



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

Description



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 multiples 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*)
- 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.

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 that 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 than 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:

- “?????????” ([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*”
- “?????????” ([moichos](#)) meaning “adulterer” (male). The technical definition is: “*an adulterer, that is, a man who is guilty with a married woman*”
- “?????????” ([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*).
- “?????????” ([moicheuó](#)) a verb meaning “I commit adultery”. The technical definition is “*to commit adultery with, have unlawful intercourse with another’s wife*”

“

- “??????” ([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:

- “?????” ([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.
- “????????” ([niuph](#)) meaning “adulteries”. No Technical definition given, but related to “naaph” above, so sharing the same definition.
- “?????” ([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, then it 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 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. At a first glance it makes some sense. 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 be 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 “???????” ([opheil?](#)), which means:

Cognate: 3782 *opheil?* (a feminine noun) – a *specific (applied) kind of indebtedness*, implying an “applied obligation” *due to the debt (what is owed)*. See 3781 (*opheilet?s*)

And the word translated “depriving” in verse 5 is “?????????” ([apostereó](#)), which means:

650 *apostereó?* (from 575 /*apó*, “away from” and 4732 /*stereó?*, “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 “?????” ([rabah](#)). It means:

Strong's Concordance:

Definition: to be or become much, many or great

Brown-Driver-Briggs Lexicon:

I. [?????]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 because too many wives will turn the king’s heart from God.

That 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:

While 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 that mean that remaining unmarried is 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. Jesus also said this, as it is written:

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 – "?????????" {[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 multiples 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.

There's more proof that this doesn't apply to polygamy (*polygyny*), but it takes ~2000 words to unpack it, delving into history, sociology, and some elements of the Greek language. Click below to expand the explanation, or feel free to skip it if you'd like.

(Spoiler: "husband of one wife" was an idiom that meant "wasn't promiscuous". Being an idiom, it shouldn't be taken literally any more than "play your cards right" or "don't bite off more than you can chew" should be taken literally. The important part is the idiomatic sense. See [my article on Bible translations](#) for more information on idioms.)

[Click here to expand a ~2000 word more detailed/technical explanation](#)

Further Proof That “Husband of One Wife” Isn’t about Polygamy (Polygyny)

An extremely strong indication that Paul’s intent wasn’t to prohibit polygamy (*polygyny*) comes from the fact that it was already illegal to have multiple wives under Roman rule (*proof in the quote below*). Remember that 1 Timothy was written to Timothy while he was at Ephesus (*1 Tim 1:3*). Ephesus was under Roman jurisdiction, so polygyny was already illegal. Therefore, Paul talking about elders in a Roman city simply couldn’t refer to polygamy.

(I’m not alone in this opinion either; many, many commentaries point this out.)

Further, Christians didn’t come up with “monogamy only”. The first major nation to be “monogamy only” was actually ancient Babylon, with Greece and Rome being the next two. (*For more information, I recommend the book [Sex and Culture by J.D. Unwin](#).*) In fact, the Romans tried and failed to get rid of polygamy (*polygyny*) among the Jews for hundreds of years.

“When the Christian Church came into being, polygamy was still practiced by the Jews. It is true that we find no references to it in the New Testament; and from this some have inferred that it must have fallen into disuse, and that at the time of our Lord the Jewish people had become monogamous. But the conclusion appears to be unwarranted. Josephus in two places speaks of polygamy as a recognized institution: and Justin Martyr makes it a matter of reproach to Trypho that the Jewish teachers permitted a man to have several wives. Indeed when in 212 A.D. the lex Antoniana de civitate gave the rights of Roman Citizenship to great numbers of Jews, it was found necessary to tolerate polygamy among them, even though **it was against Roman law for a citizen to have more than one wife**. In 285 A.D. a constitution of Diocletian and Maximian interdicted polygamy to all subjects of the empire without exception. But with the Jews, at least, the enactment failed of its effect; and in **393 A.D.** a special law was issued by Theodosius to compel the Jews to relinquish this national custom. **Even so they were not induced to conform.**

(“Christian Marriage: An Historical and Doctrinal Study” by Joyce, George Hayward)

The pagan cultures of Greece and Roman enforced “monogamy only”, but the Jews didn’t. Greece and Rome were radical for preventing their men from having more than one wife, as nearly all other civilizations in world history – Jews included – allowed polygyny.

Polygyny, which is the proper term for when a man takes multiple wives, and to a much lesser extent polyandry, a woman taking multiple husbands, was overwhelmingly common in our past. Being present in approximately **85%** of anthropologically recorded cultures on Earth, polygamy is incredibly common historically. This includes relatively egalitarian hunter-gatherer societies, where there was not any great disparity in wealth, as well as agrarian societies where there was a much greater disparity in wealth.

[\(Source.\)](#)

Even our word “Romantic” means “*to be like the Romans*” referring to monogamy-only societies.

Now with that context, we’ll look at the linguistic argument.

The Linguistic Argument

Greek doesn’t have separate words for “wife” vs “woman”. They’re both the same word, which Paul used in this verse: “????” ([guné](#)).

wife, woman.

Probably from the base of ginomai; a woman; specially, a wife — wife, woman.

Further, the Greek word translated “husband” there is “????” ([anér](#)), which can mean either “man” as in “a male human being”, or it can mean “a husband”.

fellow, husband, man, sir.

A primary word (compare anthropos); a man (properly as an individual male) — fellow, husband, man, sir.

For both words, only context determines which is intended. Thus, the Greek in this passage is literally a “one woman man”. (*Which just about any Greek commentary will confirm, and many English ones too.*)

We’ll get to why that’s important in a minute.

The phrase “one woman man” in 1 Timothy 3:2 has a companion 2 chapters later in 1 Timothy 5:9.

1 Timothy 5:9

A widow is to be put on the list only if she is not less than sixty years old, having been the wife of one man,

Again, the Greek words used here can mean wife/woman and man/husband respectively, with only context dictating which is intended. So it literally reads: “one man woman” in 5:9; just like 3:2 reads “one woman man”. The exact same words are used, only the order/gender is switched.

For now, we’ll pretend that “wife of one husband” was the intention.

Consider that Paul is talking about widows.

Then notice the phrase “having been”.

The full meaning of the Greek is lost because our English language is more limited than the original Greek in some ways. For example, Greek has more tenses than English does. Tenses indicate time, and Greek has a tense that English doesn't have called the “perfect tense”. **The phrase “having been” in this verse is in the Greek perfect tense**, so we'll spend a little time examining it.

Here are two good explanations of what the perfect tense means:

The perfect tense expresses perfective action. Perfective action involves a present state which has resulted from a past action. The present state is a **continuing** state; the past action is a completed action.

[Source.](#)

Or as another website puts it:

Any Greek student is familiar with the basic idea of the perfect tense: completed action. The tense is used to describe an action or process that (1) has been completed and (2) has produced **results that are still in effect** at the time of writing.

[Source.](#)

The perfect tense means something was done in the past (*completed action*), which then resulted in an ‘ongoing state’ which continues to the present day. For example, Hebrews 12:2 says:

Hebrews 12:2

fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down (*perfect tense*) at the right hand of the throne of God.

The phrase “has sat down” is one word in the Greek perfect tense. It means that Jesus “sat down” in the past (*completed action*), and remains in the **ongoing ‘state’** of being seated up to the present moment. Some translations focus on the “continuing state” aspect and translate it “is seated”.

Hebrews 12:2 (ESV)

looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Notice that the present tense is an accepted way to translate the perfect tense because of this ongoing state which results from an action that was completed in the past. Regardless, it means an action was

done/completed in the past and the resultant ongoing state continues up to the present.

That's the perfect Greek tense.

This is VERY important: the word translated "having been" in 1 Timothy 5:9 is in the perfect tense.

This is crucial.

(And you can double check this by looking at [this verse in an interlinear Bible](#). The "R" in the "V-RPA-NFS" underneath the word tells you it's in the perfect tense if you look at [that website's parsing guide](#).)

1 Timothy 5:9

A widow is to be put on the list only if she is not less than sixty years old, having been (*perfect tense*) the wife of one man,

Remember, the Greek perfect tense indicates an action that is **completed** in the past, which results in an **ongoing state** in the present. Think about that in the context of the verse, especially if we translate it "wife of one husband".

Do you see the problem yet?

It's like in Hebrews 12:2 where Jesus sat down in the past (*completed action*), which resulted in Him continuing to be seated up to the present (*ongoing state*). So in the perfect tense, a woman became a wife in the past (*completed action*), but for the perfect tense to be accurate, she must **remain** in that same **ongoing state** up to the present; the ongoing state of being a **wife**.

However, if a wife became a widow because her husband died, her **state** would change. She wouldn't be in the **ongoing state** of being a wife, she would have **change states** from being a wife to being a widow.

So when 1 Timothy says:

1 Timothy 5:9

A widow is to be put on the list only if she is not less than sixty years old, having been (*perfect tense*) the wife of one man,

Consider what this means if we translated this verse "husband of one wife":

Because of the perfect tense, it means that the woman would remain in the ongoing state of being a wife, even after her husband is dead and thus she's changed states from 'wife' into 'widow'...

...which makes no sense.

It's **impossible** for a woman to remain in the **ongoing state** of being a wife when she doesn't have a husband. Therefore, a woman can't currently be in the **ongoing state** of being the "wife of one

husband” if she isn’t a wife at all!

See the issue?

As we saw, in Hebrews 12:2 the ESV translated a perfect tense word as “is seated” (*present tense*) to highlight this ongoing state. Doing the same thing here would result in this:

1 Timothy 5:9 (*modified*)

A widow is to be put on the list only if she is not less than sixty years old, being the wife of one man,

A widow currently being the wife of one man is simply ludicrous!

Translating it “wife of one man” creates an impossible problem because of this. Paul says that a widow – an unmarried woman – must be in the *ongoing state* of being a wife to be put on the list. A widow must be married to be on the list of widows?! That’s impossible.

It’s ludicrous.

It simply makes no sense...

...unless it doesn’t actually mean “wife of one husband” at all.

Now, there are two options for what it could mean instead. We’ve already talked about how the phrase is more literally “one woman man” here, which tells us that marriage is not involved. Period. It’s simply impossible for marriage to have been Paul’s point here because of what we just talked about.

Now consider:

- **If:** “husband of one wife” is an incorrect understanding
- **And if:** “one woman man” doesn’t refer to marriage at all
- **Then:** “one woman man” simply can’t refer to polygamy at all, because polygamy is a type of marriage.

Now you might ask: “*What does ‘one woman man’ mean then, and doesn’t it still prohibit polygamy for elders?*” The words and “one woman man” sounds like a slam dunk case against one man having multiple women.

That’s 100% true...

...unless “one woman man” isn’t what Paul meant at all, even though that’s what the words mean. Fortunately, there’s one case where this is 100% true:

Idioms

The [Cambridge dictionary defines an idiom](#) thusly:

Idiom: a group of words in a fixed order that have a particular meaning that is different from the meanings of each word on its own:

- *To “have bitten off more than you can chew” is an idiom that means you have tried to do something which is too difficult for you.*

For more proof that this is an idiom, we'll look at the cultural context.

Sex outside of marriage wasn't just available to Roman males – **it was expected**. When a Roman father decided his son was old enough to take on some adult duties (at about age 14) the family celebrated, and his parents gave him a ring to demonstrate his status to others. Large numbers of these diminutive rings have survived, and a common symbol on them is an erect phallus. They wanted to remind their son that sexual activity was part of being a man.

...there were more brothels in Roman streets than pubs in English ones.

([Source.](#))

Like we saw earlier, Rome was strictly monogamous by law. Multiple wives weren't permitted and having more than one wife was punished with varying degrees of severity depending on the time period. **But while they could only have one wife, a LOT of Romans had other sexual partners that they weren't married to.**

The Romans often had others “*on the side*” they had sex with, even though they were married to someone else. This practice became very widespread, so much that it was nearly ubiquitous. A “one woman man” is an obvious way of saying that a man didn't sleep around with women he weren't married to.

It's also supported by the historical context:

Paul told Timothy of the minimum level of morality that he expected in a Church leader. He had to be ‘a man of one woman’ (usually translated ‘...of one wife’, 1 Timothy 3:2, 12), just as a widow who wanted church support had to have been ‘a woman of one man’ (5:9). The meaning of these phrases is puzzling because they don't occur elsewhere in Greek literature. They can't mean ‘monogamous’ because no one practiced bigamy (it was against Roman law); and they can't mean ‘married only once’ because Paul elsewhere advises young widows to remarry (1 Timothy 5:14).

The puzzle is partly solved when we translate the phrase ‘a woman of one man’ into Latin – ‘*univera*’ (‘one man’) – because this was used very commonly, mostly on the gravestones. It referred to women who remained faithful to their husband.

In contrast, the phrase ‘man of one woman’ doesn’t have a Latin equivalent. This is because it would be an absurd concept. Married men weren’t expected to be faithful, and no man would have this on his grave because it wouldn’t be regarded as a compliment even if anyone believed it. Men had mistresses if they were rich and used brothels if they were poor (or if they just wanted a change), and household slaves were always available.

([Source.](#))

The Latin inscription “*univera* (‘one man’)” on headstones meant one thing: “this woman only ever had sex with her spouse”.

That is,

- She never had sex with anyone before getting married
- She only had sex with her husband after getting married

It’s an idiom.

The phrase “one man woman” is an idiom which encapsulates the entire Christian sexual ethic of no sex outside of marriage.

Paul takes the well-known Latin phrase and writes it in Greek, only this time he applies it to men. That is, he says the expectation for men is the same as for women: no sex outside of marriage. No brothels, no mistresses, and no sleeping with the slaves either; sex is for wives only.

One (*very obscure*) translation renders the phrase in 1 Timothy 3:2 as “*a man who isn’t promiscuous*” for this exact reason.

This is further confirmed by looking at the list of requirements for elders in 1 Timothy 3:1-7. If you read it, you’ll notice that something is conspicuous by its absence: a requirement for sexually purity. If “one woman man” refers to marriage, then there’s no requirement for sexual fidelity among church elders. Therefore, an elder could (*theoretically*) sleep around to his heart’s content and still fit with Paul’s list of requirements. (*Though obviously there are many other places which prohibit such immorality.* [The Bible is very clear that sex outside of marriage is wrong.](#))

Again, Paul was using a common idiom of the day to say elders can’t sleep around. It’s not a prohibition against polygamy/polygyny, unless a widow can be the “wife of one husband” without even having a husband. Paul borrowed a common idiom/phrase which meant “didn’t have sex outside of marriage” and applied it to men.

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 “?????” ([heautoú](#)).

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 Cor 7:2 literally it 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 do we how to 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 "?????" (*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's chose **specifically allowed** for polygyny in this passage.

If God doesn't do things on 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 divorce*), it's also not a sin.

However, I realize that 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 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 verse to go to.

However, there are verses which 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 far 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.

God Commanded Polygamy/Polygyny – Round #1

Under two specific circumstances, polygamy (*polygyny*) was not only allowed by the Mosaic Law, it was **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 isn't any exception in the text to indicate that he was. 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 more obvious if you look at the Hebrew word translated “man”. It's the word “?????” (*ish*), pronounced “eesh”, and it's used 376 times in the Old Testament. But get this: almost 20% of the times 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 "?????" ([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 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 and God command 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 geocide, 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:

2nd 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. God's “slavery” was 100% voluntary on the part of the “slave”, it was of a limited duration (*7 years max*), it was forbidden to return a runaway “slave” to his master, and when the 7 years were up, the former “slave” was sent out with a bunch of stuff from his master.

Rather than quote all the verses for this, I'll link to a video by Mike Winger about this. He has [a shorter video](#) that's an overview and [a longer video](#) with more detail. He goes over the verses and please check those videos out if you want to understand biblical “slavery” better.

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*”, that 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; 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 all already married? That’s the essence, and you’ll see that this applied when the brother was already married based the following verses. Also, notice the use of the Hebrew word “?????” (*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 the husband’s brother was already married.

The word translated “house” is the Hebrew word “?????” ([bayith](#)) The literal definition is “house”, however 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”, certainly 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 which 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 “????????” ([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 which 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 contained 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 polygynist 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 “????” ([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 {khole}; 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 (?????) in bosom,
3. bosom as part of body:
 1. a. external, lie in bosom, of wife
 2. 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.

Consider, **If:**

James 1:17

Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.

Then:

If God offered more wives, wouldn’t that mean that multiples wives are a “good thing given” and a “perfect gift”? James even specifies that God doesn’t change, so why wouldn’t it be a good thing now?

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 the 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 suggesting 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 [the 5th article in my series on marriage](#). While I don't explicitly touch this topic, the reason husbands don't need their wives' permission should be obvious from that article.

Additionally, I recommend you start the marriage series from the beginning before you read the 5th article. Please read [this article first](#) (*as a sort of introduction*), and then the first article, entitled: [How Getting Marriage “Wrong” Destroyed Every Great Civilization in World History](#). You can see the full index for the marriage series at the end of this article.

(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.)

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.

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 was 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:

- a. [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](#)
 - a. [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...](#)
 - o [Appendix A: Biblical Reasons for Divorce, When Remarriage is Allowed, and How Adultery Figures In](#)