

Polygamy and Related Practices in the Bible

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Introduction

In the beginning, God created man and woman to be monogamous. Woman was created by God from man to be a partner and helpmate to him. Although relationships apart from monogamous relationships occur, they are not what is best for men and women and generally cause problems and difficulties. In this study we will be reviewing a number of relationships between men and women in the Bible which are not monogamous.

God's relationship with his people is often pictured as a marriage relationship. In that relationship, monogamy is expected, not polygamy. God is a "jealous" God and he expects his people not to be chasing after other Gods. This is made clear in the first two of the 10 Commandments. In the First Commandment God says that we are to have no other gods before Him. (Gen. 20:2). In the Second Commandment God describes himself as "a Jealous God." (Gen. 2:5).

When God's people are not faithful it is viewed as "harlotry" or "adultery.". The prophet Hosea and his wife Gomer are a picture of what happens when the people of God are not faithful to God and go seeking other spiritual relationships. Hosea represents God who redeems man. Gomer represents the people of God who stray and commit adultery. Satan seeks to destroy the people of God through the use of adulteries and polygamous relationships. Satan used men and women who were not Jewish to draw the Jewish people into idolatry. He wants men and women to be unfaithful to him. He uses Delilah's to entrap Samson's and he uses sexual sins and indiscretions to trap many men and women of God to destroy their witness and usefulness.

Although it is embarrassing to admit but man apparently has an inherent weakness to say "Yes" when a woman makes any type of request, especially if that woman is attractive. We seem to devolve to boys "who can't say no." Men seem to act as though they believe the quote of Nikos Kazantzakis in Zorba the Greek when Zorba says: "If a woman sleeps alone it puts a shame on all men. God has a very big heart, but there is one sin He will not forgive. If a woman calls a man to her bed and he will not go." Man seems to have innate weakness in the flesh to say "No" to a pretty women when it involves sex and will develop the most bizarre rationalizations to excuse his weakness and bad morals.

If Eve offers the fruit to Adam, he does not say "No" but instead says "Yes" to her offer even though it meant disobeying God. Then he tries to excuse himself by saying "Well, the woman offered it to me." If Sarai says to Abram, perhaps you can have an heir through my servant, Abraham apparently says something like "Well, I guess we can do that." If Rachael and Leah offer their handmaidens to Jacob, he apparently thinks "Why not?" Samson tells all to Delilah despite the fact that he knows she is trying to trap him. David and Solomon apparently used a multitude of excuses, David even went so far to see the husband of Bathsheba is killed. In short man can marshal no end of excuses for infidelity and polygamy including excuses like, " it is allowed by law" , " it provides the needs of poor women", "we need children for the work of the land", " I have taken captives in war", " I need a child because God wants me to have a child and *ad infinitum*.

When polygamy is accepted by the female, apparently many males are happy to go along with the idea of polygamy if they can afford it. When it comes down to a choice between doing it God's way and being faithful or following the flesh, men often succumb, as Adam did, to the way of the flesh. The fact that one is a minister or pastor or patriarch or religious king does not change the fact as evidenced in the many ministers who have shown themselves unfaithful to their spouses.

The inability of men to say "No" is part of the reason that God did not want Israelite men to marry the daughters of those who were not Israelites. Non-Israelite women would bring into the marriage their idols and further teach their children to honor their idols. That is why marriage with "Gentiles" and others who were not Jews was strongly discouraged. It was for this reason that Ezra in Chapter 9 of the Book of Ezra discouraged the pollution of the People of God by intermarriage with non-Jews including the Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, the Jebusites, Ammonites, Moabites, Egyptians and Amorites so that the "holy seed is mixed with the people of those lands." (Ezra 9:4). There appears to be a concern that God's Holy People and the Seed promised in Genesis, could be eradicated both spiritually and physically by the people of the world.

Monogamy not polygamy is the intent of God. It is the role of the church as the Bride of Christ to have a sole and monogamous relationship with the Bride Groom, Jesus Christ. Likewise man is to have a monogamous relationship with his wife. Satan, however, prefers polygamy and infidelity and would seek to have the church also love the world and to both dilute and pollute the Church's love for Christ.

Polygamy is a tool used by Satan to destroy the person of God and to destroy the people of God. It manifests itself in pictures of those who are unfaithful such as Jezebels, Delilahs, Babylon, Gomer, the Great Harlot and all who sell themselves for the riches of this world. The picture is of those who are unfaithful to God.

God however, is able to take those who have been unfaithful and restore them to faithfulness. Here we see examples like Rahab the Harlot, Mary Magdalene, and the woman taken in adultery. People who have been profligate with their affections are bought back from slavery like Gomer was bought back by Hosea. The unfaithful who say "Yes" to God can be redeemed.

In this study we will look at a number of instances in Scripture where polygamy or concubinage was indulged in as well as some of the causes of both. In most of these instances, things did not go well. Many of these practices were developed by men and utilized in ancient times. The practices were regulated by the Bible. However practices like this were similar to slavery. Although the Bible may have set forth regulations in the area, the practice was not encouraged although it was indulged in.

It is clear to me that Jesus was well aware of these practices; however, he knew the true intent of God. I believe Jesus' treatment of these aspects of Biblical history are similar to his pronouncements in the area of divorce. In Matthew 19:3-8 Jesus responded on this issue:

The Pharisees also came to Him, testing Him, and saying to Him, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?" And He answered and said to them, "Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning,

made them male and female, 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? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.” They said to Him, “Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?” He said to them, “Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so.

Jesus did not spend much time justifying the ancient practices. Instead he concentrated on the intent and heart of God. As we review the ancient practices, we should keep in mind, that they were exactly that –practices. Sometimes those practices resulted from war, economics and other factors, but they were not the intent of God. God, in His mercy, dealt directly with those people despite their practices, just as he deals with us today despite our sins, failings and short comings.

Behind this tableau of men and women relationships are the basic drivers found in Genesis. The woman will have a desire for a man. The woman will bring forth a Seed who will defeat Satan. Women will have a desire to reproduce and propagate the race and this will be one of the strongest and most primal of the desires of mankind. It far exceeds modern concepts like love and relationship.

Below we will look more closely at some of the instances of polygamy and concubinage in the Bible and some of the social, economic and other causes of both polygamy and concubinage. As used in my study, polygamy means that a man has more than one wife at the same time (although this is more accurately known as polygyny). Concubinage is a state below marriage where the woman is supported and has certain rights although her status is less than of a married wife.

Not All Patriarchs and Rulers were Polygamous

There are numerous instances of monogamous relationships in the Old Testament. We will first look at a few instances of monogamy and then look at some instances of polygamy.

Adam

Adam was monogamous with Eve. God had created Eve as a helpmate to Adam and there is no recorded instance of Adam having other wives. We first hear of polygamy in Genesis 4:19 when Lemech who was of the “cursed” line of Cain, took two wives, Adah and Zillah.

Isaac

Isaac married Rebecca. He had no other wives or concubines according to Scripture.

Joseph

Joseph is one of the twelve sons of Jacob/Israel. Joseph marries an Egyptian woman, named Asenath in the Bible (Gen. 41:45). Joseph was monogamous. The offspring of Joseph were Manasseh and Ephraim. Interestingly, the Egyptians believed in marriage and the vast majority of Egypt was monogamous.

Polygamy and Concubinage in The Old Testament.

Abraham

Abraham's first wife was Sarai (later her name was changed to Sarah). Sarah could not have any children. Abraham was rich and like most people who were rich of his time Abraham had slaves and servants. Sarah also had servants, including an Egyptian servant named Hagar. One of the practices of the time was that a woman who was unable to have children, sometimes had children by allowing their husbands to have relations with the servant, and when the child was born the child was considered to be a child of the husband and also of the wife who owned the servant who had given birth to the child. This was the situation which Sarai proposed to Abraham.

In Genesis 16:2-4 this situation is described:

So Sarai said to Abram, "See now, the Lord has restrained me from bearing children. Please go in to my maid; perhaps I shall obtain children by her." And Abraham heeded the voice of Sarai. Then, Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar her maid, the Egyptian, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife, after Abram had dwelt ten years in Canaan. So he went in to Hagar, and she conceived. And when she conceived, her mistress became despised in her eyes.

As I have previously pointed out men have a tendency to say "Yes" to their wives and to other beautiful women in their lives. When Sarai proposes a polygamous arrangement to Abram, he does not suggest that they wait on God. Instead he says, "Yes." From the union of Abraham and Hagar will come Ismael. And from Ismael will come a large and powerful nation who are now known as the Arabs. The competition between the children of Isaac, the Jews, and the children of Ishmael, the Arabs, continues through today.

When God tells Abraham later that a nation will come from a child to be born from Abraham and his wife Sarai, Abraham laughs because Abraham is 100 and Sarah is 90 years old and Abraham responds to God "Oh, that Ishmael might live before You!" (Gen. 17:17-18). God's response at Verse 19 was "No, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac..." (The word "Isaac" means laughter). The promised great kings and the promised Seed and Messiah would come through the line of Isaac. God had done a mighty thing when he fulfilled his promise through Abraham and Sarah. People probably chuckled when they heard that old Sarah was going to have a child and they laughed with joy when Isaac was born. Both Sarah and Abraham had laughed when God said that they would

have the child but it was God who had the last laugh. From laughter would come the King David and the Seed, Jesus, the Messiah.

Sarah lived to see her promised son, Isaac, grow up. Abraham was 137 years old when Sarah died but God was not finished with him. Abraham had been promised to be the Father of many nations and God was not through with him yet. Other nations would come. In Genesis 25:1, it says that "Abraham again took a wife, and her name was Keturah." From that union came six sons and from them came other nations.

Jewish sages dispute who Keturah really was. A few thought that this was another name for Hagar and that she returned to live with Abraham. However other Jewish sages disagree as do most Old Testament scholars. References to Keturah are found at Genesis 25:1-4 and 1 Chronicles 1:32-33. In Genesis she is referred to as "another wife" and the Hebrew word "isah" is used. In the First Chronicles passage she is referred to as a "concubine" and the Hebrew word "pileges" is used. It is entirely likely that both words describe her status.

It is interesting to see how Isaac was treated when it came to inheritance. Genesis 25:5-6 says:

And Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac. But Abraham gave gifts to the sons of the concubines which Abraham had; and while he was still living he sent them eastward, away from Isaac his son, to the country of the east.

Some of the issues which we will discuss at the end of this chapter is how to reconcile our beliefs in monogamy today with the fact that Abraham practiced polygamy and also engaged in slavery. The two issues are not that far apart because women were often treated as property in ancient times. Further some even have taken the position that because polygamy was practiced by Abraham and God still dealt with him in mercy, they believe that God justifies and even promotes polygamy.

The fact of the matter, is that polygamy and, in particular the polygamy of Abraham, generated a great amount of dissension and pain and we even experience its effects today.

The relationship between Sarah and Hagar was difficult and ultimately resulted in Hagar having to leave the household. This departure from the household was even supported by God. There was constant strife between Sarah and Hagar and Hagar began to disrespect Sarah as soon as she found out that she was pregnant. (Gen. 16:4). When Sarah complained to Abraham, he told Sarah to do as she pleased about Hagar and Sarah "dealt harshly" with Hagar so that she even fled to the desert. (Gen. 16:6). God told Hagar to return and submit herself to Sarah. Hagar did and when Abraham was 86, Ishmael was born. God had prophesied that Ishmael would be "a wild man" and his hand would be against every man and every man's hand would be against him". (Ge. 16:12).

The trouble between Hagar and Ismael and Sarah continued. When Abraham gave a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned from his mother, Sarah saw Ismael mocking (Gen. 21:9). Sarah went to Abraham and told him to cast out Hagar and Ismael but Abraham was not happy because Ishmael was his son. (Gen. 21:10-11).

However God instructed Abraham to do exactly what Sarah had told Abraham to do but promised him that he would make a nation out of Ishmael because he was from the seed of Abraham. (Gen. 21:12-13). From Ismael came the Arab nations and from Isaac came the Jewish nation.

When it came time for Abraham to die, there was a temporary reconciliation and Isaac and Ishmael buried Abraham together. Since that time there has been continuing enmity between the Arab nations and the Jewish nations.

It was never God's purpose to bring the promised "Seed" through Ishmael and it was not God's purpose to raise up his chosen people through Ishmael. Sarah, instead of depending on God to carry out his promises, tried to assist God's plans through human actions and intelligence. Sarah solved her problem of infertility through a polygamous relationship.

Despite the failings and shortcomings of flesh and blood people, God worked anyway. He did not choose to bless through world through the plan of Sarah but had a purpose which far exceeded Sarah's. Sarah was willing to settle for a surrogate mother to bring about an heir. God had a better plan. That plan was to do a miraculous work in Sarah and cause her to have an heir from her own body. God's plan was to bring The Seed promised to Eve through Sarah, instead of through Hagar. God chose to carry out his promises miraculously, not through man's efforts. God does miracles. He causes Sarah to bear a child in old age; He causes Elizabeth the mother of John the Baptist to bear a child in old age, and he causes Mary to bear a child, Jesus the Messiah, without the help of man. God is a God of the miraculous.

Jacob

Jacob's father Isaac, the son of Abraham, had only one wife. However, Jacob's older twin fraternal brother, Esau, engaged in polygamy. The Bible reports that at age 40, Esau took as wives, Judith the daughter of Beerli the Hittite, and Basemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite. Not only had Esau married outside of the faith but he had married two Hittite women. (Gen. 26:34). Gen. 26:35 says they "were a grief of mind to Isaac and Rebekah." Once again, Satan had managed to corrupt the line from which the Seed would come.

Through trickery, Jacob stole the blessing of Isaac that would have normally gone to Esau. Rebecca, mother of Esau and Isaac, feared that like Eve, Esau may kill Jacob, for stealing the blessing of Isaac and sought a reason to send Jacob away.

So in Genesis 27:46 she says to Isaac: "I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth ("Heth" was the ancestor of the Hittite Nation); if Jacob takes a wife of the daughters of Heth, like those who are the daughters of the land, what good will my life be to me?" In short, Esau had not only engaged in polygamy and but polygamy with the women of the land, who were not Jewish. Isaac sends Jacob to go to Padan Aram so that he can take a wife from Laban's house as opposed to the daughters of Canaan. (Gen. 28:1-3).

Esau finally figures out that his Hittite wives are not pleasing to Isaac and so marries an additional wife Mahalath, who was from Ismael's line. Esau tries to correct the mistake of marrying outside the faith by

adding another wife, but this only compounds the polygamy. Therefore polygamy was continuing to be practiced in Canaan and polygamy was continuing to be practiced in Abraham's line.

Jacob will also engaged in polygamy although it does not appear that this was his initial intent. Instead Jacob is tricked into polygamy and like males before him, his response is "Yes." Jacob fell in love with Rachel and agreed to serve Laban for seven years to marry Rachel. (Gen. 29:15-20). Jacob gets married but finds out the next morning that Laban has tricked him and has given to him Leah, the older daughter, instead. Jacob confronts Laban and Laban tells him to complete his honeymoon week with Leah and then Laban will give him his youngest daughter, Rachel, as well. However, Jacob must serve Laban an extra seven years for Rachel. Now Jacob had Leah as a wife (her maid was Zilpah), and another wife, his beloved Rachel (her maid was Bilhah). (Genesis Gen. 29:26-30). Before long the two wives enter into a competition to make sure that their positions are secure through the birth of children. As part of this competition, each wife also gives their handmaid to Jacob as a wife/concubine with the following results:

- Jacob loves Rachael more than Leah (Gen. 29:30).
- Leah has Reuben and says "Now my husband will love me" (Gen.29:32).
- Leah has Simeon and says that the Lord heard her cry because she was "unloved" (Gen. 29:33).
- Leah has Levi and says that now her husband will become attached to her because she has three sons (Gen. 29:34).
- Leah has a fourth son Judah and stops bearing children (Gen 29:35).
- Rachel says to Jacob, "Give me children , or else I die!" Jacob gets angry and responds that he is not God (Gen. 30:1-2).
- Rachel gives Bilhah her maid to Jacob as wife in order that Rachel may have an heir (and, of course, Jacob says "Yes") (Gen. 30:3).
- Bilhah, Rachel's maid, has a child Dan and Rachel rejoices that God has judged and heard Rachel's case and that Rachel now has a son (Gen. 30:4-6).
- Bilhah, Rachel's maid, has Naphtali and Rachel says "I have wrestled with my sister, and I have prevailed." Gen. 30:7-8).
- Leah who has stopped bearing fights fire with fire and gives Jacob her handmaid Zilpah. Of course, Jacob says "Yes." Zilpah has Gad. (Gen. 30:10-11).
- Zilpah, the handmaid of Leah has Asher and Leah says, "I am happy, for the daughters will call me blessed." (Gen. 30:11-13)
- Rachel agrees to give up Jacob for a night to Leah for some mandrakes found by Reuben which were believed to have properties that would cause fertility. Jacob is told by Leah that he has to spend the night with her because Rachel agreed to give him up for the night as part of the deal. Of course, Jacob says "Yes" because that is what guys say and Leah has a fifth son, who she names Issachar. (Gen. 30:14-18).
- Leah has a son Zebulun. Leah says "now my husband will dwell with me because I have borne him six sons." The six sons are Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar and Zebulun. In addition, Zilpah, Leah's maid, has born Jacob Asher and Gad.
- Leah has a daughter, Dinah.

- Rachel later has a son named Joseph and says “ God has taken away my reproach” (Gen. 30:22-24)
- A number of years later , Rachel will have a child and die in childbirth and the name of this child is Benjamin.

You can see from the names and the events that the household of Jacob was not a place of peace. There was dissension between Rachel and Leah. Rachel was loved by Jacob but Leah not so much. Leah had children but Rachel did not. There was competitiveness wives and between the children. The children of the handmaidens were probably reminded regularly that their status was inferior to the children of Leah and Rachel.

To summarize the children again:

Leah’s Children: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar and Zebulun. Leah also had Dinah.

Rachel’s Children: Joseph and Benjamin (who would be born later)

Bilhah’s (Maid of Rachel) Children: Dan and Naphtali

Zilpah’s (Maid of Leah): Gad and Asher

There were clearly favorites among the wives and the children. If there were any doubt as to who ranked where it became perfectly obvious when Jacob left Laban’s employment and returned to his homeland. Jacob was to be met by his brother Esau and had good reason to believe that Esau was not going to be happy to see him because Jacob had cheated his brother out of both the birthright and the blessing of their father Isaac.

As Jacob returns to meet his brother he segments his family so that if Esau is angry he will meet the less loved members first and kill them giving the others an opportunity to escape. So let’s look at how Jacob organizes them. If there were every any doubt where you ranked in Jacob’s family these actions dispelled them. First Jacob divides his family as well as his flocks, herds and camels into two groups. (Gen. 32:6-8). When Esau comes with his 400 men, Jacob puts Bilhah and Zilpah and their children in front. Following them he puts Leah and her children next. Rachel and Joseph are at the end of the column at the safest position. (Gen. 33:1-3). Any so Jacob signals their importance. The concubine wives and their children would be slaughtered first, Leah and her children next and finally Jacob and Rachel were safely in the back.

Polygamy generated a pecking order among the twelve tribes of Israel. Further the polygamous family was neither peaceful nor free of envies, deceit and hatred. Some of the things which would happen in this not so happy family of twelve brothers and one sister were as follows:

- Dinah would be raped by the Prince of Shekem. (Gen. 34:1-4).
- Simeon and Levi her brothers would lie and trick the Prince of Shekem and end up killing the rapist, the father of the rapist and all of the men of the town of Shekem. (Gen. 34:5-31)

- Joseph, the son of Rachel brings a bad report about his half-brothers from Bilhah and Zilpah (Gen. 37:2)
- Jacob makes Joseph a tunic of many colors and it makes all of his brothers envious because Jacob loved him the best. (Gen. 37:3-4)
- Joseph's brothers decide to kill him but instead sell him into slavery. (Gen. 37:18-36).
- Joseph's brothers lie to their father, bring Joseph's torn and bloody cloak to Jacob, and let him conclude that Joseph had been killed by wild beasts. (Gen. 37:31-35)
- Judah marries a Canaanite woman and his first two children were so evil that the Scripture says that God killed them. (Gen. 38:1-10).
- Reuben the oldest son has sex with Jacob's wife Bilhah. (Gen. 35:22).
- Judah unknowingly has sex with his daughter-in-law Tamar and has two children by her (Gen 31:1-30).

Polygamy had not produced a righteous family. However, God in his mercy would continue to work through sinful and fallen people. The line of the Messiah would go through Jacob. Instead of going through Jacob's favorite Rachel, it would go through Leah and then through Judah and his daughter-in-law Tamar and eventually through King David and on to the birth of the Seed, Jesus Christ. God patiently works with us even though we are sinful and make mistakes.

Now we shall turn to polygamy and some of the Kings in the Old Testament.

Saul

During the time of Saul, polygamy was not uncommon among the rich and was generally practiced by kings. Polygamy began slowly during the time of Saul and then increased more during the time of David and Solomon.

We cannot be certain; however we know that Saul had at least one wife and also had a concubine. His wife was Ahimaaz and he had four sons and two daughters by her. (1 Sam.14:51; 2 Sam. 2:8 and 1 Chron. 8:33). Saul also had a concubine named Rizpah and he had two sons by her. (2 Sam. 21:8). When Saul was superseded by King David, God admonished David said at 2 Sam12: 8, "I gave your master's house and your master's wives into your keeping and gave you the house of Israel and Judah."

Polygamy by the monarchy would increase during the reigns of David and Solomon. Sometimes, polygamy was also used as a means of conducting affairs of state and making treaties.

King David

Even though David was "a man after God's own heart", he seemed to give little thought that polygamy was wrong. Yet polygamy and a lack of sexual morality did not bless David but instead brought death, destruction and heart-ache.

David's first wife, Michal, was the daughter of King Saul. Saul first offered his oldest daughter, Merab, to David but then decided to give her another. (1 Sam. 18:17-19). Saul then decided to give his youngest daughter, Michal, to David providing David gave Saul as a dowry 100 foreskins from the Philistines. David and his men, kill two hundred Philistines and pay Saul twice his asking price. (1 Sam. 18: 20-30). Eventually, David has to flee the presence of Saul before Saul kills him and he flees leaving Michal with her father, who eventually gives her to another man as his wife. (1 Sam. 25:44). David and Michal have no children.

During the time that David is living in the wilderness, he takes two additional wives. The first was Ahinoam of Jezreel ((1 Sam. 25:43)and the next was Abigail the wife of Nabal whose husband had died after almost being killed by David (1 Sam. 25:1-43).

Another wife of David was Bathsheba. Bathsheba was the wife of Uriah the Hittite, one of the well-known soldiers serving David. While Joab and the army is at war, David remains in Jerusalem. David is on the roof of his palace in the evening and sees Bathsheba taking a bath on her roof. He summons her to the palace and has sex with her. Bathsheba becomes pregnant with David's baby and informs him that she is pregnant. King David tries to hide his adultery by commanding that Uriah come home with the hope that Uriah will have relations with his wife while on furlough and think that the baby belongs to him. However, Uriah frustrates David's efforts. He refuses to go see his wife, claiming that it is not right to do so when the army and its soldiers are still at battle. Also he refuses to go home even through David gets him drunk. Finally, David sends Uriah back to the army but arranges for Uriah's death by having Joab put Uriah in the front lines before the walls of the besieged town of Rabbah and then having the soldiers around him pull back. Uriah is killed by the Amorites at Rabbah and David marries Bathsheba. (2 Sam. 11:1-27)

In 2 Samuel 11:27 it says that David's actions "displeased the Lord." God sends the Prophet Nathan to pronounce judgment upon King David for his actions. Nathan tells David the story about a very rich man who had lots of herds and flocks. When a visitor comes, instead of sacrificing one of his own ewes, the rich man goes to his neighbor who has only one small ewe that he has loved and takes that lamb and uses it as a sacrifice to feed the rich man's guest. When David hears the story, he says this evil man should die and restore four lambs for the one that he stole. Nathan tells David that he is the rich man and that he has stolen Bathsheba and has killed her husband Uriah with the sword of the Ammonites. Nathan tells David that he shall not die for his sin but he will experience adversity from his own house, his wives shall be given to a neighbor who will have sex with them openly and that the child born to him and Bathsheba will die. (2 Sam:12:1-15).

Interestingly, Uriah and Bathsheba had a monogamous marriage. David who was engaged in polygamy gave little consideration about engaging in adultery with Bathsheba. After all, he was the King and she was beautiful. The man with the single "lamb" was Uriah and the man with the many flocks and sheep was David.

The consequences of David's action were severe and set off a chain reaction in his polygamous household which will be discussed later.

Another important wife of David was Maacah who was the daughter of Talmai, who was King of Geshur (1 Chron. 3:3). Maacah was the mother of Absalom.

Other wives included Haggai, Abital and Eglah (2 Sam 3:2-5; 1 Chron. 3:1-3). In addition Samuel had other wives and concubines and children from them. (2 Sam. 5:13-16).

With so many wives and concubines there was a constant competition between wives and their children for power and position.

The adversity prophesied by Nathan began when the King's eldest son who was Amnon born from David's wife Ahinoam fell in love with this half-sister Tamar. Tamar was a sister of Absalom and a daughter of Maacah. Amnon lured Tamar to his bedroom pretending to be sick, raped her, refused to marry her and then kicked her out. Tamar went in mourning to her brother Absalom who began to plot to take revenge against Amnon. (2 Sam. 13:1-22).

Absalom said nothing to Amnon, waited two years and then invited all of the King's sons to a banquet. At the banquet, Absalom killed the oldest son, Amnon, in revenge for the rape of Tamar. (2 Sam. 13:23-33). Absalom then fled to his grandfather Talmai, King of Geshur. After, three years, Absalom was allowed to return to Israel.

Eventually Absalom committed treason against King David. He went to Hebron and raised an army to fight against his father. Many people from Israel and Judah decided to support Absalom including Ahithophel, one of David's finest counselors. David and his entourage fled from Jerusalem; however, David left ten of his concubines to keep the palace. (2 Sam. 15:16). When Absalom takes possession of Jerusalem, Ahithophel suggested that Absalom pitch a tent on top of David's palace and there Absalom had sex with the ten concubines. Ahithophel said that these actions would assure Israel that the ties to David were cut irretrievably and that he would "be abhorred" by his father David. (2 Sam. 16:20-23). In addition, sleeping with concubines of a king was a means of showing to the world that you were seceding to the rights and rulership of that king. So, of course, Absalom said "Yes" and did as Ahithophel suggested.

Eventually, the rebellion of Absalom fails. Absalom is killed by Joab against David's orders. When David returns to Jerusalem, there is an issue on what action to take regarding the ten concubines. David has them placed into seclusion but does not visit them again for sexual relations. He does continue to support them however. It is a very sad situation because they are forced to live in widowhood for the rest of their lives. (2 Sam. 20:3).

During his lifetime, David had a number of other sons. This included Daniel from Abigail, Adonijah from his wife Haggith, Shephatiah from his wife Abital, Ithream from his wife Eglah, Shimea, another son of Bathsheba, Sobab from Bathsheba, Nathan from Bathsheba and Solomon from Bathsheba. Other sons born to David include Ibhar, Shishai, Eliphelet, Nogah, Nepheg, Japhia, Elishama, Eliada, Eliphelet and Jerimoth. In short, David had many sons and daughters from a number of different wives and concubines.

As you can see, David's family life was filled with rebellion, hardship and adversity.

King Solomon

While King David still lived, at the end of life, there was another conflict between his sons as to whom would become king. David's fourth son, Adonijah, the son of Haggith, proclaimed himself as king with the support of the head of the army Joab. However, others opposed Adonijah including one of the generals, Benaiah, the priest Zadok, Nathan the Prophet and some of David's personal guards. Adonijah was an older brother to his half-brother Solomon; however David had promised Bathsheba that Solomon would be the king who would follow David. Nathan advises Bathsheba to go to David and remind him of David's promise to her that Solomon would sit upon David's throne when he was gone. She does so. While she is telling King David that Adonijah is declaring himself as king, Nathan comes in and supports her statement. (1 Kings 1: 1-32).

David commands that David's servants have Solomon ride to Gihon Springs where he would be anointed with oil by the Priest Zadok and the Prophet Nathan. A horn is blown and people began to chant "Long live King Solomon! Benaiah and part of the army is there along with David's guards and the city breaks into celebration. (1 Kings 1:28-48).

When this occurs Adonijah and all of those with him become afraid. Those who are with Adonijah flee and Adonijah goes to the Horns of the Altar of the Tabernacle and pleads for his life, which Solomon promises to grant him so long as he stays out of trouble.(1 Kings 1:49-53).

Before David's death, David had a beautiful young girl who warmed his bed, but David because of his age did not have sex with her. Her name was Abishag the Shunamite. (1 Kings 1-4). After David dies Adonijah goes to Solomon's mother Bathsheba and asks her to ask for Abishag the Shunamite to be Adonijah's wife and she agrees to ask her son, King Solomon. When Bathsheba asks this request, Solomon is outraged and tells her that this is the equivalent of asking to be king. Solomon then condemns Adonijah to death for making a second attempt at the kingship and Benaiah is sent by Solomon and executes Adonijah.

The incident with Abishag again illustrates how sex with a king's wife or concubine was in effect proclaiming yourself to be king. The situation with Adonijah also shows the dissension and problems that result from polygamy. The practice of polygamy promoted discord, favoritism, intrigues, plots, rivalries and even deaths.

Solomon enters into a treaty with Pharaoh of Egypt by marrying Pharaoh's daughter and moving her to Jerusalem. This will begin a long process which will involve many treaties and many wives for political alliances and other purposes. With these foreign wives and concubines comes a tolerance for their gods. After all, it is good politics to accommodate the religious beliefs of others.

In First Kings, the third chapter, God had appeared to Solomon and allowed him to ask for a gift. Solomon asked for the "an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good

and evil.” (1 Kings 3:6-9). God was pleased with the request of Solomon and granted him a wise and understanding heart but also gave him riches and honor. (1 Kings 3:12-13). Solomon is considered to be the wisest man who ever lived and we use phrases today such as “the wisdom of Solomon.”

Interestingly, we know only the name of one of Solomon’s wives which was Naamah, who was an Ammonite, and the mother of Rehoboam who would be the successor to Solomon. (1 Kings 14:21-31; 2 Chron. 12:13).

Despite Solomon’s great wisdom, Solomon took 700 wives and 300 concubines. Those women drew his heart away from God. Solomon not only said “Yes” to the temptations of the flesh and pleasure but when his wives wanted to keep and worship their foreign gods, the wisest man in the world could not resist and say “No.” Like Adam, he said “Yes” to the requests and demands of his wives and concubines.

Some of the wives and concubines were for political purposes but many were because he “loved” them. Solomon’s weakness in this area are revealed in 1 Kings 11:1-9 which says the following:

But King Solomon loved many foreign women, as well as the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians and Hittes—from the nations of whom the Lord had said to the children of Israel, “You shall not intermarry with them, for they will turn away your hearts after their gods.” Solomon clung to these in love. And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned away his heart. For it was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the Lord his God, as was the heart of his father David. For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom, the abomination of the Ammonites. Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord, and did not fully follow the Lord as did his father David.

Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, on the hill that is east of Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the people of Ammon. And he did likewise for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods.

So the Lord became angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned from the Lord God of Israel....

Because of Solomon’s actions, God raised up adversaries to Solomon and eventually tore away 10 of the 12 Tribes from Solomon’s successor Rehoboam and gave them to Solomon’s servant Jeroboam. (See 2 Kings 11:14; 2 Kings 11:26-40).

The moral to this story is that intelligence and wisdom is not enough to keep a male from wanting to say “Yes” and please a female. The wisest and smartest man in the world does not have enough intelligence and wisdom to say “No.” Their mind may know better but they override their mind often using logic to excuse their actions. Men have a great ability to fabricate good reasons for their bad actions.

Polygamy in the Divided Kingdoms

After the kingdoms divided between the ten Northern Tribes ("Israel") and the two southern tribes ("Judah"), there are many examples of polygamy not only among kings but others. At least six of the 20 kings of Judah are mentioned as engaging in polygamy. (2 Chron. 11:18-20; 2 Chron. 13:21; 2 Chron. 21:14-17; 2 Chron. 24:2-3; 2 Kings 24:15; Jer. 38:23).

In the northern kingdom, Ahab engaged in polygamy although there probably others. (1 Kings 20:3-7).

One Body

In Genesis, God takes woman from the body of man and God begins with a monogamous relationship between man and woman. At the end of the Old Testament, God returns to the same concept by prophetic words spoken by Malachi. In the Second Chapter of Malachi, Malachi tells the Israelites why God does not answer their prayers. The first reason is that Judah has not been faithful to God. Instead "He has married the daughter of a foreign god." (Mal. 2:11). The second reason that God does not hear their prayers is because just as man has not been faithful to God, he has not been faithful to "the wife of his youth" . Again, Malachi hearkens back to basic question: "Did He not make them one...?" (Gen. 2:15). And therefore in both divorce and in polygamy, we do not adhere to the original intent of God that there should be one man and one woman and one flesh. In addition, one of the reasons for this faithfulness between one man and one woman is that it is an aid in bringing about Godly offspring (Mal. 2:15).

Here is the Malachi 2:13-19 which ends the Old Testament with the same refrain found in the creation verses in Genesis:

And this is the second thing you do: You cover the altar of the Lord with tears, with weeping and crying; so He does not regard the offering anymore, nor receive it with goodwill from your hands. Yet you say, "For what reason?" Because the Lord has been witness between you and the wife of your youth, with whom you have dealt treacherously; yet she is your companion and the wife by covenant. But did he not make them one, having a remnant of the Spirit? And why one? He seeks godly offspring. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth. For the Lord God of Israel says that He hates divorce....

Final Comments about Polygamy in the Old Testament.

Below are a number of comments about polygamy in the Old Testament based upon my study:

- God's original intent was for there to be equality between man and woman and for man to have one wife. Sin reduced the position of women from a place of equality to a lesser position.

- With sin came warfare, slavery, poverty and death. In warfare, men were generally killed and women were enslaved.
- Due to sin and economics, women no longer was
- a helper to man. They became subservient from a political, economic and social stand point. Men were viewed as producers whereas women were largely dependent upon fathers, husbands and brothers to protect them.
- After the fall, polygamy arose and women were not treated as being equal to men. Instead they were treated more like possessions or chattel. Under Jewish law, daughters could be sold into slavery (Ex. 21:7). Slavery was not God's idea for man but something which man developed on his own. Polygamy and slavery are not far removed. In both cases, human beings are treated as being subservient to their owners.
- Due to the inability to supply for their own needs, women who did not have a means of supply were from time to time forced into slavery or prostitution. However even in these types of situations God worked. For instance Rahab was a prostitute and evidently provided for her family by that means. God worked in her life and caused her not only to join the Israelites and become a Hebrew but even had the genealogy of King David the Messiah run through her line. God looks at the heart and is in the business of redemption. God looks past our social history and our past sins.
- Despite their economic and social disadvantages, women used their intelligence, beauty, sexuality and power as mothers to have exert a measure of control over men. Following the pattern of Eve, men had an innate tendency to say "Yes" to their requests.
- God can bring forth good from evil. Even polygamy and concubinage could be used for good purposes. Some of the instances would be causing those who were not likely to be married, such as Leah, to find husbands.
- In an age in which many men were killed in war, women often escaped death by going into polygamous relationships or into concubinage. Among the Jews, there were strict Levitical rules that mandated that women captured in battle not be raped but go through a mourning process and that there were opportunities to join the Hebrew people as wives or concubines.
- God can work through evil. What is meant for evil, God can use for good.
- God often works despite our social norms. He may use slavery to save his people through the enslavement of Joseph, but that does not mean that God endorses slavery.
- God looks at the heart. David was a man after God's own heart despite the fact that he both accepted and indulged in polygamy.
- God looks at your heart regardless of whether you are object of polygamy or not. For instance, God heard the prayer of Elkanah for a son and answered it with the birth of Samuel even though Elkanah was in a polygamous marriage (1 Sam 1:4-7). Likewise, God looked at the heart of Leah as she sought to have children even though Leah was in a polygamous marriage (Gen 29:31) and felt that she was unloved (and probably was).
- Polygamy engenders strife and heart ache. There is heart wrenching pain for women who are in polygamous relationships. They are left competing for the affection for their husbands. ("Your desire shall be for your husband and He shall rule over you" (Gen3:16). In addition there is competition between the wives and the offspring of polygamous relationships.
- Men are easily convinced to enter into polygamous relationships and find any number of reasons to do so. "Multiple partners are needed for an heir". "It is alright with my spouse in fact she even suggested it". "I am rich and can afford to have multiple marriages". "This is what God wants for me". "It was alright for Abraham, David and Solomon and I am like them". "Engaging in polygamy will help me cement necessary political relationships which will benefit

me and my country". "The more children the better." "It was good enough for the Patriarchs so it is what God wants for spiritual leaders." "God said to go forth and to multiply."

- Behind the backdrop of all of this is the Seed prophecy . A good example of how God can use evil for good was the fact that through polygamy many children were born. The ability to keep up with line the Seed might come through became increasingly difficult for Satan due to the polygamy of David and Solomon. So many women, so many heirs.
- Satan did not want the Seed to ever appear because the Seed would administer a blow to Satan's head which would ultimately be fatal. He made many efforts to keep the Seed from being born. A study could be done on these efforts but here are some of them. Satan tries to disqualify the first two men born by having Cain kill Abel. By Abel being dead he cannot generate the Seed. Likewise, Cain has become a murderer like Satan. Satan causes many women who married to the righteous to be infertile and unable to have children. One among many examples would be Sarah the wife of Abraham. However, she is only one of many. Satan loves to see the unborn not come to fruition. He inspires Pharaoh to kill the small children by having them thrown into the Nile. Satan loves child sacrifice and loves it when children are sacrificed to Molech. Satan inspires Herod to order all Jewish children in the Bethlehem under two to be killed so that the Seed (the Messiah) will not be born. Satan loves it when we engage in abortion. He knows that it is God's command that men and women reproduce. He rejoices when China causes women children to be killed. Satan also is overjoyed when hypocritical politicians support abortion as being good and women being duped into killing their own children. These are the delights of Satan. Yet in all of this, the Seed came and the Seed will come again to judge the living and the dead.

Polygamy in the New Testament

Jesus

Jesus did not address the polygamy question directly but his views regarding divorce convey his attitudes on tangential matters such as polygamy. During the time in which Jesus ministered, the vast majority of the Jews did not engage in polygamy. Some examples of polygamy during the time of Jesus might include polygamy by Caiaphas, Herod Archelaus and Herod Antipas. The Essenes with whom we believe Jesus was familiar opposed polygamy. The fact that polygamy was accepted among some Jews is reflected by Josephus who lived after Jesus who wrote in his Antiquities (17:1-2) that "it is the ancient practice among us to have many wives at the same time.

The Roman Empire generally opposed polygamy. Jesus came from a humble and poor background and polygamy was not practiced among this rank of society even if found from time to time among the rich and powerful. However, Jesus was certainly aware that polygamy existed from time to time but addressed it only indirectly. When the Pharisees asked Jesus about divorce. Jesus' response to the Pharisees reveals his attitude toward marriage. Matthew 19:3-8 sets forth Jesus' answer:

The Pharisees also came to Him, testing Him, and saying to Him, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?" And He answered and said "to them at the beginning, made them male and female" , 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"? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let not men separate."

They said to Him, “Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce , and to put her away?”

He said to them, “Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so.”

(For a comparable passage see also Mark 10:2-9)

Jesus in looking at the man-woman relation went back to Genesis and explained that God’s intent was there to be one man and one woman. The two were joined together as one flesh. God’s intent was not for there to be a man and multiple women. This conclusion covered the difficult area of divorce and the easier case of polygamy. The Mosaic law provisions make provision for divorce (and polygamy in certain instances) were due to sin and the hardness of the hearts of people.

Paul

Paul clearly did not believe that polygamy was acceptable. Paul followed the lead of Jesus in measuring the husband-wife relationship against God’s intent in Genesis. Like Jesus, he believed that man and woman were monogamous and were to be “one body.” This can be seen in numerous places in Paul’s writings. Paul saw a husband –wife relationship to be similar to the relationship between Christ and His church. That relationship was a monogamous relationship. Below is Ephesians 5:25-33 which describes the relationship:

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for her that that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that he might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

To Paul, the marriage relationship reflected the relationship of Christ to the church. Christ loved the church and the church was to be faithful to Christ. Paul did not see that the husband should have other wives just as Christ did not have other brides but only the one church. Instead, a man was to be “joined to his wife.”

Paul’s view of marriage and his view of “one body” can be seen in 1 Corinthians 6 and 7. In 1 Corinthians 6:16-18 Paul points out that when a man has relations with a harlot “the two are becoming one flesh. As followers of Christ we are to be joined to Christ and to flee sexual immorality. In 1 Corinthians 7:2 Paul writes: “Nevertheless because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband.” Paul uses the singular meaning one husband and one wife. Paul did not envision a man having more than one wife at a time.

In discussing women in Romans 7, Paul states that if a woman marries another man while her husband is alive, she is considered to be an adulteress, but if her husband is dead she is free of that law. Paul then uses this to highlight that through the death of Christ we are free of the law and can espouse Christ. Christ is our new husband. Again, to Paul the relationship between Christ and His church is monogamous and our relationship to Christ is to be monogamous.

Further, Paul made it absolutely clear that leaders of the church were to be monogamous. (See: 1 Tim. 3:2, 12; 5:9; Titus 1:6). In 1 Tim. 3:2, Paul states that the bishop is to be the husband of one wife. The same requirement is set forth in Titus 1:6. Likewise deacons are to be the husband of one wife. The Greek is *gunaikos andra* meaning “a man of one woman” or a “one-woman man”. Although discussion can be held as to the precise meaning of the words, it is clear that those who are polygamists are barred from holding positions of authority in the church as bishops, elders or deacons.

Interestingly, the High Priest in Judaism was expected to have only one wife. This was based upon Leviticus 21:13-14 which said, “And he shall take a wife in her virginity. A widow or a divorced woman or a defiled woman or a harlot-these he shall not marry; but he shall take a virgin of his own people as wife.” When it came to the High Priest, the highest standard was used. Leaders of the church were also held to the high standard of monogamy.

As a practical matter, there is absolutely no verse in the New Testament which would seem to justify polygamy and there is no instance in the New Testament of any polygamist holding any office in the church or even being part of a church. In fact, it is clear, that polygamy was not accepted or tolerated in the New Testament. Those seeking to justify their polygamous and/or adulterous sexual relationships are forced back to the Old Testament to make the best arguments that they can.

The Church Fathers

The early Church Fathers gave absolutely no support to those who practiced or excused polygamy. Here are just a few examples of positions taken by some of the early leaders of the Church.

In 180, Irenaeus in his book *Against Heresies (Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol.1, pg. 353)* condemned heretics for trying to promote promiscuous intercourse and a plurality of wives into the church.

Justin Martyr in the Second Century in his Dialogue with Trypho said about the Jews and their views on polygamy:

If, then, the teaching of the prophets of Himself moves you, it is better for you to follow God than your imprudent and blind masters, who even till this time permit each man to have four or five wives; and if any one see a beautiful woman and desires to have her, they quote the doings of Jacob (called Israel), and of the other patriarchs, and maintain that it is not wrong to do such things; For they are miserably ignorant in this matter.

Justin Martyr, Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 1, pg. 266.

Under Roman law, it was not lawful to have more than one wife. However, when the Lex Antoniana de Civitate gave Roman Citizenship to many Jews in 212 A.D., Jews were allowed to have more than one wife. In 285 A.D. Diocletian forbade polygamy to all Roman citizens including Jews.

Another Church Father, Theophilus, around 180 A.D. wrote To Autolyucus and said:

But far be it from Christians to conceive any such deeds; for with them temperance dwells, self-restraint is practiced, monogamy is observed, Chastity is guarded.

Theophilus, Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 2, pg. 115.

Below are two passages from Clement of Alexandria who wrote about 195 A.D. The first takes the position that polygamy may have been permissively allowed under certain circumstances in the Old Testament only.

But it is the same man and Lord who makes the old new, by no longer allowing several marriages (for at that time God required it when men had to increase and multiply), and by teaching single marriage for the sake of begetting children and looking after domestic affairs, for which purpose woman was given to man as a "helpmeet."

Clement of Alexandria, Miscellanies, Book III, Ch. 12

The other quote by Clement follows the admonition of Paul:

For he also lays down that the bishop who is to rule the Church must be a man who governs his own household well. A household pleasing to the Lord consists of a marriage with one wife.

Clement of Alexandria, Miscellanies, Book III, Ch. 18

Conclusion

God's plan with Adam and Eve was a monogamous union. As a result of the disobedience of man and woman, sin was introduced into the world. As a result, the original intent of God for the man-woman relationship, was perverted. As man and woman carried out God's plan to be fruitful, multiply and subdue the world, man found another way to carry out that command in a way that he considered better. That way began with the line of Cain and involved polygamy. In addition man sinned in being violent, killing, entering into wars and taking captives, especially women. Instead of women being helpers and partners many women were relegated to being slaves and chattel. The Mosaic law dealt with some of the rules for women taken in war and for slaves.

Polygamy became an accepted practice in Hebrew life although many did not indulge in it. Moreover, polygamy was utilized not only to satisfy the lusts of the flesh but also as a means of making treaties and entering into national relationships.

Although we are not aware of any prophets who entered into polygamous relationships, there are a number of patriarchs who did including Abraham and Jacob. In addition a number of Kings entered into polygamous relationships including Saul, David and Solomon.

The results of the polygamous relationships were generally not good with wives being hurt, children being put into competitive relationships with even murder and bloodshed happening. Untold lives were injured through polygamy.

Despite the unfortunate results of polygamy, God continued to work through the hearts of those who were involved and worked through many of their lives. Yet in all of this, polygamy was not God's best for man. In Abraham's case for instance, he chose not to work through that relationship but worked by doing a miracle in the life of Abraham and his first wife, Sarah.

One of the most significant drivers in the entire history of the man-woman relationship was the need for woman to reproduce and give birth to the Seed, who would be the new Adam.

In the Incarnation God fulfilled his promise for the Seed. Jesus satisfied all of the promises and prophecies regarding the Seed. The Seed was the new Adam and He brought many sons and daughters to life. With the Seed the curse of Satan and the curse of death over man and woman were broken. In Christ, the curse of woman having to be subservient to man through sin and disobedience was broken. In addition the curse of man trying to enslave and subjugate women was also broken. Instead a new relationship was restored which was one of love, trust and interdependence which are to be demonstrated and pictured in the Christian family.

When Jesus was asked about divorce, he hearkened back to the original plan of God where by man and woman would be faithful to one another and they would join together as one body.

At the time of Jesus the vast majority of people were monogamous and monogamy was the accepted practice although there were a few Jews here and there who still practiced polygamy.

In the New Testament, it was not necessary to address the issue, but when it was addressed it was clear that monogamy was God's plan. The leaders of the church, including bishops, elders and deacons, were expected to be monogamous.

Further in the first couple of centuries after Christ, it is absolutely clear that Christians and not just the leaders were expected to be monogamous.

At the beginning of history, God's plan was that there would be a faithful monogamous relationship. God expected his people to be faithful to him. They were to have no other God's before him. Moreover, God described Himself as being "a jealous God."

The Hebrew people were to be faithful to God. They were not to have other Gods. Their relationship to God was to be a monogamous one. When polygamy was practiced, such as in Solomon's case it opened the door to relationship with foreign women and their gods and often the hearts of the Hebrew people were drawn away by their practices.

Unfaithfulness is often seen as being embodied by dissolute women including Delilah, Jezebel, Gomer and the whoredom of Babylon. The world is often viewed as a temptress tempting man to disobey the commands of God. In Proverbs 5:18-20 we are told to “rejoice with the wife of our youth” and “not be enraptured by an immoral woman, and be embraced in the arms of a seductress.”

The church is not supposed to be polygamous and to see other husbands other than Christ. When Christians follow the world they are in essence committing adultery from their calling into a holy relationship with Christ. As Christians we are to be faithful.

Christ too is faithful in his relationship with his people. Like most men, Christ says “Yes” to our requests and our prayers. As Scripture says, “whatsoever we ask if we shall receive (1 John 3:22). All the promises of God are “Yes and Amen.” (2 Cor. 1:20) We are the Bride of Christ. Christ and His church are one body. We have his love, his affection and his protection. Like Grooms and Brides ever where we say “I do.” We enter into vows and covenant relationships. There are promises. He says, “Follow me.” We say, like Ruth, “Where you go, I will go and your God shall be my God.” We say “Yes” to Christ and he gladly says “Yes” to us. He gives us what we ask and He gives us life more abundantly and most importantly he gives us an eternal life and an eternal home. We are the bride and we attend His wedding party. Our dowry is the Holy Spirit.