

## The Plan of God

**Matthew 19:4...** *Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, 5 And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? 6 Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.* From passages like **Genesis 2:24** and **Matthew 9:4-6** we see that God's plan is for a man and a woman (both unmarried) to leave their parents to form a home, in marriage. What marks this union is that the two make commitment between them, and this commitment does not end until the death of one of the two. (**Romans 7:1-3**) The reason for the marriage was the loneliness of the man, and if he were married, he would not have loneliness.

## The Attack against Marriage

The first attacks on marriage were adultery (one married and the other married or not), then fornication (sexual perversion) then polygamy (multiple marriage partners), and also divorce. Then we see homosexuality and lesbianism, in addition to other sexual perversions such as incest, bestiality, and other things that we can not mention. God has made it very clear to us that all this is against his will, and this will is *"male and female... shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh"*. (**Matthew 19:4**).

In addition, we have to emphasize that this **marriage is for life**. On the one hand, young people should think and pray for a long time before entering into marriage, and on the other hand, they should take the marriage with great seriousness and solemnity (importance).

We must clarify that within the norms and customs of the Old Testament, to have sex with a woman implied obligations towards that woman, be free, or be a slave. First, if she was married, then the death penalty was applied for rape (**Leviticus 20:10**). The act of taking what belongs to their neighbor was condemned with the death penalty under the law (**Exodus 20:17**).

Abraham had a wife, Sarah, and his relationship with Hagar was incorrect, although Sarah proposed it. When Ishmael was born and grew up, God sent Abraham to send Hagar and his other concubines out (**Genesis 25:6**), because there was competition with Sarah. After Sarah died (**Genesis 23:1-2**), Abraham married Keturah again (**Genesis 25:1**). Isaac had only one wife. In the case of Jacob and his wives, Leah and Rachel, it was a hoax by his father-in-law that it turned out that he had two wives. Jacob married Raquel although Laban had not given her yet.

## Polygamy among the Patriarchs

In David's case, David was outside the will of God in many of his practices. There is much that he did wrong with his wives, but we see that Michal probably died soon (**2 Samuel 6:23**). David did wrong by Bethsheba, but his problem was his attitude and his actions of disobedience before God. When he repented, God forgave David, but his situation with these women was still a problem. He had 10 concubines, and David took care of them. **2 Samuel 20:3** *And David came to his house at Jerusalem; and the king took the ten women his concubines, whom he had left to keep the house, and put them in ward, and fed them, **but went not in unto them. So they were shut up unto the day of their death, living in widowhood.*** David never had sexual relations with them (they remained as widows) until his death. Solomon also had many women, but clearly they were his downfall.

## God overlooked Man's Disobedience

**Acts 17:30** *And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:*

God did not condemn the multiple wives of the patriarchs, at least not very openly. Remember that the order of the Bible is not the order the books were written. Genesis was written by Moses, who was very much after Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in time. Even with the books of Moses we see the kings of Israel and Judah taking multiple wives.

**It is important in this discussion to condemn polygamy. It was never acceptable to God, even though God did not directly punish patriarchs**

**for doing so.** It is a great headache to have more than one wife. God does not need to do anything extra! In their situations, the knowledge, the environment, etc., they had very little knowledge of the whole will of God, not like us who have 66 books of the Bible to study.

Actually, polygamy was a common practice since before the Law of Moses, and the Law of Moses did not directly attack this practice, but the law proposed rules about it, and also with other parallel practices. Consider **Exodus 22:16** *And if a man entice a maid that is not betrothed, and lie with her, he shall surely endow her to be his wife.* God did not approve of fornication here, but **God imposed the rule that every man takes responsibility for his actions.**

We can criticize the institution of slavery equally. Although it existed at the time of the Bible, the Bible did not directly condemn slavery, but regulated several aspects of the practice of slavery. The important thing here is to note that although for reasons that only God knows, the institution was not directly condemned or prohibited, neither was it sanctioned as allowed, or exemplary. God just did not comment on it.

God forbade kings from having too many wives (**Leviticus 21:13; Deuteronomy 17:17; Exodus 21:10**). Solomon obviously did not pay attention to this (**2 Samuel 3:2-5, 14; 5:13**). **The kings made this practice to ensure they had an heir by the time they died.** But when Moses wrote Genesis, it was very clear in the account of the creation of Adam and Eve, that God wanted to emphasize that one man, and one woman, joined together to be *"one flesh."* (**Genesis 2:23-24**) **The emphasis is on the two joining to be a single unit, indivisible, and without more participants (no more men, no more women).** The idea of unity is directly against either of them having another (sexual or romantic) partner. **The unit is destroyed when one of the two has another.** The biblical examples of polygamy proved this point very well.

Although the pattern is very clear between a single man and a single woman, the lack of condemnation has caused problems for some. Martin Luther, studying the matter, observed that Jesus did not condemn polygamy or propose a change in the

system, but spoke about unity in marriage. The conclusion for Luther was then that he also could not condemn polygamy.

When cultures allowed polygamy, it was usually limited to have four wives at most, and each had all the rights of a wife to man, such as having a house for herself and her children. **But the Jews condemned the practice with Rabbi Gersom (1000 AD)**. There were rules applying when they took another woman, nothing would be diminished from the first wife (**Ex. 21:10**). These types of laws although regulating the practices did not approve of them, because they were neither wise nor truly God's will.

### The New Testament Pattern

**1 Timothy 3:2** A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife...**12** Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife...

God proposed, as the local and visible example for believers, that the pastor be a man of God. The Pastor and the deacon are the moral examples for the church to follow. In both cases, they are to be men "of a single wife". This is a broader standard than being married to one woman. They must not have other romances than their single wife. Nothing else satisfies God's will. The phrase carries the meaning that the man is to have only affections and relationship with a single woman (the opposite of polygamy).

**1 Corinthians 7:2** Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. It is permissible for each man to have one (singular) wife, and for each woman to have one (singular) husband. The singularity and exclusiveness of the couple is very strong and obvious, making polygamy impossible. There is no place for more until the death of your partner.

### Adultery, Two Wives at the Same Time

**Romans 7:1** Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? **2** For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be

*dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. 3 So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress; but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.*

When God unites two people in marriage, God prohibits anybody to separate them (**Matthew 19:4-9**). This means that neither divorce nor polygamy is the will of God. Simply having two wives or two living spouses at the same time is adultery. For those who divorce, they should be left alone until their ex-husband, or ex-wife, dies. To remarry would be to commit adultery according to God.

**Matthew 19:8** He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. **9** And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.

**Conclusion:** In the Old Testament, there are institutions such as polygamy, concubines, and slavery, which God does not openly condemn, but they are not the standard of God. During these times people had less light than we now have, and they did things that for us are clearly wrong.

## Polygamy:

# Is it biblical to have multiple spouses?

By David Cox

[FAM13] v1r ©2008 www.coxtracts.com  
This brochure can be freely photocopied and printed.



**Genesis 2:24** Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh..

Is it biblical to be married to more than one person? In our day there are many crazy things going on, and one of these is the taking and leaving marriage partners as if people are just changing clothes. Some religious groups such as Mormons teach that it is biblical for a man to have several wives. They use for their defense the example of the Old Testament patriarchs when they had several wives and concubines at the time. This tract examines this matter to clarify it. First, let's clarify that the Bible gives the right of a widow or widower to marry again with another person. Marriage dissolves in death, and it is acceptable and allowed to marry again.