

Did Jesus Endorse Polygamy?

Introduction.

- I. The question is “Did Jesus Endorse Polygamy?”
- II. This seems like a strange and ridiculous question to most of us, but there are many who believe Jesus did endorse polygamy.
- III. There are some religious groups and cultures that endorse polygamy, and some of these maintain that Jesus taught polygamy.
 - A. This argument is sometimes used by those who have no regard for Christ, but seek to justify their actions by appealing to Christ.
 - B. This argument is sometimes used by those who claim to have regard for Christ and seek to justify their actions or the actions of others by His alleged teaching on this subject.
 - C. The arguments are nearly always in favor of polygamy and not polyandry.
- IV. As the definition of marriage is changing in our country and in the world, more and more people are seeking to base their practice on the endorsement of Jesus.
 - A. Some want marriage to be a man and a woman, two women, two men, a man and two or more women, etc..
 - B. Some even want marriage to be a man and an animal or a woman and an animal.
 - C. Very few seek to justify polyandry (a woman having more than one husband). **This issue is a “man” thing.**

I. Some Arguments Used To Prove Jesus Endorse Polygamy

- A. There is the **argument of silence** that basically maintains that Jesus never condemned it.
 1. They contend that if were wrong Jesus would have said, “You cannot be polygamist” or some such language.
 2. They forget that Jesus lived under the Mosaical law that permitted polygamy though rarely practiced by the Jews of His time.
- B. There is the **Old Testament argument**.
 1. It is argue that it was practiced in Old Testament times.
 2. It is clear from scripture that polygamy was practiced in the Old Testament.
 - a. It was not a part of God’s original plan. (Gen. 2:18-24).

- 1) God did not take two Eves from the side of Adam.
- 2) Adam was monogamous. Eve could not be the mother of all living if Adam had married other women and had children by them.
- 3) Adam and Eve are the parents of mankind. (Gen. 3:20).

GEN 3:20 Now the man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all the living.

b The first record of it is Genesis 4:19,23.

GEN 4:19 And Lamech took to himself two wives: the name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other, Zillah.
 GEN 4:23 And Lamech said to his wives, "Adah and Zillah, Listen to my voice, You wives of Lamech, Give heed to my speech, For I have killed a man for wounding me; And a boy for striking me;

- c. Noah and his sons were also monogamous. (Gen. 7:7; 1 Pet. 3:20).
- d. Many men in the Old Testament had more than one wife - Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Saul, David, Solomon, etc.. Here are 17 recorded cases of polygamy in the Old Testament, but certainly there were others.

1. Lamech (Gen 4:23)	5. Ashur (1 Chron. 4:5).	9. Solomon (1 Kgs. 11:1-8).	13. Joash (2 Chron. 24:3).
2. Abraham (Gen. 16)	6. Gideon (Jud. 8:30).	10. Rehoboan (2 Chron. 11:18-23).	14. Ahab (2 Kgs. 10; 11:18-23).
3. Esau (Gen. 26:34; 28:9).	7. Elkanah (1 Sam. 1:2).	11. Abijah (2 Chron. 13:21).	15. Jehoiachin (2 Kgs. 24:15).
4. Jacob (Gen. 29:30).	8. David (1Sam. 25:39-44; 2 Sam. 3:2-5; 5:13; 1 Chron. 14:3).	12. Jehorah (2 Chron. 21:14).	16. Belshazzar (Dan. 5:2; 1 Chron. 2:8; 11:18-23).
			17. Hosea (Hos. 3:1,2).

e. It was tolerated and regulated, but not commanded except in the case of a levirate marriage.

C. It was monogamy that was commanded [set forth as the ideal marriage] in the Old Testament. (Psa. 128:3; Prov. 5:18; 18:22; 19:14; 31:10-29; Eccles. 9:9).

D. There is the levirate marriage argument.

- The levirate marriage came about when a man died without having children. His brother or near kinsman was to marry his wife and the children born to that union would be reckoned as the seed of the deceased brother. (Deut. 25:5-10).
- This did not forbid being already married. (Deut. 21:15-17).
- One could relinquish this right or obligation by taking off his shoe and giving it to another. (Ruth 4:6-8).

RUT 4:6 And the closest relative said, "I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I jeopardize my own inheritance. Redeem it

for yourself; you may have my right of redemption, for I cannot redeem it."

RUT 4:7 Now this was the custom in former times in Israel concerning the redemption and the exchange of land to confirm any matter: a man removed his sandal and gave it to another; and this was the manner of attestation in Israel.

RUT 4:8 So the closest relative said to Boaz, "Buy it for yourself." And he removed his sandal.

1. This hypothetical series of husbands was used, by the Sadducees, to prove there was no resurrection. (Matt. 22:23-30).
 - a. How could a woman have multiple husbands in the after life?
 - b. This, they argued, proved there could be no resurrection.
2. Jesus refuted their argument by indicating there will be no marriages in heaven. (Matt. 22:31, 32).
 - a. Jesus taught we shall be like the angels
 - b. See also Luke 20:36

LUK 20:36 for neither can they die anymore, for they are like angels, and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection.

3. Jesus lived under the law of Moses (Gal. 4:4) and accepted levirate law, but there is no evidence it was a part of the New Covenant.
 4. There is no evidence Jesus was ever involved in levirate marriages other than this question.
 5. It is interesting to note that the Sadducees thought it preposterous that a woman could have seven husbands in heaven.
 - a. Women could only have one husband at a time under the Law. Polyandry was very very rare in the ancient world and unknown to the Old Testament.
 - b. The same problem would exist for a man in heaven whether he had one wife at time or more than one at the same time.
 - c. The subject of polygamy, under the new covenant, is not being discussed here by Jesus.
- E. There is the argument based on the **parable of the ten virgins**. (Matt. 25:1-13).
1. The purpose of this parable was to teach that we must be ready for the Lord's coming. (Matt. 25:13).
 2. Some argue the groom was going to marry all ten maidens, but only married the five that were ready.
 3. The parable does not teach that the five maidens, who were ready, became brides of the groom.
 - a. The ten maidens are bridesmaids.
 - b. The bride is not mentioned in this parable.
 4. The point is that they were not allowed into the marriage feast because they were not ready.
 5. It is not describing some marital orgy in which five brides marry the groom instead of 10 brides.

6. They are never called brides nor is there any indication that they were betrothed to the groom.

7. The Old Testament, that permitted polygamy, warned of the danger of multiplying wives.

F. There is the no sin argument.

ROM 4:15 for the Law brings about wrath, but where there is no law, neither is there violation.

1. It is argued that there is no law in the New Testament forbidding polygamy.

2. Since there is no law in the New Testament forbidding polygamy, it is affirmed polygamy is not sin.

3. This fallacious argument assumes something must be specifically mentioned to be sin.

4. The New Testament does not specifically condemn these things.

Animal sacrifices	Sex acts with animals	Beating wife	Worshiping graven images
Old Testament incest laws See Lev. 18	Various harmful drugs	Animal abuse	Forcing wife into prostitution
Over medicating one's self	Having concubines - This was also an Old Testament practice.	Gambling	Suicide
Euthanasia	Abortion	Overeating	Making graven images

G There is the **hardship argument**.

1. Some contend that we have no example of Jesus breaking up polygamist marriages.

2. It is argued we should not do so because it would create great hardships on some.

3. Breaking up polygamist marriages might create hardships, but so does breaking up any kind of unlawful marriages - bigamist marriages, incest marriages, forced marriages, etc.

a. Sending men or women to prison also works hardships on many marriages.

b. We send criminals to prison even though it works hardships and may cause the breakup of the marriage.

H.. Some use a **shortage of men argument**.

1. They contend there are not enough men to go around; thus, men are doing a good and needful thing to have more than one wife.

2. It is strange this argument is not used where men out number the women to advocate polyandry.

I. Some use the regulation argument to argue for polygamy.

A. Exodus 21:8 establishes a rule for slaves who became wives. There is no mention of the man having to be single to marry a slave.

- B. Exodus 21:10 indicates a man is not allowed to diminish food, clothing, and marital rights, if he marries a slave.
- C. Leviticus 24:14 prevents a man from marrying a woman and her mother at the same time. It is argued that this rule does not make sense if polygamy was a sin.
- D. Deuteronomy 22:28-29 speaks of a man being required to marry a virgin he had sex with, as long as the father did not refuse him. It is argued that there is no mention of whether the man was single or not. If it was a sin to be a polygamist there would have been a rule here saying if the man was already married he would be punished or stoned.
- E. Judges 8:30 calls "Gideon" "a man of God," but he had "many wives."
- F. 1 Samuel 1:2 and 13:14 tells us that Elkanah had two wives. One of the wives was Hannah who gave birth to the prophet Samuel. Some argued that Samuel would be illegitimate if polygamy was sin.
- G. Some argue that on the basis of Solomon it was only wrong to hoard wives - not have more than one wife. (1 Kgs. 11:1-3; Deut. 17:17).
- H. 2 Samuel 12:7-8 tells us that David was given his dead master's wives.
- I. 1 Kings 15:5 tells us that David had a least seven wives, but he is called a man after God's own heart.
- J. 1 Chron. 2:46-48 indicates Caleb had two concubines, but he was allowed to enter the promise land.
- K. Joash had two wives that were chosen by Jehoida the priest. (2 Chron. 24:3).
- L. Nehemiah 13:25 suggest that Solomon sinned because he took foreign wives and multiplied wives, not because he had more than one wife.
- M. Esther 2:2-4 teaches that Esther was at least the 2nd wife of the king.
- N. Job 27:15 has Job speaking of a man who's "wives shall weep."
- O. Abraham was called "a friend of God," but he was a polygamist. (Jas. 2:23).

- All of these examples only prove that polygamy was allowed and regulated in the Old Testament.
- They do not prove polygamy or having concubines was approved in the New Testament.
- Many of those who seek to justify polygamy in the New Testament maintain this was to be the exception and not the rule. They fail to explain why this should not be the rule
- They know that by advocating it to be the exception they will not receive the outrage of the many who oppose it. Most do not have the courage to openly advocate polygamy.

II. What Jesus Taught About Polygamy

- A. Jesus did not address polygamy in a direct way.
- B. He did show, by His teachings, that polygamy is not acceptable under the new covenant.

1. Keep in mind that the levirate marriage was a part of the Old Covenant that was nailed to the cross. (Col. 2:14-17).
 - a. We never find anyone being instructed to marry his brother's wife to keep the family line going.
 - b. This obligation ceased to be acceptable under the law of Christ.
 2. Keep in mind that silence does not suggest approval.
 - a. There are many things Jesus did not specifically mention in His ministry.
 - b. Rape, homosexuality, incest, sorcery, carousing, child abuse, sex with animals, cursing God, gossiping
- C. Here are the references Jesus made to marriage. (Matt. 5:31, 32; 19:1-9; Mk. 10:10–12; Lk. 16:18; Jn. 2:1-11).
1. Jesus presents the fact that a man and a woman are joined together by God and they or anyone else should not sever what God has joined together.
 2. He does not address the subject of polygamy, but speaking of marriage always in terms of a man and a woman excludes it.
 3. Though some existed in the 1st century world, we do not have any examples of polygamists marriages in the gospels or in the church.
 4. Polygamy was rarely practiced among the Jews in Jesus' day, but was practiced by some Gentiles.

III. What The Apostles Of Jesus Taught About Polygamy

- Keep in mind the apostle taught the words of Jesus. (Jn. 14:26; 16:13).
 - Paul taught by revelation and authority of Christ. (Gal. 1:12; 1 Cor. 14:37).
 - The apostles were mouthpieces of Jesus. (Lk. 10:16; Jn. 13:20).
 - It is fallacious to distinguish what Jesus bound on believers and what the apostles bound on them.
 - The New Testament is complete, and contains all things that pertain to life and godliness. (2 Pet. 1:3; 2 Tim. 3:16,17).
 - We must have the authority of Christ for all that we do. (Col. 3:17). Silence is not authority.
- A. The apostles did not address polygamy in a direct way, but everything they wrote would indicate it was wrong.
1. Eph. 5:22-33 - The language of this passage is monogamous.
 2. Colossians 3:18, 19

COL 3:18 Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.

COL 3:19 Husbands, love your wives, and do not be embittered against them.

- a. "Wives" being in subjection to "husbands" does not describe polyandry nor does "husbands" loving "wives" describe polygamy.

b. The plural is used for the singular.

c. A wife was to be in subjection to her husband, and a husband was to love his wife.

3. 1 Peter 3:1-7

1PE 3:1 In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives,

1PE 3:2 as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior.

1PE 3:3 And let not your adornment be merely external-- braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses;

1PE 3:4 but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God.

1PE 3:5 For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands.

1PE 3:6 Thus Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, and you have become her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear.

1PE 3:7 You husbands likewise, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with a weaker vessel, since she is a woman; and grant her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.

a. "Wives, be submissive to your own husbands" did not mean a woman could have multiple husbands, but each woman is to be submissive to her own husband.

b. "Husbands likewise, live with your wives in an understanding way" did not mean a man could have multiple wives, but he is to recognize she is "a weaker vessel" and is to "grant her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life."

4. 1 Cor. 7:2-5

1CO 7:2 But because of immoralities, let **each man have his own wife**, and let **each woman have her own husband**.

1CO 7:3 Let the husband **fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise also the wife to her husband**.

1CO 7:4 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**.

1CO 7:5 Stop depriving one another, except by agreement for a time that you may devote yourselves to prayer, and come together again lest Satan tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

a. This is certainly not polygamist language.

b. Verse 5 is a strain to apply to a man with multiple wives.

c. The Christians at Corinth had a very worldly background (1 Cor, 6:9-11), but there is no mention of polygamy - past or present. If it existed at Corinth, surely Paul would have dealt with it in 1 Corinthians 7. 1 Corinthians 7 deals extensively with the sexual needs of Christian men and women.

5. Tit. 2:3-5

TIT 2:3 Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips, nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good,

TIT 2:4 that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children,

TIT 2:5 to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be dishonored.

6. Heb. 13:4 - Under the new covenant having multiple wives is fornication. Because something was tolerated under one covenant did not mean it was tolerated under the new covenant. Animal sacrifices were once commanded as a part of worship, but such is abominable today.
7. Jesus is a once for all sacrifice for sin.

HEB 7:27 who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins, and then for the sins of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself.

HEB 9:12 and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.

HEB 9:26 Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

B. We have no New Testament examples of polygamy being accepted or practiced in the church.

1. This alone may not prove it is wrong, but it does indicate we have no basis from the New Testament to argue for it.
2. It is unexplainable why elders would be required to be the “the husband of one wife” or a “one woman man” if polygamy was acceptable and according to some a good thing. (1 Tim. 3:2, 12).
 - a. It is the view of most conservative scholars that Paul did not have polygamy in mind.
 - b. Widows who were to be enrolled had to meet this qualification “having been the wife of one man.” Polyandry was extremely rare, if it existed at all, in those day.
 - c. The idea is that elders and deacons must be faithful to their wives, and widows could not be enrolled if they had not been faithful to their husbands. They had to be faithful to their mates - men who were not womanizers or a woman with loose morals. They would not be “above approach.” (Tit. 1:7; 1 Tim. 3:10).

IV. Dangers Of Polygamy

A. It is unauthorized in the Christian age; thus it is sin.

1. The law of the land may or may not permit it, but not God in the Christian age.
2. We are to live by the authority of Christ (Col. 3:17; Matt. 28:18), and there is no authority for polygamy.

B. Those who had multiple wives in the Old Testament had many problems. (Deut. 17:14-17; 1 Kgs. 11:3,4).

1. There is the problem of jealousy, neglect, favoritism, etc.
 - a. Consider all the problems Abraham had with Sarah and Hagar.
 - b. Consider all the problems Jacob had. with Rachel and Leah.
 - c. Consider all the problems Solomon had.
2. There is the problem of faithfulness
 - a. How do you love multiple wives as your own body? There is much evidence that polygamist under

the Patriarchal law or Mosaic law did not live up to this Christian standard.

- b. How do you avoid favoritism?
- 3. There is the problem of providing for the sexual needs of one's partner.
 - a. Polygamy might satisfy the sexual needs of the male.
 - b. But how could it satisfy the needs of multiple wives?
- 4. There is the problem of enforcing all the laws that surrounded polygamy in the Old Testament, especially since civil law does not recognize the Old Testament as binding and most who claim to be Christians do not seek to follow the Old Testament as a whole.

1. Do not have sexual relations with a woman and her daughter. (Lev. 18:17).	3. Do not have sexual relations with a woman and her daughter's daughter. (Lev. 18:17).	5. Man cannot have sexual relations with another man. (Lev. 18:22).	7. Woman cannot have sexual relations with an animal. (Lev. 18:23).
2. Do not have sexual relations with a woman and her son's daughter. (Lev. 18:17).	4. Do not have sexual relations with your wife in addition to her sister, as rivals. (Lev. 18:18).	6. Man cannot have sexual relations with an animal. (Lev. 18:23).	

- a. How can one appeal to the Old Testament for authority to practice polygamy and then ignore the laws they do not like?
- b. Advocates of polygamy do not normally follow all of these laws, and even if they do or attempt to follow them, they are following the wrong law.
- c. The Bible makes it plain that we are not under the Mosaic law. (Rom. 7:4; Gal. 2:16; 3:24,25; 5:4).

Conclusion

- I. This lesson may appear to some as not applicable, but this is short-sighted.
 - A. Polygamy is practiced in the US and in other places in the world.
 - B. Many are seeking to destroy marriage and define it in any way they see fit.
 - C. Others do not want to enforce monogamy in places where people are polygamous, and this has been a debated subject among missionaries.
 - 1. Those who do not want to enforce this have the same problem if a man has a wife and a girlfriend, two wives, a wife and a boy friend, two girl friends.
 - 2. The breakup of any of these relationships can be very painful.
 - D. We must be prepared to defend marriage, as taught in God's word, or end up in a world that is filled with every kind of perversion.
 - E. More and more people want to do what is right in their own eyes, and do not care about God's word and

living as God wants us to live.

II. We should use Ephesians 5:22-33 as our rule of marriage.

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