



## SAVED TO SERVE

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### CAN POLYGAMY BE JUSTIFIED FROM THE BIBLE?

1. In this Sabbath School Lesson, we will study the Bible to see if polygamy is approved by God. There are certain groups of Muslims, Latter Day Saints (Mormons), and Hebrew Israelites who believe that polygamy is an acceptable practice. Additionally, there are many critics of the Bible who claim it cannot be inspired because it reveals the sinful deeds of men and therefore, it is not a holy book. We will address these claims in this lesson.
  2. What did God say of His creations prior to the creation of mankind? Genesis 1:10, 12, 18, 21, 25  

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  3. What did God create on the sixth day, and what did He say afterward? Genesis 1:25-27, 31; Genesis 2:21-23  

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  4. **Note:** God said things were "good" or perfect prior to the creation of man and after man's creation. Therefore, what we see in Eden represents God's perfect will and ideal for mankind, even on the point of relationships and marriage.
  5. How many wives were given to Adam at creation? Genesis 2:23, 24; Genesis 3:20  

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  6. Did Jesus, our Lord and Savior, support polygamy? How many persons in a marriage were to be considered one flesh? Matthew 19:3-6; Ephesians 5:31  

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  7. What was Paul's counsel to avoid fornication? 1 Corinthians 7:2  

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  8. What are some qualifications to be a bishop or deacon in the church? 1 Timothy 3:2, 12; Titus 1:6  

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  9. Furthermore, what principles are outlined in God's ten commandments? Exodus 20:12, 14  

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  10. **Note:** Naturally, you can only have one father and one mother. If a married man or woman is unfaithful to their marriage vows by intimately involving themselves with another person, that is called adultery. It is clear that even in the commandments, God was teaching us that only one man and one woman should come together in marriage.
  11. Who was the first polygamist, and of whom was he a descendant? Genesis 4:19, 17, 23-24  

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  12. **Note:** Lamech was a descendant of Cain, who had rejected God and produced a lineage of person who departed from God's way. Hence, why we see in Genesis 4 & 5, two distinct genealogies of people: those from Seth who followed God (Genesis 4:26), and those of Cain who disobeyed God.
  13. What happened when the faithful people from Seth's line saw the daughters of Cain's descendants? Genesis 6:1, 2  

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- a) What did this sin of polygamy, among others, cause God to say and do? Genesis 6:3, 5, 7  

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**“Polygamy had been early introduced, contrary to the divine arrangement at the beginning. The Lord gave to Adam one wife, showing His order in that respect. But after the Fall, men chose to follow their own sinful desires; and as the result, crime and wretchedness rapidly increased. Neither the marriage relation nor the rights of property were respected. Whoever coveted the wives or the possessions of his neighbor, took them by force, and men exulted in their deeds of violence. They delighted in destroying the life of animals; and the use of flesh for food rendered them still more cruel and bloodthirsty, until they came to regard human life with astonishing indifference.” {PP 91.3}**

14. **Note:** Still, critics site Biblical examples to justify polygamy, ranging from Abraham, Jacob, Gideon, Elkanah, David, Solomon, and others. They claim that since the Bible says David was a man after God's own heart and God says, "I AM the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob," that God approved of their sins. Let us examine a few of these individuals to see if polygamy was their own choice or if God had ordained it.

**“The Lord said of Noah and his family who were saved in the ark, “For thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation.” Noah had but one wife, and their united family discipline was blessed of God. Because Noah's sons were righteous, they were preserved in the ark with their righteous father. God has not sanctioned polygamy in a single instance. It was contrary to his will. He knew that the happiness of man would be destroyed by it.” {3SG 100.1}**

15. Who was Abram or Abraham's wife, and what did God promise to him? Genesis 11:29; Genesis 15:2, 4
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16. When the promise that they would have a son was delayed, whose voice did Abraham listen to, to take another wife? What was the result? Genesis 16:1-6; Genesis 21:2, 9-13
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17. **Note:** If God was in favor of polygamy or of Sarah's plan to fulfill the promise of God through Hagar, God would not have permitted Abraham to kick out his son Ishmael and his mother Hagar.

**“If God had sanctioned polygamy he would not have thus directed Abraham to send away Hagar and her son. He would teach all a lesson in this, that the rights and happiness of the marriage relation are to be ever respected, and guarded, even at a great sacrifice. Sarah was the first and only true wife of Abraham. She was entitled to rights, as a wife and mother, which no other could have in the family. She revered her husband, calling him lord; but she was jealous lest his affections should be divided with Hagar. God did not rebuke Sarah for the course she pursued. Abraham was reproved by the angels for distrusting God's power, which had led him to take Hagar as his wife, and to think that through her the promise would be fulfilled.” {3SG 104.2}**

18. Jacob also had multiple wives. Genesis 29:30 says that he loved Rachel more than Leah. Read the following scriptures and describe what was took place between the two principal wives of Jacob: Rachel and Leah. Genesis 29:32, 34; Genesis 30:1-5, 9
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- a) The strife, jealousy, and competition that existed in Jacob's home between his wives also extended down to his children. What did Jacob's sons do to Joseph, the firstborn of Rachel? Genesis 37:23-24, 27-28
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**“The sin of Jacob, and the train of events to which it led, had not failed to exert an influence for evil—an influence that revealed its bitter fruit in the character and life of his sons. As these sons arrived at manhood they developed serious faults. The results of polygamy were manifest in the household. This terrible evil tends to dry up the very springs of love, and its influence weakens the most sacred ties. The jealousy of the several mothers had embittered the family relation, the children had grown up contentious and impatient of control, and the father's life was darkened with anxiety and grief.” {CC 72.2}**

19. How many wives did Elkanah, Samuel's father, have? How did Peninnah treat Hannah? 1 Samuel 1:1, 2, 4-6
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20. David is also frequently referenced as an example of having many wives. What judgment was placed upon the house of David for his sin and for taking multiple wives? 2 Samuel 12:9-11
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**“His crime in the case of Uriah and Bath-sheba was heinous in the sight of God. A just and impartial God did not sanction or excuse these sins in David, but sends a reproof, and heavy denunciation by Nathan, his prophet, which portrays in living colors his grievous offense... David awakens as from a dream. He feels the sense of his sin. He does not seek to excuse his course, or palliate his sin, as did Saul; but with remorse and sincere grief, he bows his head before the prophet of God, and acknowledges his guilt...Yet he should be punished, because he had given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme. This occasion has been improved by the enemies of God, from David's day until the present time.**

Skeptics have assailed christianity, and ridiculed the Bible, because David gave them occasion. They bring up to Christians the case of David, his sin in the case of Uriah and Bathsheba, his polygamy, and then assert that David is called a man after God's own heart, and if the Bible record is correct, God justified David in his crimes." {4aSG 86.2}

"I was shown that it was when David was pure, and walking in the counsel of God, that God called him a man after his own heart. When David departed from God, and stained his virtuous character by his crimes, he was no longer a man after God's own heart. God did not in the least degree justify him in his sins, but sent Nathan his prophet, with dreadful denunciations to David because he had transgressed the commandment of the Lord. God shows his displeasure at David's having a plurality of wives by visiting him with judgments, and permitting evils to rise up against him from his own house. The terrible calamity God permitted to come upon David, who for his integrity was once called a man after God's own heart, is evidence to after generations that God would not justify any one in transgressing his commandments, but that he will surely punish the guilty, however righteous, and favored of God they might once have been while they followed the Lord in purity of heart. When the righteous turn from their righteousness and do evil, their past righteousness will not save them from the wrath of a just and holy God." {4aSG 87.1}

21. Probably the most famous polygamist in all of scriptures is none other than Solomon, who had 700 wives and 300 concubines! What happened to Solomon as a result of disobeying God's order to have one wife? 1 Kings 11:1-4

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22. Whose practices were God's people following which led them to be polygamists and to not regard polygamy as a sin? 2 Kings 17:7-9

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23. **Note:** It is clear from scripture that God didn't sanction or approve polygamy in the lives of these illustrious Bible characters. The result of their sins are left on record as evidence of God's displeasure, and the unhappiness in their homes was evidence that polygamy was never God's plan. Let us now close on the how the accounts of these men give us hope of salvation.

24. Whose names are recorded in Hebrews 11? Hebrews 11:8, 21, 32

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25. Although they sinned and made mistakes, what were they able to work through faith? Hebrews 11:33

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26. What do the failures and successes of their christian walk teach us? Hebrews 12:1

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a) What else do their stories of failure and victory validate? 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21

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"Had our good Bible been written by uninspired persons, it would have presented quite a different appearance and would have been a discouraging study to erring mortals, who are contending with natural frailties and the temptations of a wily foe. But as it is, we have a correct record of the religious experiences of marked characters in Bible history. Men whom God favored, and to whom He entrusted great responsibilities, were sometimes overcome by temptation and committed sins, even as we of the present day strive, waver, and frequently fall into error. But it is encouraging to our desponding hearts to know that through God's grace they could gain fresh vigor to again rise above their evil natures; and, remembering this, we are ready to renew the conflict ourselves." {4T 10.2}

27. Hebrews 12:1 says that we are "compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses". Contextually, these witnesses are referring to the people mentioned in Hebrews 11. In scripture, who and what else are called witnesses which will encourage us and give us power to overcome sin?

a) 1 Timothy 6:12 - **Answer:** Those in and out of the church who have seen our profession to follow Christ. Others are watching us, therefore, we should pray that we are not a stumbling block or a castaway - 1 Corinthians 9:27.

b) Romans 2:15; Romans 9:1

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c) Revelation 11:3-6 - **Answer:** The two witnesses or the Old & New Testament of the Bible are witnesses to help us stay on the right path to salvation.

d) 1 Thessalonians 2:5; Hebrews 2:4

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e) Hebrews 10:15; Romans 8:16

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f) Revelation 1:5; Revelation 3:14

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28. Jesus is more than just our Witness to encourage us to continue on the path of salvation. What other titles are given to Him?  
Hebrews 12:2

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29. Describe what we must do, through the power of Jesus, to finally overcome sin. Analyze Hebrews 12:2-4.

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