.

I recommend you scroll up and read that section

again to read the edits, then come back and finishing reading this comment.

So you are correct about the Greek grammar there. “the own disciples” is awkward in English but perfectly normal in Greek, and that construction is actually the most common one I’ve seen IIRC. However, the word itself doesn’t indicate they weren’t someone else’s disciples; it’s context that does that.

Let me explain:

The article uses a logical/linguistic fallacy where they take a word’s usage in one context, and then assume the word must mean exactly the same thing in all other contexts. This is silly, and consider the English word “fair” as an example. It’s used a ton of ways: “fair skin”, “fair weather”, “fair play”, “going to the fair”, etc. Ironically, **if you take it as simple possession like the first half of the article suggests, it solves all of these problems**.

It’s like saying “her car”. It might belong to her alone. It might be her husband’s car too. It might be a car that she’s leasing and belongs to someone else. Simple possession doesn’t answer any of these questions, and trying to make it answer them is a bad idea. I pointed out that idios ***allows*** for non-exclusive possession, not that it ***must*** indicate non-exclusive possession.

Now, ***in context***, when used with a word that indicates exclusive possession as it is here, I think the non-exclusive component is the point. However, that’s an argument from *context*, not word definition. It’s like me arguing that “fair play” must refer to “moral play” because of the words around it; that’s a *contextual* argument, not one based on definition. (*which again is ambiguous with simple possession*)

Now, to headship. I’m an ardent believer in authority in marriage. I have a whole series on marriage which covers it in detail. However, you should NEVER import concepts that a passage isn’t talking about. 1 Cor 7 doesn’t talk about authority in marriage much, except sexually. To make it about any other kind of authority is twisting the scriptures. If we were to read this

passage about non-sexual authority, we must then conclude that men and women are perfectly equal in authority. (*which obviously they aren't; see my series or even just Eph 5:22-33*)

Hunter JULY 20, 2022

Awesome work here. …Just a few comments:)

"This verse contains the only explicit reasons that God gave in the Mosaic Law that women could divorce their husbands." on Exodus 21:10-11 omits the preface that sets the context in concubinage. She is only able to be given her freedom in this circumstance because she is a slave-wife. There is nothing in the law that provides the same for a non-slave-wife who either was given by her father or who gave herself (had her father died or previous husband died).

My near 700 word aside;) about the premarital sex article that I'm putting here because it gives background for my comments:

Your treatment on Deuteronomy 22:13-14 in the premarital sex article reads into the text that the "misconduct" was sex before marriage without any recognition of the other possibilities, namely the misconduct that is described at the end of the same verse that the man, *expecting to find his bride a virgin* didn't find her a virgin. This is virginity fraud, which is to steal away from her father and future husband that which was to be given. That was the sin. This is made clear by the "whoring in her father's house" at the end of the passage, where the main word was "in." Since elsewhere it deals with father's who put their daughters into whoring, this is distinct from that and the issue was precisely that it was under the father's radar and not by his consent.

You mention the tie between prostitution and whoring (the more general term) and rely on your assumption of your reader's distaste of the former to carry to the latter, but prostitution is not outright condemned except in circumstances where it is also adultery. The proverbs speaks much about the two situations but when it is not a married woman being talked about, the parallel is that it is a waste of resource, not a risk of death. The distinction is made clear in Pro 6:26 "For by means of a harlot; A man is reduced to a crust of bread; And an adulteress will prey upon his precious life." However, because it is a waste of resources, which would not be a faithful thing to do, in that it would be related to a

lack of faith, we can apply the New Testament teaching that anything not done in faith is sin. However, (to use your way of carrying the reader's sentiments;)) if we think that way about indulging prostitution, we also need to think that way about indulging debt, which there are also strong proverbs about (which I do actually think is "wrong" stemming from lack of faith).

I think this lack of faith approach goes along with your treatment of Matthew 19, where it doesn't give a prohibition on extramarital sex but it only paints two options. If the passage included a command to abstain from it, we would find the command, but if it were simply undesirable for faithful people, we would simply not find it as an option – which is the way it is written.

Concerning 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, the definitions given for pornos simply uses the exact English term, fornication, that you're trying to unpack by looking at the Greek word. This circle isn't your fault, but unfortunate, nonetheless. Fortunately, though, as you underlined, a real definition is given: male prostitute or anyone engaging in sexual immorality. The outline for the entire Strong's definition of porneia is:

illicit sexual intercourse

adultery, fornication, homosexuality, lesbianism, intercourse with animals etc.

sexual intercourse with close relatives; Lev. 18

sexual intercourse with a divorced man or woman; Mk. 10:11-12

metaph. the worship of idols

of the defilement of idolatry, as incurred by eating the sacrifices offered to idols

Notice that adultery is listed under the umbrella term porneia. This is because the word means, as that one definition you gave accurately conveys, sexual unlawfulness; that is, anything that is against the law of Moses and addressed to a universal audience that is related to sexuality.

This definition helps when approaching 1 Corinthians 7:1-2. It definitely makes sense that in order to avoid lots of sexual immorality issues (like adultery) each man should have his wife to himself and each wife her husband. The logic doesn't follow though that therefore anything outside of that can be called sexual immorality (for example…singleness). And again with verses 8-9, although I agree that in the end it indicates any other option is not a faithful option, it doesn't actually say to not be

married and not burn with passion but still have sex is sin. There's a truth to saying extramarital sex is "wrong" but how it's wrong (lack of faith) is very important.

And back to the current article:

On the topic of the-elders-have-to-so-everyone-does, you wrote "what about having less than one wife? (Being unmarried.) Seriously." Classic. Thumbs up.

As for your approach to the one-woman-man, I was happy to see that you mentioned the correlated one-man-woman passage and I really enjoyed the historical references, but the outcome of that adventure surprised me. I understand the part about the tense for the one-man-woman making it impossible for the phrase to mean the woman was and still is married to only one man, and I can get behind making a connection to univera (although I can't find any sources on that tidbit) meaning "this woman only ever had sex with her spouse" – describing a quality and not a state so that the tense works – but when applying that to the male side, the problem is that the idiom still contains the word "one" in order to convey this idea. Any resulting use of the idiom is going to have to be centered around the idea of singularity just like the idiom did in "univera." If the apostle was already changing the idiom, switching around man and woman, he could have easily changed the word "one" to something more fitting had he meant "this man only ever had sex with *one or more women* who were at the time spouses." That definition doesn't make sense and doesn't actually honor the discovery of "univera."

The way you broke down the meaning of univera into two parts seems to make this clear: "she never had sex with anyone before getting married [and] she only had sex with her husband after getting married." I'm not sure what you were getting at with that expansion, but it actually proves my point because those two statements together mean: no one else before the marriage date and no one else after the marriage date. I'm not sure how the article then jumps to how the younger widows being encouraged to remarry is contradictory to this, but it isn't.

1 Timothy 5:9 limits the provision of widows to those who were and continue to be one-man-women. To understand what this means, we should ask, practically speaking, why would this be? Whatever the reason, we have to accept from the start that some old ladies got help and some didn't based on some past action (may have been seen or maybe wasn't). I suspect not being

willing to accept that sentiment is what is causing the assumption mentioned above. The key is in the next few verses 11 and 14. The reason that Paul wanted the younger widows to marry was out of a concern that they would double back and want to marry again (or that they would simply take advantage of the generosity). The goal was for the women selected for support to be devoted to Christ. Paul indicates that if the younger widows wouldn't be prone to remarriage then they should happily support them so they can devote their time to the saints. Since he knew that wouldn't be the case, he simply excluded them.

So, the likelihood of marrying again is a reason to exclude someone, that much is clear. …Well, that seems like a good enough explanation then as to why older widows might be forever barred from receiving the widows fund – if they show themselves to be prone to remarriage. How can a widow show that they are prone to remarriage when they are older and it's not easy to predict based on age or personality? Simple: if they have ever had (by their own choice) extramarital sex or remarried. Either case shows they are obviously prone to remarrying and therefore should just do that again, even at an older age.

My favorite part is how this actually supports the concept of polygyny. Does anyone ever ask where these new husbands are going to come from in a shrinking pool of men for these women Paul is saying should remarry?

So this all bares on the view of a one-woman-man. Since the word "one" remains and since the meaning of a one-man-woman does indicate the quality of having only one sex partner over the course of their entire life, especially with the "univera" connection, we might expect that the one-woman-man means the same, just for a man, a man with the quality of only ever having one sex with one woman and no one else at any point. This would exclude bachelors, men with multiple wives, and widowers who remarried. Widowers would not be excluded because their quality of being a man who has only ever had one woman would remain. And to go along with the unvera connection, we could even assume any men who had ever had extra-marital sex would also be excluded.

Let's look at further support: Firstly, the verse that references the one-woman-man quality gives us no verb (the verb preceding is an infinitive), so the whole issue of perfect tense isn't at play. Instead we need to look at any reason that may have been given

for elders needing to be married at all. What's the goal of the limitation? It might different than that of the widows. In verse 5 it gives us a reason elders must rule their households well, which is only possible if one has a household, which is really only possible if one is or has been married: "for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?" This makes sense. An elder has to have or have had a wife in order to understand what it is like to care for the church, analogized as the bride of Christ.

But why then might it be limiting the other way, why not more than one woman for an elder? Besides the "one" being present in the phrase and the abundant singularity emphasized by the univera concept, there is yet more evidence that an elder should not have or ever have had more than one woman: "But I want you to be without care. He who is unmarried cares for the things of the Lord—how he may please the Lord. But he who is married cares about the things of the world—how he may please his wife." (1Co 7:32-33) If a man with one wife is with "care", thinking about how to please his wife, how much care about the things of the world would he have if he two wives? It would stand to reason twice as much. What about 5 or 15? Let's assuming he wasn't "hoarding" them, which is where it on its own would be a problem, but would he have as much time to shepherd an entire group of people with all of their needs if he had 15 wives? Uh, no. Hence the upper parameter of no more than one woman ever having been had.

On to other things.

You did a great job of covering the idios issue. That verse right there is, I have found, is all most people need to see to break on the issue.

Concerning the adultery section, I'm not even going to read that right now for the sake of not potentially having more to say. I hope in the article about it though that you explain how a husband can share in the sin of adultery if they expose their wives without reason to adultery and how the only reason given in the law and exempted by Christ for sending away a wife (who stays a wife despite separation) is that if she is found with child that isn't the husbands and the adultery wasn't witnessed (such that the test of infidelity doesn't apply and stoning also can't apply), just like righteous Joseph was considering doing to Mary. I hope you also used it to make a powerful statement about how

marriage is permanent for as long as spouses live (Romans 7:2), leaving only room for separating what is joined, with no room for unjoining. I hope you went on to share the terrible possibility illustrated in Deut. 24 where a woman sent away finds another man to be with and therefore cannot return to her husband even if he changed his mind because she embraced being sent away instead of staying faithful (denying the 2 acceptable choices offered by Paul in 1 Cor 7:11). Anyway, I'll have to read it and see😊

The "two have become one flesh" section. You did pretty well, but since the one flesh aspect is called a mystery and likened to our connection with God, I don't think it works to avoid the math by downplaying it to mean sex. I find it easier to just help people follow the math through: if 1+1=1 then taking that resulting one and adding another 1 will give you….1! This also helps explain the idea of wives being connected via the man like believers are connected through the Spirit.

You wrote: "how long would the bridesmaids need to wait with the bride for the groom?" This is awesome and definitely going into my list of go to arguments. Wisdom.

So…Hoseah. This is interesting. As much as I want a clear example where God told someone to take another wife, it just doesn't add up. First of all, just within the first verse you quote, God says "go again, love a woman who is loved by her husband, yet an adulteress." He doesn't say who "will be" loved by her husband or yet "will be" an adulteress. It's present tense so the only options are either Hosea is taking the wife of another man… who loves his wife?…or he is taking his own wife back or he is taking a woman who has a husband at the moment God gives the command but who won't by the time Hosea takes her. Definitely not suspecting options A or C. As for the "bought" part, how many days did he "buy" her for. The following verses show how he was only expecting her to actually stay for a few days, and wow, harsh words if she were a new bride "you shall not play the harlot"… She's not a new bride. She's the same bride whose husband is choosing to show his love by paying for his time with his wife just like all the other guys have to do because she's a harlot, not a slave: "these are the wages that my lovers have given me" (2:12b)

Thanks for the Luther quote!

Ahhh, I think that's all. It's nice to see someone really delving

into these issues without getting cocky and unwilling to learn more.

Reply

> **Berean Patriot (admin)** JULY 24, 2022
> I can't possibly respond to everything, but I'll hit the highlights. Thank you first. 🙂
>
> Concerning "univera", you're right that details are sparse. From the little I've found, it seems that univera could refer to a woman whose husband had died and she'd remarried, as long as she'd never had sex outside of marriage. (*Remember, Latin is a terribly imprecise and "word poor" language*) Again, the idea wasn't that she'd only had sex with one man, but rather that she'd never had sex outside of marriage. Sorry if I didn't make that clear.
>
> You make an interesting point regarding multiple wives possibly disqualifying one for eldership based on time constraints. I'm not sure I see it that way, but it's not a bad point and I'll have to think about it more.
>
> Regarding divorce, I highly recommend you read my article: Biblical Reasons for Divorce, When Remarriage is Allowed, and How Adultery Figures In. God got a divorce and commanded an "automatic divorce" in the OT law. No joke. It's a covenant, and under specific situations it can be annulled. (*though obviously for life would be the case in an ideal world*)

NOYB SEPTEMBER 10, 2022
In short. This is a piece of twisted ideology suited to minds that desire (through evil working within) to bend and pervert the words of Holy Scripture to suit the carnal nature of mankind against God's laws towards one man and one woman in marriage.

Reply

Dustin OCTOBER 30, 2022
Thank you for the hard work on this, not many folks today are willing to even put in a conversations worth of work on this topic, for obvious reasons. For the sake of the current and future, I think it's a topic we need to take more seriously, and without folks like you putting in the effort, there are precious few

resources to go to for learning, especially so well put together and thought out.

*There's a broken link (https://www.thesacrists.com/post/from-polygamy-to-monogamy) source, appears the website as a whole is down, just thought to update you, I checked the web archive but it's not been archived unfortunately.

Reply

Tough Bible NOVEMBER 5, 2022

I generally agree with you about what the Bible is clearly saying. I have some reservations about Hosea Chapter 3. I think you make a good case that the second woman is not Gomer, however there may be room in the text to deduce that Gomer abandoned Hosea at that point because Hosea promises to the woman in verse 3 "You shall not play the prostitute, nor shall you have another man; so I will also be toward you." I think it's understood here that Hosea is saying, "So I will not have another besides you." You COULD be strictly grammatical and say that Hosea is promising not to have another man which doesn't exclude him having another woman, but that might be counter to what Hosea is actually declaring here. What say you?

Reply

> **Berean Patriot (admin)** NOVEMBER 7, 2022
>
> The phrase "I will be toward you" makes a lot more sense grammatically as a relational phrase. For example John 1:1 more literally says: "In [the] beginning was existing the Word, and the Word was **toward** God…" Again, "toward" was a relational phrase. Consider also Genesis 3:16 (*the curse on women*), where it more literally says "your desire will be **toward** your husband".
>
> Further, Hosea saying that he will be exclusive to her destroys the prophetic picture of God being married (*symbolically metaphorically*) to two unfaithful women: Judah and Israel.

Lam NOVEMBER 9, 2022

1) healthy monogamous marriage in the Bible — Ruth and Boaz.
2) Reading the Parable of the Virgins like this is a problem or we could support God being commending dishonesty in the Parable of

the Unjust Steward…
3) Polygynous countries having the lowest crime rates? Last time i checked Singapore, Japan, Norway and China don't allow polygamy. I'd agree on the Gulf countries but if you think Senegal and Indonesia report accurate data you can go there and verify for yourself 🙂 Or if you're fighting a war, shooting the opposite side isn't a crime, of course (Syria, Palestine, Sudan…)

Otherwise, great article!

Reply

> **Berean Patriot (admin)** NOVEMBER 9, 2022
> 1) Except we know nothing of their marriage, just that they got married and she got pregnant. The story essentially stops at their betrothal.
>
> 2) Why is it a problem? The point is that Jesus (God) pictures himself as a polygynist. In the parable you mentioned that's not the case.
>
> 3) I'll deal with this in the follow-up article if I ever get time to finish it. Suffice it to say for now that polygamy isn't a predictor of high crime once you control for other factors.
>
> Thanks. 🙂

A-Dub FEBRUARY 24, 2023

Matthew 19:3-12 seem to refute your point of view, particularly vs 8, which you apparently sidestepped by using the surrounding verses, where Jesus plainly states, "but from the beginning it was not so."

What was not from the beginning? Polygamy. Male-Male marriage. Female-Female marriage. Human-Non-Human marriage. Pre-Fall Genesis 1 and 2 bear that out. Jesus's restoration after the cross and the grave, along with Paul's 1 Corinthians 7, supplement the return to one man, one wife marriage. The subsequent polygamy arrangements are post-fall.

The OT is what God presented. The NT is what God intended.

Very interesting points

Reply

> **Berean Patriot (admin)** FEBRUARY 24, 2023
> Except the thing which wasn't from the beginning in

that passage is divorce, (sort of) not polygyny. Polygyny isn't mentioned even once in that passage. Further, 1 Cor 7:1-2 argues in favor of polygyny, not against it; see that section of this article. Additionally, clothes also "weren't from the beginning" and were instituted post-fall, but going without them now would be sin. Therefore, the "if it didn't exist pre-fall, God doesn't approve" argument doesn't seem to work. (*especially since God commanded polygyny under certain circumstances; again, see the article.*)

Ken MARCH 12, 2023

I enjoyed this article!

Reply

SF MARCH 25, 2023

Wow. Not one comment about what women might want for their lives. It's all about what "godly" patriarchs want-sex with multiple women that is 'religiously sanctioned.' If you want a REAL look onto the life of a wife in a polygamous marriage, read "Wife No. 19." This book is about the 19th wife of Brigham Young (leader of the Mormons) and the terrible life she led before finally escaping. BTW, she was forced into the marriage; she was no willing participant. Forced marriages, where young women are forced into marriages with much older men, are a hallmark of polygamous societies. Always. Which is the point, isn't it?

Reply

jim APRIL 3, 2023

Thanks for the hard work. A few addtions for you to consider;
1) Ezekiel chapter 23 also depicts God with 2 adulterous wives in Samaria and Jerusalem (v4)
2) God only opened Rachel's womb after she gave Jacob her handmaid Bilhah to wife and Bilhah concieved Gen 30:3-5 and verse 22
3) Isaac blessed Jacob and said 'God almighty bless thee and make thee fruitful and multiply thee…' from Gen 28:3 which then God confirmed in Gen 28:13-14 before Jacob had any wivs or children
God repeated the blessing in Gen 35:11 'be fruitfull and multiply' while Jacob had 4 wives and 10 children (2 to go). This was God's

plan for Jacob. Just like the same blessing was given to Noah post flodd and Adam and Eve. God's plan.
4) With regard to civil legality we only need ask one question; Is marriage God given?
If that answer is a resounding yes then we have clear instruction how to proceed.
matt 25:21 `..render therfore unto Cesar the things that are Cesar's and unto God the things that are God's'
We as belivers should not have permitted civil OR religious authorities to take away what God has givn to us. We would not I hope give over baptism and the Lord's supper to unbelievers to rule over and ruin – so why did we with betrothal, marriage and divorce.
There is also no instance I can find of religious authorities or buildings being used for this purpose in old or new testaments. Betrothal (contract) is between familes. Marriage (one flesh between betrothed) is private and has no witnesses Gen 24:67. Western weddings are not quite what they first appear.
1 Peter 2:13+ tells us to obey authority in this world, the same Peter who rejected that authority in Acts 5:29 saying we must obey God rather than man (paraphrase), contradiction? not for me, Marriage is from God, and all the things pertaining to it, Man has no authority over God and his Kingdom

Reply

miki APRIL 24, 2023

Hi Jim — Abraham Lincoln and George Washington never got married with the state. Look into "Commitment Ceremonies." They are the same as regular marriages, but zero paperwork. It's just the couple and God. Just like how it's meant to be. This method would mean a man can easily add multiple wives — regardless of the state he's living in.

Reply

otto MAY 17, 2023

SF — what happens to the surplus of women unable to find Godly men (men that see Jesus as the Master)? They may find someone decent — end up losing her virginity to him because she thought he's going to marry her — and he dumps her. When the surplus of women are not being taken care of — it leads to one-night stands, whoredom, and marriages with un-godly men. Which Jesus says turns the land into wickedness. That is the fruit of

enforced monogamy. Broken family units. Homosexuality. Transgenderism. Women need Godly men to protect them and provide for them. Not just physical protection, but spiritual protection against the adversary.

Many modern self-righteous Christians, I believe, will have a lot to answer for on the judgement seat.

Reply

otto MAY 17, 2023

In terms of marriage vows made to a wife:

Leviticus 5:4
Or if a person swears thoughtlessly with his lips to do evil or to do good, in whatever matter a man may speak thoughtlessly with an oath, and it is hidden from him, and then he comes to know it, he will be guilty in one of these. 5 So it shall be when he becomes guilty in one of these, that he shall confess that in which he has sinned. 6 He shall also bring his guilt offering to the Lord for his sin which he has committed, a female from the flock, a lamb or a goat as a sin offering. So the priest shall make atonement on his behalf for his sin.

– Let’s say a non-Christian makes an oath, but later becomes a Christian and recognizes the thoughtlessness of his oath; based on Leviticus Chapter 5, that man can come to the High Priest (King Jesus), and admit his sin and error he made. Thereby, be free from his oath he made.

Reply

Brian MAY 20, 2023

Great reading, ty for taking the time to put it together!
My understanding was opened about polygyny 5 years ago when Jesus started to lead me. I was married the legal way. I started to talk to her about polygyny found everywhere in scriptures. She couldn’t deal with the info, moved out, and took my 2 boys. Then, she got jurisdiction in another state. They had court without inviting me and did a default judgment.
The powers that be want monogamy because it’s easier to control. With polygyny, you create a family that can be huge and powerful with influences. Thinking about polygyny, if a guy had 2 wives, the wives compete for his love and attention in a family unit. Many women use their private as a weapon and in a monogamous relationship that causes the guy to burn in lust.

Polygyny changes the power structure. Polygyny would help the women with children in the family unit. Interesting how when women are close, they have their menstrual cycles line up tougher. With polygyny in a family unit you could have one of the wives watch the children, another one creating a side business, and another tending to a full time garden to grow organic food, and they could all rotate to help with the burdens. With polygyny, a man that had great wives wouldn't need to cheat. I can only see so much good come from it

US court system is operating under color of law. In the USA, we have 2 jurisdictions operating common law and color of law. I have found power in 18 usc 241 and 242. Those statues put those that operate under color of law in their place. For example, a property I own I put a shipping container on it, a neighbor called code enforcement on me. I spoke to code enforcement, and they said I couldn't have that on my property and that if I don't remove it, we will get fined and have to go to court. So, I found a guy that makes signs with a legal notice, no trespass, and I posted it at the gate. Code enforcement came to check if I removed it, and I did not. Now, 6 months later, I haven't heard from them anymore! I have NEVER heard of someone being left alone from code enforcement ¿! Very important when posting no trespassing, it should only say no trespass, ing on trespass makes it sometime in the future, not right now!

Blessings

Reply

Andrew P. JUNE 17, 2023

Excellent article on a topic that it seems Christians in the modern world are unwilling to touch unless it's to bash polygamy with utter contempt, albeit exegetical disregard. It's incredible how absolute "monogamy" is just kind of assumed to be the indisputable Christian norm for marriage.

I remember seeing an article on Desiring God.org (John Piper's site) that was flatly condemning the practice of a man having multiple women as opposed to God's will for the Christian, and the very next article I read there was on why Christians don't need to observe the restriction against sexual relations with a woman in her menstrual impurity. The funny thing about this is comparing the Biblical evidence for these two claims. Relations during menstruation is called an abomination in Lev 18. It's

packed into a list of clearly evil acts for which God was judging the other nations, not just Israel: incest, incest related behavior, child sacrifice, adultery, homosexuality, and bestiality. All abominations, all judged by God. Compare this with the evidence against male-specific polygamy. It's so scant that arguments have to be theologized into existence using these ad hoc abstractions about how God gave Adam only one wife and Jesus chose to quote the Septuagent version of Genesis 2 which says "the two shall become one" rather than the Hebrew which says "they shall become one ." So obviously Jesus was trying to say that marriage is only been two, right? One man, one woman, right? Of course, it is never acknowledged that Biblical polygamy involves multiple marriages with different women, not one big marriage in which the wives are married to one another! On the contrary, modern Christians believe it is adequate to abandon actual exegesis in favor of modern moral sensibilities with the ridiculous assertion that "well, God just overlooked this sin for a time," or "God permitted it but it was always against his intention." Modern Christians read Genesis as if they wrote it rather than Moses, the giver of the Law, the chosen leader of God's nation who spoke to God "face to face, as a man speaks to his friend" (Ex 33:11 ESV). I think it would help if people were reminded that the unavoidable conclusion that must be made based upon Num 12 is that Moses himself was a polygamist. Are we really prepared to say that Moses was a serial adulterer, never once corrected or reprimanded for this to his dying day. Keep in mind, the punishment for adultery was death. Yet, how many times have we all heard the tacit assumption baked into people's moral instincts that a man "cheating" on his wife is committing adultery.

So yeah, I think it is the exact opposite of what Piper and his baptist cronies so boldly claim. Polygamy is far from condemned anywhere in Scripture. If anything, it's elevated or actually commanded in certain instances. Sexual relations during a woman's menstrual impurity, on the other hand, is a different story. I believe the evidence that this is a sinful act is extremely solid given the use of the term abomination in Lev 18 and the references to uncleanness and impurity in various NT passages. Also in Hebrews: "…let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous" (13:4 ESV). Far from justifying anything and everything on a marriage bed as I have seen some argue, this verse rather lends itself to the notion of certain acts even within the marriage as in the "porneia"

category. To the Biblically literate, primarily Jewish audience (Hebrews was especially written to this sort), this would surely have called to mind the injunctions against sex during menstruation–a big deal in the Mosaic law.

But yeah, great article, Mr. B. Patriot. Thank you for tackling this issue and coming away with the exegetically-based opinion no matter how counter-cultural and unpopular it may be.

Reply

I Love the Lord AUGUST 6, 2023

Women don't want to share a man so that means it's against God because it isn't fair. God would never put women into slavery like this. This is man's doing. Women deserve so much better than this because I know God said so. I actually know God and I don't bastardize His Word and try to pretend that the original language says something that it really doesn't. You're adding to His Word. Please repent because you're misleading people into Satans trap of false doctrines.

Reply

Berean Patriot (admin) AUGUST 7, 2023

You said: "*Women don't want to share a man so that means it's against God because it isn't fair.*" A few things.

First, what God wants isn't based on what women (*or men*) want. Just because you don't like something doesn't mean that God doesn't like that thing.

Second, please don't confuse "fairness" with "being against God's law". Jesus explicitly warns against confusing fairness with justice in Matthew 20, calling those who do so evil/greedy for doing it; please see my article on Biblical justice for more information. Further, confusing fairness with justice is the core tenant of Critical Race Theory, which (*ironically*) is a satanic worldview; more information in my article on CRT: What are Social Justice and Critical Race Theory (CRT), and are they Biblical?

Finally, you say you know God, but do you know the original languages? Can you show that God didn't command a man to have sex with all his wives? Can you show that God didn't command men to engage in

polygyny? Knowledge of the original language makes things clearer, but isn't require for many of the passages.

Berean Patriot (admin) AUGUST 8, 2023
Oh, and I should add that there's an ***enormous*** number of women who would be interested. I've had some reach out to me, I know some personally, and I've talked with others who have had women reach out them them saying that they would be very interested.

Sah SEPTEMBER 7, 2023
My husband was seeing someone during our marriage for years even before. I recently learned of this. He wants to bring his other other woman into the relationship. I understand your reading and I don't disagree, if you are aware. It's not how I wanted to live my life now. How does the scripture support this. Am I wrong?

Reply

Berean Patriot (admin) SEPTEMBER 7, 2023
Why don't you send me an email via the contact page? I think I would need more information to give an opinion and would rather handle that privately.

Sah SEPTEMBER 8, 2023
Hello. Thank you. I sent you an email.

Reply

Berean Patriot (admin) SEPTEMBER 8, 2023
I got your email and will reply in the next few days; I want to think and pray on it for a bit.

Sah SEPTEMBER 9, 2023
Thank you. I'm not without my own faults, too. Take your time. I appreciate you.

Reply

Hunchback SEPTEMBER 28, 2023

"unpack it,"

Is this satire? Are you a postmodernist?

God does not "call" anyone to anything, we are not Israel. God is not a puppet master, as Vox Day calls it.

The length of the article itself is proof that polygamy was at best a crutch in the OT times, now it is only slightly less degenerate than promisuity.

Reply

Geoff FEBRUARY 26, 2024

I'm wondering if you've read either Polygamia Triumphatrix or Thelyphthora. I've read most of the latter but the former I've had to use the crutch of electronic translation assistance. (Never a good idea with Latin.)
Thelyphthora gives such a complete and sobering breakdown of everything wrong with being wrong about marriage I've been looking for other writers even half as Biblically literate and accurate. Thank you for this essay.

Reply

Annoymous MARCH 5, 2024

Hey, I get your point about idios, but isn't heautou also used for non-exclusive ownership in Luke 2:3 and Luke 14:26 ? Now I know polyandry is condemned clearly in Romans 7:3, but does heautou really imply exclusive ownership as is often claimed by proponents of polygyny in 1 Corinthians 7:2 ? Thank you for your response, just trying to look into this issue as best I can.

Reply

> **Berean Patriot (admin)** MARCH 5, 2024
>
> So, a clarification first. For a moment, let's say that heautou is an entirely non-exclusive word just like idios. That doesn't weaken the case for polygyny at all because the allowance for polygyny comes primarily from idios, not heautou. I would say that the contrast between idios and heautou makes the case stronger, but it's not reliant on heautou being exclusive at all.
>
> That said, typical usage of heautou is definitely far more exclusive than idios. Idios is generally non-exclusive in usage while heautou is almost always

very exclusive in usage, certainly compared with idios. Thus, I would say the implication exists via contrast. You have a far more exclusive word in heautou (*even if it's not always totally exclusive*) for husbands contrasted with a far less exclusive word in idios for wives. So again, the implication is certainly made by contrast even if heautou isn't 100% always used exclusively.

SW MARCH 18, 2024

The elders are to be an example to the flock (1 Peter 5:1-3), so Titus 1:6 and 1 Timothy 3:2 would indicate that bishops & elders were setting an example to their flock by each being "the husband of one wife." I agree that these passages don't specifically state "the husband of one wife, neither more nor less," but that objection seems a little bit like casuistry. The force of the passage is pretty clearly directed against polygamists being fit for the position of elder or bishop, since Paul himself was unmarried, and we have no examples (that I know of) of any of the Apostles, deacons, or elders in the New Testament being polygamous. And, an argument with somewhat lesser force: The Christian objections to polygamy are extremely ancient, and it would seem that 1 Cor.7:2-4 was always understood as counseling either monogamy or celibacy.

Reply

Berean Patriot (admin) MARCH 19, 2024

Did you read the article? Like the article says, yes elders are supposed to lead the flock by example, but what about men gifted with singleness? There's already a clear exception to the "husband of one wife" (*even if you ignore the idiomatic sense*), so why not more than once one wife? You need to take the whole counsel of scripture into account.

Both scripture and cultural context tell us that Paul was almost certainly married at some point, though of course he was single (*likely widowed*) by the time he wrote the epistles. (*I keep meaning to write an article about that, but I'm short on time.*)

To your point about 1 Cor 7:2, I have an article entitled: The Biggest Mistakes Most People Make

When Studying the Bible that you might wanted to read, especially the part under this heading and the heading following it.

July MARCH 29, 2024

Blessings! Thanks for the hard work you put into theses articles. I am a Christian who always thought monogamy was the only way. But your case of it being permissible in the OT is quite strong. But what about the NT, is polygyny prescribed for us christians? Do we have to follow this part of the law? What about the civil authorities who prohibits multiple wives? Are we supposed to go against them? One last thing. What about the case of Adam and Eve. Why didn't God create multiple wives for Adam?

Reply

Berean Patriot (admin) APRIL 3, 2024

So, I wouldn't use the word "prescribed" because that would indicate there's a command for it somewhere. I would simply prefer to say that it's morally just as morally acceptable as monogamy. There's nothing that says a Christian man can't have multiple wives, though no requirement for him to have multiple wives.

As to civil authorities, that's a sticky issue. It's hard to make the case that we should go against them, but not impossible. I'm not sure I'm convinced by the case, but the case isn't without merit.

As to Adam and Eve, I don't know. There are good biological/genetic reasons to have a 50/50 gender ratio, and even among Muslims where it's accepted by the Quran, not more than 1%-2% of Muslim men have more than one wife worldwide on average, so one man, one woman would still be the norm. Perhaps that's part of the reason God did it, but obviously I don't know.

Amber APRIL 19, 2024

Hello, just curious of how we could find a local church who wouldn't condemn our biblical views on marriage. Where we could come as a two wife family and worship without rebuke.

Reply

Berean Patriot (admin) APRIL 21, 2024
I'm afraid I don't have any resources for that. You might try biblicalfamilies.org, especially their forum; they might know of one in your area.

Daniel DeLuca MAY 8, 2024
I spotted an error. You cited Judges 9, when you meant to cite Joshua 9.

Reply

Daniel DeLuca MAY 8, 2024
Additionally the verse you cited as Gen 12:17, is actually Gen 18:19

Reply

Daniel DeLuca MAY 8, 2024
The source for Jewish Wedding customs links to a page on your website, which itself does not link to any other potential source. It is not clear where this material originated.

Reply

Daniel DeLuca MAY 8, 2024
Response to NYOB who asserts that God has laws for one man and one woman: You are doing the very thing this article warned about, by adding to the Word of God. There is not one law from God regarding taking only one wife.

Reply

Ted Roderer MAY 10, 2024
Wow!! Truly wow. I only skimmed this article and I am blown away by the content and accuracy with which I have seen. I can't wait until I have more time to really dig in. For 5 years I was living in faith and knowledge that was revealed to me 2 weeks ago I got a bigger confirmation and found a great resource because of it and tonight I found my 3rd resource and huge confirmation on Gods truth on polygyny. It just keeps solidifying. Praise God for your heart and research and how He has led you. Just noticed you too know about Biblical Families.org. That's my most recent find.
Thank you Sir

Reply

Ted MAY 26, 2024

Lev 18:18

Nor shall you take a woman as a rival to her sister, to uncover her nakedness while the other is alive.

This is after a whole list of forbidden sexual relationships.

Polygyny is not listed (obviously), but this seems to recognize that a man needs to take a rival wife at times, perhaps to get the other wife back into action/competition.

Get yourself a rival wife and possibly that first wife will stop be lazy in her duties. That's my portrayal.

Any thoughts or insight. I don't remember this in the article, but I may have just forgotten or missed it.

Reply

Todd JULY 7, 2024

Good job.

Its simple GOD doesn't allow sin, nor would He write a law to protect a second wife if He did not allow a second wife. Polygomy is for the sake of the wives to help each other in the home. Why would a man want all that drama just for more sex. The sinful world we live in is always twisting GODs word and his plan. I am sure with the war in Ukraine there are a lot of widows with young children that would love a best friend and a husband all in the same house. There are too many homes without loving husbands to help raise GODly children. Jesus is the living word!

Reply

JTerkunor SEPTEMBER 17, 2024

Some Theological (God) and Biological (Scientific) Facts for Consideration

1. Did God or Evolution create man? Yes
2. Did God or Evolution create woman? Yes
3. Did God or Evolution command that men and women be fruitful and multiple/reproduce? Yes
4. Did God or Evolution create reproduction through sexual act? Yes
5. Did God or Evolution create menstrual cycles for women? Yes
6. Did God or Evolution create men without menstrual cycle? Yes
7. Did God or Evolution create men to be biologically capable of reproduction throughout their lifetime? Yes

8. Did God or Evolution create menopause for women so that at about 50 years they cannot have children? Yes
9. Did God or Evolution create men to be capable of reproducing throughout their life and yet create a woman (wife) to stop reproducing so that they can continue to have sexual acts just for the sake of sex? I do not think so.

Theological and Biological evidence suggests that polygamy may offer a more harmonious and natural approach to relationships than monogamy, contributing to happier societies. Biologically, women have a limited reproductive window due to menopause, while men can produce sperm throughout their lifetime. This reproductive asymmetry implies that expecting men to maintain lifelong sexual exclusivity is contrary to their natural biology. Furthermore, theological texts, including the Bible and Qur'an, accept polygamy, with figures like Abraham and David having multiple wives. Genesis 2:24's "two become one" ideal is countered by other scriptures (e.g., Romans 12:4-5, 1 Corinthians 12:12), showing that more than two can form unity or become one. "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one" (1 John 5:7-8)
Polygamy also addresses the societal issue of "cheating" or infidelity. The concept of adultery in the Bible refers to a man sleeping with another man's wife, not necessarily a violation of monogamy, which implies the societal expectation of sexual exclusivity is more cultural than God ordained. Since men can father children with different women simultaneously without confusion about paternity, polygamy enables a man to fulfil his natural reproductive potential, whereas women, due to pregnancy and menopause do not have that natural capability.
Ultimately, the unhappiness arising from relationships often stems from society's failure to recognize these natural differences. Educating future generations about male and female reproductive differences, along with crafting legal and cultural norms that are more aligned with biological realities, can foster a more harmonious coexistence and a healthier society. Polygamy, when practiced ethically and respectfully, may be a solution to the dissonance caused by rigid monogamous expectations.

Reply

Bro Darrell OCTOBER 25, 2024
I Rebuke STUBBORN WILL that rejects TRUTH.

God ORDAINED multiple wives
God BLESSED men with multiple wives
God issued 2 STANDING COMMANDMENTS (that According to Christ in Mathew 7 STILL STAND) for men to take multiple wives.

“To those theologians who CLEARLY are PRIDEFUL, SELF DELUDED and who arrogantly exalt thier words above GOD ALMIGHTY, you shall be brought down to Hell says the Lord thy God”

I rebuke you women in the name of Christ Jesus, God HAS NOT given you ANY SAY WHATSOEVER (if you married a man WHO DID NOT VOW MONOGAMY) He may freely take wives at his own perogative provided he DOES NOT diminish your needs as COMMANDED by GOD in Exodus 21:10

Woe unto the brainwashed masses, have you NO CLUE why satan had his pagan nations OUTLAW this HOLY PRACTICE?

Forced monogamy is the MAIN CAUSE of sexual immorality due to unmet sexual needs. All cultures that OUTLAW multiple wives are HIGH on illigitement sexual relationships just as the kingdom of darkness wants it.

Just imagine the kingdom of darkness knows most human males are BIOLOGICALLY NOT MONOGAMOUS so he changes laws to FORCE MEN to SIN to get their sexual needs met (porn, fornication, adultery, masturbation, prostitution, strip clubs, side chicks) basically a SLAM DUNK to take a mans soul to HELL.

Have you ever wondered why just about the majority of preachers and Pastors in America struggle with sexual temptation and MANY MANY MANY FALL.

Its because they has SURPRESSED thier GODGIVEN NATURE of PATRIARCHY having SEED for many children but DENIED by society.

Reply

Christian DECEMBER 1, 2024

I was redirected to this article from your gay and lesbian relations article, where you mentioned one could find out more. To be honest, I did read through this one rather quickly, so maybe I just missed it. Is it possible you could tell me exactly where to find it? By the way, your articles are good!

Reply

Berean Patriot (admin) DECEMBER 1, 2024
I'm glad you like them. 🙂 To your question, scroll up a bit from the conclusion to Addendum #2.

Christian DECEMBER 3, 2024
I found it. Also, I think I see where your 'suspicion' might lead . . . Anyway, how soon do you think that article will be published?
Reply

Berean Patriot (admin) DECEMBER 3, 2024
It'll be quite a while, partially because that article is way down on my priority list, especially with the current series I'm doing on PSA and my current workload; I don't have a lot of free time lately.

First Last MARCH 11, 2025
Berean,

It was great reading your article. I find myself randomly going down the rabbit hole of your website and agreeing with much (if not all) of what you have said. I went to Seminary (and graduated) and during many of my classes I came to similar conclusions. It was always concerning to me though because as I read the material provided in class I always thought that some of the conclusions were not based on facts. I think one of those books was "Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes." It actually gave all of this information on how we use presuppositions to interpret the Bible but then would do a 360 and still stick to their Western views. I came to the conclusion through my own studies that polygyny is not a sin.
Though I do not think it will become accepted in our life time. There are too many things that need fixed within the Church. Not to add that most women would never agree to it.

Thank you for this wonderful resource as I never have the time to do these deep dives anymore. I have more questions than answers after going through seminary and I was never offered ordination from my local Church. Though some day I hope to start a home Church!

Blessings
Reply

Samantha AUGUST 13, 2025

My husband has recently come across this topic and now believes that “a man cannot cheat in God’s eyes.” He had a long affair with a woman in the past and now says that God made her his wife because polygamy is allowed, but that because she was with someone else while he was with her, they are “divorced.” We have been working on trust for the past several years and now he believes he is SUPPOSED to have multiple wives because God commanded it. I am absolutely not on board with this and he is telling me I’m going against God and that I am asking him to go against God because I don’t agree to it. Did I miss something? I have read this article a few times and I’m not seeing He commands every man to have multiple wives. Please forgive me if I am not understanding. I’m new to reading and trying to understand the bible and doing God’s will. I just can’t force myself to be ok with him being with other women and am looking into divorce if he continues on with seeking out other “wives”. I appreciate the way you explained this and see that it was allowed, but I’m not seeing (unless I have missed something) that He commands all men to do this. Any clarification on this is greatly appreciated. I’m feeling pretty confused about my marriage and what God wants for me.

Reply

Berean Patriot (admin) AUGUST 13, 2025

There is no place in the Bible where God commands Christians to have multiple wives. No place. None. Yes it’s allowed, but it’s never commanded, so you aren’t missing anything.

Here’s the thing, most wedding vows contains a “monogamy only” clause in them. Numbers 30:2 means that if he’s made such a vow, he needs to keep it. There are numerous verses in scripture adjuring us to do what we say, and he would run afoul of those as well. Additionally, this verse looms large:

> **Leviticus 19:11-12** 11‘You shall not steal, nor deal falsely, nor lie to one another. 12‘You shall not swear falsely by My name, so as to profane the name of your God; I am the LORD.

If your marriage vows included a “monogamy only”

clause, and if he takes a second wife while calling himself a Christian, then he is profaning God's name by intentionally violating the oath that he swore in the wedding vows.

Now, even if your vows didn't contain a "monogamy only" clause, then he's still sinning by having sex with a woman he's not married to. If that woman was married, you likely have grounds for divorce; please see my article on divorce for the list of reasons for which you can get a divorce.

Now, if the woman wasn't married, the idea that God made the other woman into your husband's wife without a wedding is absurd. He was committing the grievous sin of fornication, and thus scripture says he isn't a Christian (*unless he's truly repented*); see 1 Cor 6:9-10.

Now, all of that said. He's correct that a married man sleeping with an unmarried woman hasn't "cheated" on his wife in the biblical sense. However, he did "cheat" in terms of his marriage vows if they contained a "monogamy only" clause.

I hope that helps clear things up, if not, feel free to ask follow-up questions.

Samantha AUGUST 13, 2025

Thank you for the further explanation. I appreciate your response. It does help clear up some of my confusion. If I find that I have more questions, I will certainly reach out.

Reply

Samantha AUGUST 14, 2025

One more concern that has come about. He believes that because they loved/loves each other that THAT made/makes them husband and wife. "Pledging" his love to another woman makes them married? Is it that simple? Saying "I pledge my love for you" makes you married in God's eyes? You responded in your comment above that "without a wedding" God didn't make her his wife. Did there have to be anything other than them saying they loved each other? There were apparently other women he had been with for short periods of time as well and I have no way of knowing whether any of them were married. Again, I apologize

for my ignorance here. I simply want to understand this so I have some direction. I have read your article on divorce, but I need to read it again. It's a lot for me to take in. I really would like to know that I can leave the marriage and be "right" in doing so or if I'm stuck. There are other factors, but I do not feel comfortable sharing on a publicly viewed platform. Thank you again and I appreciate you for taking the time to help me understand this better.

Reply

> **Berean Patriot (admin)** AUGUST 17, 2025
> Biblically speaking "love" has absolutely nothing to do with contracting marriage. Nothing. Not even a single thing. (*Though, it could impel someone to pursue marriage*) Biblical marriage is a covenant, which is a relational form of contract. It has terms and conditions that are set exclusively by the greater party (God), and the lesser party (us) can only choose to accept or reject the contract. We don't get to haggle about it. You might actually want to read my article on betrothal, since I go through the difference between how modern vs biblical marriage is contracted. To summarize, the way marriage is contracted these days is legitimate, so without formal vows in front of witnesses (*or betrothal as done in the Bible*), there is absolutely no reason whatsoever to think that he "married" any of those women.
>
> If you are uncomfortable sharing details publicly, I do have my email address on the contact page.

Grant NOVEMBER 5, 2025

I've recently read an article raising arguments against polygyny by one Aaron Ventura, which I'll link here:

https://localchristendom.com/when-did-polygamy-become-a-sin/

While I recommend looking at the whole article for proper context and reasoning, a couple points in particular stood out to me. One is that the expression used in Leviticus 18:18 in regards to not marrying "a woman and her sister" is better understood as referring to a symbolic sister rather than a biological one, since that is the way it's used elsewhere in the Bible. The other is in regards to God giving Saul's wives to David after his death;

Ventura argues that they couldn't have been David's wives, since David had married Saul's daughter Michal, and the law prohibits being married to both a mother and daughter.

I'm eager to here your response, since they're usually well thought out and detailed.

Reply

Berean Patriot (admin) NOVEMBER 6, 2025

I agree that a marriage is between one man and one woman, polygyny simply means the man has multiple marriages. Proper definitions completely defeat his first argument. Another defeater for that is 1 Cor 6:16, which makes "one flesh" an idiom for sex. Further, in Gen 2:24, it says that the man will be joined to his wife (*married*) and then they will become one flesh (*have sex*). A careful reading of Gen 2:24 makes it clear that marriage (*joining*) isn't the same as becoming one flesh (*having sex)*.

Now, his Lev 18:18 argument is:

> "Everywhere else this phrase "isah el-achotah" (a woman in addition to her sister) occurs in the Old Testament, this phrase is always "used idiomatically in the distributive sense of 'one in addition to another' and **nowhere else refers to literal sisters**."

It "nowhere else refers to literal sisters" because it always refers to ***objects***. We do this today with phrases like "sister sites", "sister cities", etc. The Hebrew word is "אָחוֹת" (achowth), and you can see a list of every place its used here. When its translated "another" is where you'd see that construction, and it's always *objects*.

Even if he's correct, what about the commands in the law to marry a second wife? (*Like in Ex 22:17-17 covered in my article above*). His understanding makes the law — and thus scripture — contradict itself.

Further, there's actually a debate on what the command in Lev 18:18 is. Is the command not to

marry a woman in addition to her sister period (*with the reason that it will vex her*), or is it a command not to marry a woman in addition to her sister *in order to vex the current sister/wife*. The latter interpretation says it's fine to marry sisters, you just can't do it in order to vex your current wife. Both are legitimate understandings of the Hebrew text, though, I don't personally have a position on which is correct right now. (*I would err on the side of caution though.*) Regardless, the reason for the prohibition isn't because of morality, which is what he would need to make his case.

His argument about 1 Sam 25 has one very solid element, but the rest is silly. By his reading, one of the blessings that God gave David was to take care of Saul's widows. Apparently, that's up there with being rescued from Saul and becoming king. Also, God was apparently saying that David could have more widows to take care of and that was a blessing like becoming king? (*insert an eye roll emoji here*) His understanding ignores the ANE understanding that part of hostile takeover was taking the former guy's wives as your own. (*Of which there are many examples in scripture.*)

Now, the solid element is this:

> Now David was already married to Michal, Saul's daughter, and so if he married Saul's wife and concubine, he would be explicitly breaking this law.

That's a great argument since Lev 18 explicitly prohibits marrying a woman and her daughter. To respond, I'll repurpose something he says just a few paragraphs later:

> First, there is nothing here that requires us to read this in a polygamous way, for example, Joash could have one wife, and then she died, and then he was given another, and Jehoida is the one who arranged a godly wife for the king. That's a possible reading of the text.

Using his own reasoning, maybe Michal's mother had died? (*And he asserts that Saul only had two wives, but scripture only names two and leaves open the possibility of others. It's likely Saul had other wives since he was the king.*) 1 Kings 15:5 makes it clear that David didn't break the law except concerning Uriah, so I think Michal's mother dying prior to David taking Saul's wives as his own makes the most sense of scripture.

Leave a Reply

Comment Text*

Name*

Email*

Website

- [ ] Notify me of follow-up comments by email.
- [ ] Notify me of new posts by email.

Post Comment

RECENT POSTS

- Will Marriage and Childbearing Exist in Eternity? What about Isaiah 11:8 and 65:20?
- Who Hardened Pharaoh's Heart? (With the context most miss)
- PSA Series – Did the Early Church Fathers Teach PSA? (With Quotes AND Context)
- PSA Series – What is Justification? What Does "Clothed in the Righteousness of Christ" Mean?
- PSA Series – What is Faith? How Does Faith Save Us?

Search

Berean Patriot Copyright © 2026.

Theme by MyThemeShop