

# 119

## MINISTRIES

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### **Answering Atheists: Does the Bible Endorse Polygamy?**

Atheists, radical feminists, and other critics of the Bible often claim that the Bible has misogynistic overtones. That is to say, that the Bible is strongly prejudiced against women.

It is claimed that the human authors of the Bible regard women as mere property and of lesser value than men. One of the reasons given in support of this claim is the Bible’s alleged endorsement of polygamy—that is, the practice whereby a man is married to more than one woman at the same time.

Is it true that the Bible permits or even endorses this practice? Does God give any commandments in regards to polygamy—whether for or against? What do we make of the fact that many of the men in the Bible—who are often described as godly and righteous men—engaged in this practice?

We will be exploring this topic in depth throughout this teaching. First, if you haven’t yet watched our teaching, [Is the Bible Misogynistic?](#), we recommend starting there. In that teaching, we give a broad overview of the biblical view of women, which sets the foundation for other teachings in this series.

So where do we begin in answering these questions?

In Matthew 19, Yeshua our Messiah was asked a question about marriage. When it came to this topic, we think it’s significant that Yeshua’s response was not to quibble with the Pharisees over the nuances of particular laws in the Torah. Yeshua’s response was to point us towards the original divine establishment of marriage in the beginning. He quoted Genesis, which says:

#### **Genesis 2:24**

**Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.**

Since our Messiah pointed to the marriage between Adam and Eve in the Garden as the ideal picture of marriage, we think it’s appropriate to start there as well. You’ll notice in that verse we just read that God’s original design for marriage is that it of a monogamous relationship—that is, a man and his wife.

When the apostle Paul cites this verse, it's even clearer:

### **Ephesians 5:31**

**Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.**

You'll notice here that it says, "The *two* shall become one flesh." It doesn't say three, four, or more. It says two shall become one. This is God's divine design for marriage at Creation.

Why would God make the original marriage monogamous? As Old Testament scholar, Dr. Richard Davidson, explains:

Monogamy is ultimately rooted in monotheism and in the concept of *imago Dei* (image of God): just as the Lord God, who is "one" (Deut. 6:4), is not involved in promiscuous relationships within a polytheistic pantheon, so husbands and wives, created in God's image, are to be monogamous in their marital relationship with each other.

*-Richard M. Davidson, "Condemnation and Grace: Polygamy and Concubinage in the Old Testament," Christian Research Journal, Vol. 38, #5 (2015)*

So God's original design for marriage is not some arbitrary decision on His part. It's deeply theological and ultimately rooted in biblical truths about God's very nature as expressed in the Scriptures. This is not an insignificant point!

If God's original design for marriage is meant to be a picture of His divine nature, then it could be argued that any deviation from God's original design would be, therefore, a distortion of that picture. As followers of the God of Israel, our purpose is to bear God's image—that is, to accurately represent who God is by how we live our lives, and that includes our marriages.

Some might object, "*But wait! If this is so important, why doesn't God give any commandments prohibiting polygamy?*"

On the surface, this is a good objection. If polygamy were so against God's will and design for marriage, we would expect God to make that clear in His Law. After all, adultery and homosexuality likewise are distortions of God's original design for marriage, and thus there are clear laws against those acts. But when it comes to polygamy, several passages in the *TANAKH*, on the surface, *seem* to permit and even approve of the practice. How do we deal with that?

In this teaching, our argument is rather straightforward:

- First, like homosexuality and adultery, polygamy is a clear deviation from God's original design for marriage as established in Creation.
- Second, the Bible *does*, in fact, explicitly prohibit the practice of polygamy.
- Third, rather than being endorsed in the Bible, polygamy is painted in a negative light and actually discouraged throughout the Bible.
- And fourth, the passages in which polygamy might seem to be approved by God are

misunderstood.

Regarding our first point, we've already seen through the Creation account in Genesis that monogamy is indeed God's original design for marriage. And again, we've seen that both Yeshua and Paul affirm this original design for marriage by using that established truth as the basis for their own teachings.

It's not a coincidence that the New Testament consistently and invariably upholds the teaching in Genesis that marriage is between one man and one woman.

The Apostle Paul says clearly in 1 Corinthians 7:2,

### **1 Corinthians 7:2**

[But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband.](#)

Paul's instruction concerning marriage is based on the Torah and the teaching of Yeshua.

In 1 Timothy 3:2 and verse 12, Paul also said that the elders and deacons within the congregation are only to have one wife, again reinforcing the importance of this divine truth, as elders are to be examples of righteous living to the rest of the congregation.

Some attempt to suggest that Paul's words on righteous living in 1 Timothy 3:2 and verse 12 is referring to divorce—that is to say, one is to not be remarried following a divorce. However, there exists no instruction forbidding remarriage after divorce in the law of God. In fact, Deuteronomy 24 are the go-to instructions surrounding divorce in the Torah, and we find there that remarriage after divorce is acceptable. Paul is not adding to the Word of God (Deuteronomy 4:2). 1 Timothy 3 is not about divorce. In fact, according to the context, it should be strongly noted that divorce is not even mentioned in 1 Timothy 3!

Paul was instructing against taking on another wife while still being married.

Again, Paul wasn't pulling the instruction out of nowhere. His teachings were based on the Torah, and therefore, he clearly interpreted the issue of polygamy as being prohibited. But where in the Torah does Paul get this idea?

As we stated earlier, God's original design for marriage is not arbitrary, but reflects deep theological truths about His character and His nature. Therefore, polygamy obviously goes against God's original intent for marriage at Creation. That much is clear. Paul certainly could have been citing the Creation account as Torah instruction forbidding polygamy, however, as critics would argue, the creation account of one man and one woman seems, at most, to lend itself as a "best practice" and not necessarily direct Torah instruction. Yet Paul presents his position as direct Torah instruction, clearly forbidding polygamy. Polygamy is defined by Paul as not being above reproach. Polygamy is not considered righteous living.

So, where in the Torah would Paul have found such clear instruction prohibiting polygamy, justifying his instruction that any elder entertaining polygamy was not representing righteous living?

That now brings our attention to our second point—that is, the Bible, the Torah, explicitly prohibits polygamy. To begin, consider this commandment in Leviticus:

## Leviticus 18:18

You shall not marry a woman in addition to her sister as a rival while she is alive, to uncover her nakedness.

This verse is usually translated as prohibiting one type of polygamous marriage, specifically a marriage to two sisters while both are alive. The implication of this interpretation is that a man cannot marry his sister-in-law, *but* polygamy in general is permitted.

However, scholars have challenged this interpretation. There are many reasons to believe that this verse does not necessarily refer to two blood-related sisters, but properly refers to two *women* in general.

Thus, “sister” would have a broader definition to include any woman, and not just a blood relative. If this interpretation is correct, we therefore have an explicit commandment forbidding polygamy in the Torah.

Since this is such a crucial point, we are going to spend a lot of time unpacking the reasons for why we believe this verse prohibits polygamy in general. This will serve as a good foundation going forward when we examine this topic throughout the rest of the Scriptures.

So why should we believe that Leviticus 18:18 prohibits *all* polygamy rather than simply prohibiting a marriage between a man and two literal sisters? There are several points we’ll consider to make this case.

First, in Hebrew, “a woman in addition to her sister,” is *ishah el-achotah*, which literally means “a woman to her sister.” This is an idiomatic expression, which is always used in the distributive sense of “one in addition to another.” Consider the following verses in which this exact phrase is used idiomatically:

### Exodus 26:3

Five curtains shall be coupled **to one another** [*ishah el-achotah*], and the other five curtains shall be coupled **to one another** [*ishah el-achotah*].

חַמֵּשׁ הַיְרִיעוֹת תִּהְיֶינָה חִבְרֹת אִשָּׁה אֶל-אֲחֹתָהּ וְחַמֵּשׁ הַיְרִיעוֹת אֲשֶׁר אֶל-אֲחֹתָהּ:

### Exodus 26:6

And you shall make fifty clasps of gold, and couple the curtains **one to the other** [*ishah el-achotah*] with the clasps, so that the tabernacle may be a single whole.

וַעֲשִׂיתָ חֲמִשִּׁים חֲמִשִּׁים קְרָסִי זָהָב וְחִבַּרְתָּ אֶת-הַיְרִיעוֹת אִשָּׁה אֶל-אֲחֹתָהּ בְּקְרָסִים וְהָיָה הַמִּשְׁכָּן אֶחָד: פ

### Ezekiel 1:9

Their wings touched **one another** [*ishah el-achotah*]. Each one of them went straight forward, without turning as they went.

חִבְרֹת אִשָּׁה אֶל-אֲחֹתָהּ בְּנִפְיָהֶם לֹא-יִסְבוּ בְּלִכְתָּן אִישׁ אֶל-עֵבֶר פְּנָיו יֵלְכוּ:

In Exodus 26, you’ll notice that it speaks of the coupling of curtains and clasps “one to the other,” which is literally, “a woman to her sister”—*ishah el-achotah*—the exact same phrase used in Leviticus 18:18.

The verse in Ezekiel speaks of the wings of the cherubim touching “one another,” which, again, literally translates to “a woman to her sister.”

In fact, every time the phrase *ishah el-achotah* occurs in the TANAKH, it is used in an idiomatic manner, meaning “one to another.”

- Exodus 26:3
- Exodus 26:5
- Exodus 26:6
- Exodus 26:17
- Ezekiel 1:9
- Ezekiel 1:23
- Ezekiel 3:13

This is also the case with the masculine equivalent of this phrase, *ish el-akiw*, which literally means, “a man to his brother.” Every time this expression occurs, it’s used idiomatically in the distributive sense of, “one in addition to another”:

- Genesis 37:19
- Genesis 42:21
- Genesis 42:28
- Exodus 16:15
- Exodus 25:20
- Exodus 37:9
- Numbers 14:4
- 2 Kings 7:6
- Jeremiah 13:14
- Jeremiah 25:26
- Ezekiel 24:23
- Ezekiel 33:30

So, when we interpret the phrase *ishah el-achotah* in light of its consistent usage throughout the Scriptures, Leviticus 18:18 appears it ought to be understood idiomatically and distributively as saying you shall not marry one woman in addition to another woman. This phrase is used in this way everywhere else in the Bible, and therefore it doesn’t seem to make sense to interpret Leviticus 18:18 as referring to two literal sisters.

The word “sister” in Leviticus 18:18 therefore has a broader reference to a female citizen in general, which certainly has lexical warrant in the TANAKH. Take, for instance, this passage from Hosea:

**Hosea 2:1**

Say to your brothers, “You are my people,” and to your sisters, “You have received mercy.”

Here the term “sisters” is not referring to literal sisters but has a broader meaning.

Interestingly, this interpretation of Leviticus 18:18 was shared by the Qumran community, a first century Jewish sect, from whom we get the Dead Sea Scrolls. For instance, among the Dead Sea Scrolls is what is known as The Temple Scroll, which contains a commentary on Deuteronomy 17:14-20 concerning

kings. According to scholars, this commentary appeals to Leviticus 18:18 as an ancient Hebrew language proof text against polygamy, versus the more modern interpretation limiting it to only the wife's sister. The Temple Scroll paraphrases Leviticus 18:18 as follows:

He may not take a wife from any of the nations. Rather, he must take himself a wife from his father's house—that is, from his father's family. **He is not to take another wife in addition to her; no, she alone shall be with him as long as she lives.** If she dies, then he may take himself another wife from his father's house, that is, his family.

*-11QT57:15-19, Michael Wise, Marin Abegg & Edward Cook, "Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Translation," p. 485*

Scholar and theologian, Angelo Tosato, argues that the interpretation of this verse in the Qumran community best reflects the original meaning of Leviticus 18:18:

Qumran's interpretation of Leviticus 18:18 is not only correct but even more faithful to the original sense than the interpretation commonly given today.

*-Angelo Tosato, "The Law of Leviticus 18:18: A Reexamination," CBQ Vol. 46, p. 208*

Based on Paul's comments about men who take on additional wives while already married not being "above reproach," it appears that Paul took the same position on Leviticus 18:18 as the Qumran community.

Second, if the author of Leviticus intended Leviticus 18:18 to be understood as a prohibition against marrying literal sisters, thereby implicitly permitting polygamy in general, it would be very clear grammatically. But the textual evidence suggests something else. Old Testament scholar and professor, Dr. Gordon P. Hugenberger, explains as follows:

Indeed, had it been the intention of Leviticus 18:18 to prohibit a man from marrying two women who were literal sisters, it could have done so with considerably less ambiguity by the use of the conjunction "and [ו]," rather than the preposition "to [ל]," that is, "a woman *and* her sister." The grammar of this expression would then be precisely analogous to that of "a woman *and* her daughter," the phrase employed by the author in the immediately preceding verse, where he forbids sexual relations with a woman and her daughter. It appears likely that it was the awareness of this usage which already led the Zadokites and the Qumran community in the first century B.C., as well as the much later Karaites, to interpret Lev. 18:18 as an explicit prohibition against polygyny.

*-Gordon P. Hugenberger, "Marriage as a Covenant: A Study of Biblical Law & Ethics Governing Marriage, Developed from the Perspective of Malachi," p. 115-116*

In other words, the fact that the verse uses the preposition "to" rather than the conjunction "and" lends support to our argument that this phrase is intended to be understood idiomatically in the distributive sense rather than talking about two literal sisters. If it were referring to two literal sisters, we would expect the phrasing of the verse to be consistent with the other anti-incest laws of Leviticus 18, but it isn't.

Third, the fact that Leviticus 18:18 prohibits polygamy in general is made all the more clear when we

consider the reason for the commandment, which is to prevent rivalry between the two wives: “**You shall not marry a woman in addition to her sister as a rival.**” This consequence applies to any type of polygamous union, not merely that of a marriage with two literal sisters. As Tosato remarks:

This motivation shows that the act legislated against is deemed criminal, not in itself (and thus it is not a case of an incestuous union; nor more generally of a sexual union retained intrinsically perverse), **but is deemed criminal in relation to the man’s first wife** who would be damaged. In addition, the harm which the law wants avoided is such (rivalry, enmity) that *any* woman (and not necessarily a sister of the first wife) is capable of causing...

-Angelo Tosato, “*The Law of Leviticus 18:18: A Reexamination,*” *CBQ Vol. 46, p. 207*

The language, “**as a rival,**” used in Leviticus 18:18, is also used in 1 Samuel 1:6 in regards to the contentious relationship between Peninnah and Hannah, the wives of Elkanah. And there’s no evidence that these women were literal sisters:

### **1 Samuel 1:6**

**And her rival used to provoke her grievously to irritate her, because the Lord (YHWH) had closed her womb.**

If the reason for this commandment was to avoid rivalry between co-wives, it simply does not make sense that this law should be limited to literal sisters. Throughout history we’ve seen the contentious relationship between co-wives, whether they are sisters or not. You need to look no further than Abraham’s wives, Sarah and Hagar, to see this.

In other words, if the more modern interpretation of Leviticus 18:18 is true, then why would there be rivalry and strife in a polygamous relationship *only* if the wives were literal sisters? The rivalry and strife are due to women competing for the attention and love from the same man. Would only sisters experience rivalry competing for the attention and love of the same man? Of course not.

How many women would willingly choose to share the love and attention of the same man versus the preferred arrangement of one man and one wife? That appears to be the point of Leviticus 18:18 stating that any polygamous relationship is likely to create rivalry between the wives, regardless if they are sisters or not.

We have one last point we’ll make about this passage in regards to the overall literary structure of Leviticus 18. Some people insist that Leviticus 18:18 is dealing with a specific incestuous union involving two literal sisters because it occurs directly after many other laws forbidding various incestuous relations.

However, scholars have pointed out that there is a major literary break between verse 17 and 18 in Leviticus 18. This chapter presents two separate units of laws—the first unit dealing specifically with laws prohibiting various incestuous relationships and the second unit dealing with laws governing sexual morality and more generally. Leviticus 18:18 is part of the *second* unit, and therefore not intended to be included with the anti-incest laws of verses 6-17.

Theologian Dr. Paul Copan explains:

Each verse in 7-17 begins identically, starting with the noun “the nakedness (of) [*erwat*],” and it

leads up to the command, “You shall not uncover \_\_\_\_’s nakedness.” Also, in each of these verses (except v. 9) an explanation is given for the prohibition (e.g., “she is your mother”); this explanation isn’t found in verse 18, which we would expect if it were an incest prohibition. By contrast, each verse in 18-23 begins with a different construction. Even if you don’t read Hebrew, you can truly just glance at the text and immediately see the difference in structure starting with verse 18. Verses 18-23 each begin with what’s called the *waw* conjunctive (like our word “and”) followed by a different word than “nakedness” (*erwat*); also, instead of the consistent use of the negative (*lo*) plus the verb “uncover” (*tegalleh*, from the root *galah*), as in 7-17, here the negative particles are used before verbs other than uncover. **Why are these contrasts important? In verses 6-17, we’re dealing with kinship bonds while verses 18-23 address prohibited sexual relations outside of kinship bonds.**

-Paul Copan, *Is God a Moral Monster: Making Sense of the Old Testament God*, p. 113

All of this leads us to the conclusion that Leviticus 18:18 likely refers to *any* two women and not merely two literal sisters. Thus, Leviticus 18:18 prohibits a man from marrying another woman in addition to his first wife while she is alive. That is to say, the Torah explicitly prohibits polygamy.

That being said, even if you ignore all of the evidence and insist that Leviticus 18:18 refers specifically to two literal sisters, it still wouldn’t necessarily follow that polygamy, in general, is permitted.

For instance, Leviticus 19:29 prohibits a man from making his daughter a prostitute. The fact that this commandment specifically refers to a daughter gives no implicit permission for a man to make *other* women prostitutes, such as his wife or his sister. Likewise, there’s simply no reason to assume any kind of implicit permission of polygamy in Leviticus 18:18.

In fact, this verse would still be a case *against* polygamy! Even if we assume—again, contrary to the evidence—that Leviticus 18:18 says specifically not to marry the literal sister of your wife, a reasonable argument could *still* be made that it ought to apply more generally as a law against taking *any* additional wife.

Again, this would be just like the law in Leviticus 19:29. Even though the law specifically refers to a man’s daughter, obviously it is applied generally as a law against making *any* woman a prostitute. So, a consistent, common sense exegesis gives us warrant for applying Leviticus 18:18 more generally rather than limiting the law to literal sisters.

In the Hebraic perspective, it is common to interpret commandments beyond their literal understanding. The spirit or intent behind each commandment is understood to apply as well.

For example:

#### **Exodus 23:4**

*If you meet your enemy's ox or his donkey going astray, you shall bring it back to him.*

If your enemy’s horse or sheep goes astray, should you return the animal to him? ...or only if it is his ox or donkey that should be returned? Obviously we should return any animal, to be consistent with the intent or spirit of the commandment. It would even be reasonable to extract the understanding from the commandment that we are to extend courtesy and respect to all, even to our enemies.

As another example, we can see how Paul applies the spirit or intent of a law beyond what is literally stated.

### **1 Corinthians 9:8-9**

Do I say these things on human authority? Does not the Law say the same? For it is written in the Law of Moses, “You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain.”

Paul appeals to his extended interpretation of the Torah to not be from him, but from YHWH Himself. Thus, Paul is stating that YHWH intends for us to understand each commandment beyond just the literal.

Paul agrees with the literal that an ox should not be muzzled when it is treading the grain.

But, what is the purpose or intent of the commandment?

The idea is that the animal is working for you, and it will be enabled to work harder and more effectively when being fed while working.

Paul then extends this concept beyond the literal to the feeding and supporting of ministry. The work of ministries feed the flock, and Paul uses the exemplified commandment in Moses to state that the flock should then feed the ministries. Just as feeding the ox is not for the benefit of the ox, but we benefit from the ox’s work. Likewise feeding and supporting ministry is not for the benefit of the ministries, but for all those who benefit from the work of the ministry.

Paul explains further:

### **1 Corinthians 9:10-12**

Is it for oxen that God is concerned? Does he not certainly speak for our sake? It was written for our sake, because the plowman should plow in hope and the thresher thresh in hope of sharing in the crop. If we have sown spiritual things among you, is it too much if we reap material things from you? If others share this rightful claim on you, do not we even more?

So we should understand that commandments are deeper in intent than just the literal, and such should be considered in practice.

As already mentioned, this would be just like the law in Leviticus 19:29. Even though the law specifically refers to a man’s daughter, obviously it is applied generally as a law against making *any* woman a prostitute. So, a consistent, commonsense exegesis gives us warrant for applying Leviticus 18:18 more generally rather than limiting the law to literal sisters, just as we would with other commandments.

Some might object to the validity of this law by saying: “Even if Leviticus 18:18 is a law against polygamy, it still can’t be wrong, because there is no legal punishment for transgressing it!”

This objection is pretty easy to address. While it’s true the Torah doesn’t mention any legal consequences for practicing polygamy, the commandment against polygamy is certainly not unique in that regard.

For instance, there is no legal punishment for hating someone, despite the fact that Leviticus 19:17 says,

“You shall not hate your brother in your heart.” Also, the tenth commandment prohibits coveting, but the Torah likewise provides no civil punishment for breaking this law. Nobody would suggest that the lack of legal punishments for transgressing these commandments invalidates the commandments.

So why does polygamy go unpunished within the Torah legal system despite being condemned by God as sin?

Hugenberger offers a possible reason:

Leviticus 18:18 can be categorized as a *lex imperfecta*, a law which prohibits something without thereby rendering it invalid (reflecting a society which would have lacked the requisite means of enforcement in any case).

*-Gordon P. Hugenberger, “Marriage as a Covenant: A Study of Biblical Law & Ethics Governing Marriage, Developed from the Perspective of Malachi,” p. 118*

In other words, practically speaking, carrying out a punishment for transgressing this law would have been difficult to enforce in the ancient world. But whatever the reason may be, the fact that there are no legal consequences for transgressing God’s law against polygamy certainly gives no basis for rejecting the law.

On that note, the fact that there’s no punishment for transgressing Leviticus 18:18 actually further distinguishes it from the previous anti-incest laws. Leviticus 20 reiterates the anti-incest laws of Leviticus 18 and lists the punishments for transgressing them. However, you’ll notice that the commandment in Leviticus 18:18 is absent. This fact has led scholars to reasonably conclude that the law in Leviticus 18:18, therefore, is not merely another form of incest, but a law against polygamy in general.

We would conclude that Leviticus 18:18 gives us an explicit commandment against the practice of polygamy. This of course aligns with God’s original design for marriage as established in Creation. Like homosexuality and adultery in the scope of sexual relationships, polygamy is a deviation from God’s design, and therefore, we shouldn’t be surprised to find a commandment in the Torah that prohibits it.

With that said, it really shouldn’t surprise us to discover that polygamy, rather than being endorsed, is often painted in a negative light, and through that, actually seems to be discouraged throughout the Bible. It could be reasonable to believe that those who practiced polygamy throughout biblical history were doing so in direct violation of not only God’s original design for marriage exemplified in Creation, and likely, as we have seen, violating His Law.

As Davidson remarks:

In the patriarchal period, there are several biblical examples of plural marriages. Although these biblical narratives provide no explicit verbal condemnation of this practice, **the narrator presents each account in such a way as to underscore a theology of disapproval.** The record of these polygamous relationships bristles with discord, rivalry, heartache, and even rebellion, revealing the motivations and/or disastrous consequences that invariably accompanied such departures from God’s Edenic ideal.”

*-Richard M. Davidson, “Flame of Yahweh: Sexuality in the Old Testament,” p. 180*

Some may want to bring up Lamech from Genesis 4, as a man in the Bible who had no negative consequences from his polygamy. We would agree, but the narrative we find in Genesis 4 paints us a picture of a man who lives a life already against the Torah. He is a descendent of Cain who we know rebelled against the Torah. Lamech lived a life of violence and vengeance. So, while we can't say that Lamech had any negative consequences from polygamy, we can say that he was already living a life in rebellion to the Creator. Even some scholars argue that the entire story of Lamech is designed to represent a departure from YHWH's ideal for humanity as established throughout Creation. Lamech's unrighteous lifestyle, being inclusive of polygamy, would hardly be supportive or a positive for polygamy.

Aside from Lamech, there are a few more stories in Scripture about those who chose to be polygamists.

Abram's polygamy is underscored with being associated with a negative environment. We see the strife and contention between Sarai and Hagar as well as between Isaac and Ishmael. There may even be a literary parallel between Abram's polygamy with Sarai and Hagar and the fall of Adam and Eve in Genesis 3.

For instance, Genesis 3:6 says that Eve "took"—*laqach*—the fruit from the tree and "gave" it—*nathan*—to Adam.

Likewise, Genesis 16:3 says that Sarai "took"—*laqach*—her servant Hagar and "gave"—*nathan*—her to Abram.

Also consider Genesis 3:17, which says that Adam "listened to the voice of" his wife. Likewise, in Genesis 16:2 it says that Abram "listened to the voice of" his wife, Sarai.

You'll notice the identical Hebrew words and expressions used in the same order in both accounts. These parallels have led many scholars to conclude that the biblical author was intentionally connecting the Hagar scandal with the fall of Adam and Eve. In other words, Abram's polygamy is portrayed as the "fall" of Abram and Sarai just like Adam and Eve fell in the Garden. Hagar, as the second woman, is the forbidden fruit.

Moving forward, Jacob's polygamy likewise results in constant strife, contention, deception, and jealousy within his very dysfunctional family. Again, we see with Jacob a clear picture of the effects of turning away from God's original design for marriage in Creation.

The Bible records that when Esau was forty years old, he likewise became a polygamist. Esau's wives "[made life bitter for Isaac and Rebecca](#)" (Genesis 26:34-35). Hebrews 12:16 says that Esau had a "[sexually immoral and unholy](#)" character, so it's not surprising to see that he deviated from God's design for marriage by being a polygamist.

Sometimes the judge Gideon, who is said to have had "[many wives](#)", in Judges 8:30, is offered as an example of God's endorsement of polygamy. While it's true that Gideon is given as an example of faith in Hebrews 11:32, there's no reason to assume that God endorsed every aspect of his character and deeds. In fact, a major theme of the Book of Judges is that "man did what was right in his own eyes."

The author's point is to condemn the idolatry and sexual immorality of the times, and he did that by recording all the ugly details and catastrophic results of sin. Gideon is no exception. Gideon's pride and idolatry later in life contributed to Israel's downslide into apostasy and reached its climax in Abimelech,

one of Gideon's sons who had his seventy siblings murdered (Judges 9:5). In fact, it could be argued that the author deliberately mentions Gideon's polygamy in order to connect it to his negative legacy.

Perhaps the most obvious example of the disastrous consequences of polygamy is King Solomon who had married 700 women and had 300 concubines. Solomon's polygamy was in direct opposition to the commandment given to kings in Deuteronomy 17:17 not to multiply wives, which we'll unpack in more detail a little later.

The biblical author is clear that Solomon's idolatry and eventual downfall were the direct result of his polygamy:

### 1 Kings 11:3-4

He had 700 wives, who were princesses, and 300 concubines. **And his wives turned away his heart. For when Solomon was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods,** and his heart was not wholly true to the Lord [YHWH] His God, as was the heart of David his father.

We acknowledge that Solomon married many foreign women, and those foreign women knew other gods, which appears to have influenced Solomon to also go after other gods. However, Scripture notes how many wives Solomon had for a reason, and clearly, this did not go well for him.

Opponents of our position might object to some of these examples that we pointed out and insist that the contention, heartache, rebellion, etc., were not *because* of polygamy.

We agree that all of these situations were maybe not caused by polygamy itself or just about contention between wives; of course, there were likely additional factors involved. However, there does appear to be a link between some fairly disastrous events and families in which polygamy occurred.

Again, as Davidson has said, "Although these biblical narratives provide no explicit verbal condemnation of this practice, **the narrator presents each account in such a way as to underscore a theology of disapproval.**"

The disastrous consequences that have accompanied the practice of polygamy throughout Israel's history perhaps contribute to the Jewish people all but abandoning the practice by the first century. Biblical scholar and rabbi, J.H. Hertz, says:

Polygamy seems to have wellnigh disappeared in Israel after the Babylonian Exile. Early Rabbinic literature presupposes a practically monogamic society; and out of 2,800 Teachers mentioned in the Talmudim, one is only stated to have had two wives. In the fourth century Aramaic paraphrase (Targum) of the Book of Ruth, the kinsman (IV, 6) refuses to "redeem" Ruth, saying, "**I cannot marry her, because I am already married; I have no right to take an additional wife, lest it lead to strife in my home.**" Such paraphrase would be meaningless if it did not reflect the general feeling of the people on this question.

*-J.H. Hertz, Pentateuch & Haftorahs, p. 932*

What is really important to note here—and please do not miss it—is that the Targum specifically mentions that the kinsman could not marry because he was already married. Not only that, but look at his further reasoning, "lest it lead to strife in my home." That language connects directly back to Leviticus 18:18, in which marrying another would cause rivalry between the wives. This goes to show

that the general interpretation of Leviticus 18:18 was not limited to just literal sisters, but instructed against taking any additional wife, lest it should cause rivalry in the household.

Of course, as we mentioned earlier, some sects of Judaism in the first century, like the Qumran community, completely prohibited the practice. Not only that, but, also like we mentioned earlier, the apostolic instruction in the first century consistently and invariably upholds monogamy as God's design for marriage.

So this is what we have established so far:

First, like homosexuality and adultery, polygamy is a clear deviation from God's original design for marriage as established in Creation.

Second, the Bible *does* in fact, appear to explicitly prohibit the practice of polygamy.

And third, rather than being endorsed in the Bible, polygamy appears to be painted in a negative light and is consequently discouraged throughout the Bible.

Before we move on to our next point, it's important that we address the issue of concubines since it is related to this topic. It was not uncommon in the ancient world for men to have concubines in addition to wives, and we even see some men in the Bible who practiced concubinage. We will be unpacking this issue specifically in a later teaching, but here is a quick summary of the issue:

Sometimes the term "concubine"—*piylegesh* in Hebrew—refers to a legitimate wife whom a man marries after the death of his first wife. This is the case with Keturah, who is called Abraham's "wife" in Genesis 25:1, but his "concubine" in 1 Chronicles 1:32. Like we've already mentioned, there is nothing wrong with a man entering into a monogamous marriage with a woman after divorce or the death of his first wife.

However, most of the time, this term refers to a woman who could be taken by a man without any legal formalization. She would voluntarily sell herself as a maidservant to a Hebrew family for the purposes of the man's sexual pleasure as well as to bear children in the case of barrenness. We see this with Jacob who had two concubines, Bilhah and Zilpah, in addition to his wives, Rachel and Leah. In the ancient world, a concubine did not have the same legal status as a full and legitimate wife.

Many of the arguments we've given in this teaching to demonstrate God's disapproval of polygamy can also apply to concubinage. For instance:

- 1) The ideal established in Creation is one man and one woman, which certainly precludes multiple sexual partners at the same time, whether or not they are official "wives" in the eyes of Ancient Near Eastern society.
- 2) In regards to Leviticus 18:18, one of primary reasons for the command was to prevent the rivalry and strife that occurs when women compete for the attention and love from the same man. Any sexual relationship with multiple women is likely to result in such rivalry. Thus, the harm that the Law wants prevented certainly would apply to concubinage as well as polygamy.
- 3) Concubinage usually appears right alongside polygamy as being painted in a negative light throughout the Bible and therefore appears to be discouraged.

So like polygamy, we'd argue that concubinage is against God's will. The nuanced difference being that concubinage could actually be classified as a type of fornication—that is to say, “unlawful sexual activity,” which would include sexual relations outside of the marriage covenant. As we mentioned in the first part of this series, [Is the Bible Misogynistic](#), we've learned that the sexual union is to be enjoyed only within the boundaries of a committed covenant relationship between husband and wife. Since a concubine is considered to have an inferior status to that of a legitimate wife, the practice of concubinage violates the sacredness of the sexual union between husband and wife.

Like we said, this topic will be treated fully in its own teaching, but for now it's clear that the reality of concubinage in the Ancient Near East certainly does not lend support to the idea that God approves of such a practice, let alone that He approves of polygamy.

Now let's move on to our fourth point: The passages in which polygamy might seem to be approved by God are misunderstood.

Despite everything we've already covered, some people will still insist that the Bible teaches that God at least implicitly permits and perhaps approves of the practice of polygamy. A number of passages are presented in support of this assertion. Our contention, however, is that these passages have been misunderstood. When we read them in context, we find that they in no way suggest that God approves of this practice.

Let's now turn our attention to the main arguments and passages in support of the pro-polygamy position.

The first passage we'll look at is Exodus 21:

#### **Exodus 21:7-11**

When a man sells his daughter as a slave, she shall not go out as the male slaves do. If she does not please her master, who has designated her for himself, then he shall let her be redeemed. He shall have no right to sell her to a foreign people, since he has broken faith with her. If he designates her for his son, he shall deal with her as with a daughter. **If he takes another wife to himself**, he shall not diminish her food, her clothing, or her marital rights. And if he does not do these three things for her, she shall go out for nothing, without payment of money.

There is certainly a lot of confusion when it comes to this passage. It's beyond the scope of this teaching to address all of the difficult questions that arise from these verses—most notably the regulation of slavery—but if you'd like more information on that topic, we do unpack this passage and others in our teaching, [Slavery and the Bible](#).

For now, we're just going to focus on a couple of particular points. When the passage speaks of the man taking “another wife to himself,” it is assumed that this refers to another wife *in addition to* the young maidservant mentioned previously in the passage; thus, it is argued that this passage permits polygamy.

However, when you carefully read through the passage, it's clear that these laws have literally nothing to do with polygamy! A plain reading of the text demonstrates that these laws are in regards to what is to be done when an engagement falls through.

In summary, if the master decides not to marry the maidservant, the first solution is that she can be

redeemed—that is, bought back.

Alternatively, there is the option that she and the master’s son could get married if she desires. If this happens, then the master is to treat her not as a servant, but as his daughter.

If she is not redeemed and if she doesn’t marry the master’s son, and if the master decides to marry someone else other than her, the master is still required to meet her basic needs. If he doesn’t provide what she needs, the maidservant can leave and is to be considered a free woman and cannot be sold.

These instructions in the Torah are all about looking after the best interests of the maidservant so that she does not end up on the street if engagement plans fall through between her and her master. It has nothing to do with polygamy.

However, some have argued that the maidservant’s “marital rights” that her master must provide her with, refer to conjugal rights—that is, sexual pleasure. While this interpretation is reflected in many English Bible translations, some scholars have challenged that understanding. The difficulty is that the Hebrew word, *onah*, translated as “marital rights,” is notoriously difficult to translate due to the fact that it is found only once in the entire Bible.

Theologian Paul Copan argues that “shelter” or possibly “oil” are more accurate alternatives to “marital rights”:

The problem with the translation “marital rights” (*onah*) is this: It’s a stab in the dark with a term *used only once* in the Old Testament. Words occurring once can often be tricky to handle, and translators should tread carefully. Some scholars have suggested more likely possibilities. For example, this word could be related to a word for oil (or possibly ointments) [...] However, an even more plausible rendering is available. The root of the word is associated with the idea of habitation or dwelling (*ma’on, me’onah*); for example, “God is a dwelling place,” or heaven is God’s holy “dwelling place” (Deut. 33:27; 2 Cron. 30:27). We can more confidently conclude that quarters or shelter (though possibly oil) are in view here, not conjugal rights. So the servant girl should be guaranteed the basic necessities: food, clothing, and lodging/shelter.

*-Paul Copan, Is God a Moral Monster: Making Sense of the Old Testament God, p. 115*

Another objection to this plain reading of the passage is that it mentions the master having a “son.” Therefore, it is argued, he must be married and is looking into getting a second wife. However, that assumption simply goes beyond the evidence. Other reasonable options are that the master’s first wife had passed away or he is divorced. There is no reason to assume polygamy here.

No doubt this is a difficult passage, and we hope to address it more fully in a future teaching. As mentioned before, we do speak to the slavery aspect of this passage and others in our teaching, [Slavery and the Bible](#). However, when it comes to the specific question of polygamy, as far as this passage is concerned, we can move on.

The second passage we’ll look at is Deuteronomy 17:17, which says:

#### **Deuteronomy 17:17**

[And he shall not acquire many wives for himself, lest his heart turn away, nor shall he acquire for himself excessive silver and gold.](#)

The command not to “acquire many wives” is among several commandments given to kings of Israel. This is often interpreted as God forbidding a king from marrying an excessive number of women, but implicitly permitting polygamy for kings on a moderate level. In other words, it’s said that a king is allowed to marry multiple women, just not too many.

When this verse is taken in isolation, due to the imprecise language used, there simply isn’t enough evidence to say that this verse prohibits polygamy. However, when we read this verse in its immediate context, we see something interesting. Consider the verses that immediately follow:

### **Deuteronomy 17:18-20**

**And when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself in a book a copy of this law, approved by the Levitical priests. And it shall be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God by keeping all the words of this law and these statutes, and doing them, that his heart may not be lifted up above his brothers, and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, either to the right hand or the left, so that he may continue long in his kingdom, he and his children, in Israel.**

Just like his fellow citizens, the king was to follow the Torah. He was to write his own copy of the Torah and study it that He may not turn from God’s commandments. And of course, as we established earlier in this teaching, one of God’s commandments appears to prohibit polygamy!

Since the king’s righteous behavior was to serve as an example to the nation of Israel, it’s therefore reasonable to conclude that Deuteronomy 17:17 upholds the similar prohibition against polygamy given to all of God’s people in Leviticus 18:18. Furthermore, since the intent of these commandments was so that the king would not think of himself as superior to other Israelites or think of himself as above God’s Law, the language used in verse 17 to “**not acquire many wives for himself**” ought to be understood in that light. That is to say, the king is prohibited from having more wives than regular Israelites were allowed to have—namely, more than one.

Now, if the intention of this verse was to prohibit *all* polygamy, some might say that it should be clearer. However, as Dr. Gordon P. Hugenberger explains:

One may object that this prohibition would have been clearer had it simply stated “the king shall not take a second wife” or “shall not have more than one wife,” etc. Given the undeniable right to remarry following divorce or the death of a spouse, however, the expression as it exists in 17:17 may be deemed adequate.

*-Gordon P. Hugenberger, “Marriage as a Covenant: A Study of Biblical Law & Ethics Governing Marriage, Developed from the Perspective of Malachi,” p. 120, n. 137*

In other words, insisting that the language in verse 17 ought to be more precise in its prohibition of polygamy doesn’t take into account a person’s right to take another wife after divorce or the death of their first spouse. Therefore, the language in verse 17 allows for that right while also prohibiting polygamy as we can clearly see when we read it in context.

The third passage we’ll look at is Deuteronomy 21:15-17, which says:

### **Deuteronomy 21:15-17**

**If a man has two wives**, the one loved and the other unloved, and both the loved and the unloved have borne him children, and if the firstborn son belongs to the unloved, then on the day when he assigns his possessions as an inheritance to his sons, he may not treat the son of the loved as the firstborn in preference to the son of the unloved, who is the firstborn, but he shall acknowledge the firstborn, the son of the unloved, by giving him a double portion of all that he has, for he is the firstfruits of his strength. The right of the firstborn is his.

It is claimed that since this law regulates a polygamous union that God therefore approves of the practice. Again, that is an inaccurate assumption.

To give an example, the same could be said for Deuteronomy 23:18, which forbids prostitute wages from being used as payment of vows. The existence of this Law certainly doesn't legitimize prostitution! Thus, in the same way, the existence of a law detailing the rights of the firstborn in a less-than-ideal situation—when a man has two wives—does not legitimize polygamy.

The fourth argument we'll look at is based on God's instructions concerning Levirate marriage in Deuteronomy 25:5-10. This law states that when a husband dies childless, his brother or near relative is to marry the deceased husband's widow in order so that the firstborn from this marriage would be the legal heir of the deceased husband.

It is argued that since this passage does not explicitly exempt a married brother from his Levirate duty, it's *theoretically* possible that this law would require a married brother to take an additional wife.

You could argue that possibility exists in theory, but when we look at the actual evidence of this law being carried out in practice, we see something different.

We see the practice of Levirate marriage being employed only two times in the Bible—with Tamar and Ruth. In both cases, they were remarried to men who did not already have a wife.

It's important to also understand that this law was not given in a vacuum, but ought to be understood in light of everything else the Torah says on the subject. There are clear exemptions to this law, even if they aren't explicitly stated.

For instance, when Tamar's husband Onan died, she was told to remain a widow until Onan's brother, Shelah, was old enough to marry her. But an exemption for age is never stated in the law. We can reasonably conclude, therefore, that there could be other exemptions even if they aren't explicitly stated in the passage. And since we've already demonstrated how the Torah likely prohibits polygamy in Leviticus 18:18, we can reasonably conclude that this law exempts married relatives from this duty.

Admittedly, since the passage does not exhaustively cover every single situation in which the Levirate duty may or may not apply, someone *could* argue that polygamy is permitted, however, that conclusion appears least likely. *At most*, it's the rare exception to the rule and only permitted in extremely specific circumstances.

This could be compared to the principle that breaking the Sabbath is allowed in order to save a life of a person or animal. Those specific situations in which breaking the Sabbath might be necessary to save a life, do not give permission for breaking the Sabbath in general. Likewise, while it's theoretically possible that polygamy might be permitted in extremely rare circumstances, that possibility certainly does not suggest that polygamy ought to be approved in any other situation.

Regardless, this commandment needs to be understood in light of everything else the Bible says on the topic. And since the Bible is clear that polygamy is against God's will, it's reasonable to conclude that married relatives would be exempt from Levirate duty.

The fifth argument we'll look at is the claim that Moses himself had two wives at the same time. It is argued, therefore, that Moses couldn't have given commandments from God prohibiting polygamy since Moses was practicing it himself.

But is this claim true? The suggestion that Moses is a polygamist is based on an assumption that Moses' wife, Zipporah, a Midianite (Exodus 2:21; 4:25; 18:2), is a different woman than the "Cushite woman" mentioned in Numbers 12:1.

However, there is simply no evidence for this assumption. The most likely explanation is that the Cushite woman refers to Zipporah. In the Wycliff Bible Encyclopedia, John Rea remarks:

It is possible that Zipporah, a Midianite, was also designated a Cushite, for Midian included part of NW Arabia where some Cushite tribes lived. Furthermore, she may have been called a Cushite because her complexion may have been darker than that of most Israelites.

*-John Rea, "Zipporah," Wycliff Bible Encyclopedia, 2:1848-49*

This can be further confirmed in Habakkuk 3:7, where Cushan and Midian occur in synonymous parallelism, suggesting that perhaps the terms referred to the same region.

The issue in Numbers 12 is that Miriam and Aaron called Zipporah a derogatory name because, according to the very next verse, they were frustrated with Moses' leadership and likely jealous of the influence that Zipporah had over Moses as his wife. Calling her a "Cushite woman" was an attempt to demean and de-personalize Zipporah and therefore bring indictment against Moses for marrying a non-Hebrew.

Whatever the case may be, the text certainly doesn't prove that Moses had more than one wife at the same time. The only way to arrive at such a conclusion is through a series of baseless assumptions.

The sixth argument we'll look at is the suggestion that King David, a "man after God's own heart," practiced polygamy; therefore, God must permit, or even approve of it.

However, there are several reasons to reject that reasoning. First, when God anointed David as the future king and called him "a man after his own heart" in 1 Samuel 13:14, David was not yet a polygamist and was likely still single.

Moreover, everyone knows that David fell into terrible sins—including adultery and murder. So this statement certainly does not imply an endorsement of *all* of David's behavior, and therefore it cannot be used to suggest that God approved of David's polygamy.

Why don't we ever see YHWH rebuke anyone for the sin of polygamy?

God does not always rebuke every sin that everyone commits, but that does not mean that YHWH endorses it.

For example, we see that Samson committed fornication with a prostitute:

### **Judges 16:1**

Samson went to Gaza, and there he saw a prostitute, and he went in to her.

We do not see YHWH rebuking Samson.

When Cain committed murder, he got a personal warning in advance (Genesis 4:6-7) and an immediate punishment (Genesis 4:9-12). But several generations later, Lamech, the first polygamist, killed a man and boasted about it (Genesis 4:23-24); yet, nothing is recorded as having happened to him.

We cannot assume from what isn't said that nothing had happened or will happen. When there is silence in the Scriptures, all you can say is that God did not say, and we don't know. We cannot put words into God's mouth. "

### **Proverbs 30:6**

Do not add to His words, lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar.

Some might point to 2 Samuel 12 where God sent Nathan with a message of reproof to David. It is claimed that Nathan's word makes it clear that God approved of David's polygamy:

### **2 Samuel 12:7-8**

Nathan said to David, "You are the man! Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you out of the hand of Saul. **And I gave you your master's house and your master's wives into your arms** and gave you the house of Israel and of Judah. And if this were too little, I would add to you as much more.

Some might say, "See, God *gave* David Saul's wives! How can God be against polygamy if He gave David multiple wives Himself?"

There are some problems with this argument. First, why do we assume that God's "giving" of Saul's wives to David implies that David married them? There is no evidence to suggest that.

It's much more likely that God's giving of Saul's house and wives into David's arms merely speaks of all of Saul's estate being transferred to David's care. There's nothing in the text that indicates marriage at all.

Second, just a few verses later—in verse 11—God says that he will "give" *David's* wives to David's neighbor who would then sleep with them:

### **2 Samuel 12:11**

Thus says the Lord, 'Behold, I will raise up evil against you out of your own house. **And I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbor**, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun.

As we know from the rest of the story, this "neighbor" to whom God would give David's wives turned out to be David's son Absalom.

Now, Absalom sleeping with David's wives was not only adultery, but also incest. Therefore, if we're

going to say that God's "giving" of Saul's wives to David is an endorsement of polygamy—assuming that David married Saul's wives, which, again, there's no evidence of—then that same logic could be used to say that God's "giving" of David's wives to Absalom is an endorsement of incest and adultery. But obviously that would be absurd!

Third, David couldn't have married Saul's wives, because in addition to violating God's law against polygamy, he'd also be violating an anti-incest law. As we see in 1 Samuel 14:50, one of Saul's wives was Ahinoam, who was the mother of David's wife, Michal. Leviticus 18:17 prohibits marrying one's mother-in-law. Thus, this passage certainly does not give any support to the view that God approves of polygamy.

The seventh argument we'll look at, is the accusation that God Himself is a polygamist. This argument is based on Ezekiel 23, which is an allegory in which God is represented as being married to two sisters who represent the divided kingdom of Israel—Oholah, which represents Samaria, and Oholibah, which represents Jerusalem.

The point of this allegory was to illustrate *all* of Israel's sin and unfaithfulness to God. Pointing to this allegory as a proof-text for polygamy is obviously missing the point.

Moreover, the symbolic marriage between God and Israel began long before Israel was divided into two kingdoms. Therefore, *all* of Israel is to be regarded as one people chosen by God. Not only that, but Ezekiel also speaks of these two kingdoms reuniting as one in Ezekiel 37:

#### **Ezekiel 37:22**

**And I will make them *one nation* in the land, on the mountains of Israel. And one king shall be king over them all, and *they shall be no longer two nations, and no longer divided into two kingdoms.***

So according to the consistent biblical testimony, God and Israel's relationship is "monogamous," despite the temporary division of the nation. Ezekiel's allegorical message was one that addressed Israel's specific situation at that time. But from God's perspective and plan, His people are one.

The eighth argument we'll look at might go something like this: "Despite the fact that the practice of polygamy obviously seems to be condemned in the Bible, God nevertheless continued to bless and work through practicing polygamists such as Abraham, Jacob, and King David! So maybe the practice isn't ideal, but you really can't say that it's against God's will, can you?!"

The answer is yes. The fact that God worked through fallen people—and indeed continues to work through every believer despite our many flaws—is not an argument that God approves of the behavior. It's a testament to His amazing grace and mercy *despite* their behavior (Romans 8:28)

Yet in the midst of an imperfect situation caused by people going against His will, we see in God's Torah that He took special care to protect the victims of polygamy, such as Hagar and Ishmael. As we've seen, God even gave laws looking out for their best interests, such as the firstborn son born to the polygamous parents in Deuteronomy 21. Indeed, the nation of Israel itself was born from the twelve sons of Jacob who were the products of polygamy. God is certainly able to work within an imperfect situation in order to bring about His purposes. And to anyone who transgresses God's will and seeks forgiveness from the Lord, forgiveness and healing are available.

God has not abandoned His people, yet that does not stop Him from calling us back to His standard of holiness—even with regard to His design for marriage. Again, God’s compassion for the polygamist no more justifies polygamy than His compassion for the thief justifies theft. God is merciful, but He calls us to repentance.

In conclusion, with regard to the question, “Does the Bible Endorse Polygamy,” here is what we’ve learned:

We’ve established that polygamy is a clear deviation from God’s original design for marriage as established in Creation, to which Yeshua and Paul agree.

We’ve established that Paul clearly interprets the Torah to instruct against polygamy, going as far to say that a man is not above reproach unless he is married no more than just one wife.

We’ve established that the Bible *does*, in fact, appear to explicitly prohibit the practice of polygamy in Leviticus 18:18, which justifies Paul’s position.

We’ve established that polygamy is painted in a negative light and discouraged throughout the Bible.

And finally, we’ve established that the passages in which polygamy might seem to be approved by God have been misunderstood.

Therefore, we believe the answer to this question is an obvious NO. Polygamy was never endorsed, not then and not now. Our conclusion is, for whatever it is worth, that the Bible prohibits it, and it is contrary to God’s will and design for marriage.

*We pray you have been blessed by this teaching.*

*Remember, continue to test everything. Shalom! For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at [www.testeverything.net](http://www.testeverything.net)*

**Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.**

**EMAIL:** [Info@119ministries.com](mailto:Info@119ministries.com)

**FACEBOOK:** [www.facebook.com/119Ministries](http://www.facebook.com/119Ministries)

**WEBSITE:** [www.TestEverything.net](http://www.TestEverything.net) & [www.ExaminaloTodo.net](http://www.ExaminaloTodo.net)

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