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POLYGAMY AND JOSEPH SMITH

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Many people (both LDS and Non-LDS) find Joseph Smith's polygamous lifestyle objectionable. And yet, if you've ever read through the Old Testament, you have probably noticed that several of Israel's prominent leaders had more than one wife.

So why is Joseph Smith's polygamy such a big deal?

[Here are five reasons:](#)

FIRST: HE LIED ABOUT IT.

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The Old Testament **never** commands or applauds polygamy. But whenever it occurs, it is fully disclosed to the entire community. Joseph Smith practiced plural marriage in secret for years before he eventually owned up to it. In fact, not only did he keep it hidden, but he lied about to others, covering up what he was doing.

Smith's earliest plural marriage took place in 1833. Two years LATER the Church published the 1835 version of the D&C. Section 101 says,

"Inasmuch as this church of Christ has been reproached with the crime of fornication, and polygamy: we declare that we believe, that one man should have one wife; and one woman, but one husband, except in case of death, when either is at liberty to marry again."

At the same time that Joseph Smith claimed to be giving revelation from God that polygamy was a morally reprehensible criminal act, he was already secretly taking multiple wives.


SECOND: IT WAS AGAINST THE LAW.

Throughout the entire time that Joseph Smith and the other Mormon leaders practiced polygamy it was strictly prohibited by law. It was not part of the social fabric of 19th century American culture, but was introduced by Joseph Smith to those under his influence. This makes the polygamy of Joseph Smith altogether different than polygamy in other times and cultures in which it was already socially acceptable.

Furthermore, because he bore false witness about his practice of polygamy, and coveted other men's wives, he broke the most clear and basic expression of God's moral law: the 10 Commandments.

THIRD: HE HAD *MANY* WIVES.

If Joseph Smith had had relationships with 2, 3 or 4 women, his polygamy may not have drawn that much attention. But what makes this part of his life so distasteful is the sheer number of his multiple wives.

An LDS.org article officially posted by the LDS church in October of 2014 admitted that Joseph Smith had as many as 40 wives, ranging from the age of 14 to 56. In one year alone, Joseph Smith acquired as many as 18 plural wives. Not only does Jesus teach us that God's plan for marriage has always been one man and one woman, but the Old Testament specifically forbids a leader of God's people from "acquiring many wives" (Deuteronomy 17:17 ).

FORTH: HE HAD SEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH MARRIED WOMEN.

The LDS church admits that 12-14 of Joseph Smith's wives were already married to living husbands. Not only is the practice of taking another man's wife morally abhorrent on many levels, the practice (also referred to as polyandry) is firmly forbidden in D&C 132:61. It reads:

"And again, as pertaining to the law of the priesthood—if any man espouse a virgin, and desire to espouse another, and the first give her consent, and if he espouse the second, and they are virgins, and have vowed to no other man, then is he justified; he cannot commit adultery for they are given unto him; for he cannot commit adultery with that that belongeth unto him and to no one else."

This means that Joseph Smith not only disobeyed the civil law, broke apart families, and rejected the clear Biblical teaching on adultery, he even denied his own faith by abandoning the clear teaching of the D&C.

FIFTH: THE NT CONDEMNS IT.

The New Testament gives very specific qualifications for church leadership. These qualifications were meant to help Christians identify who should and should not be allowed to lead in the modern church. The two most specific lists of these qualifications can be found in the letters of 1 Timothy and Titus, both of which explicitly prohibit polygamy.

"Therefore, an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife" (1 Timothy 3:2 [L](#)).

"Appoint elders...if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife..." (Titus 1:5-7 [L](#)).

Furthermore Jesus taught that God's design for marriage was one man and one woman, saying:

"Therefore a man should leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate" (Matthew 19:5-6 [L](#)).

The one-flesh union described by Jesus makes no allowance for multiple-wife marriages. The Bible commands that if anyone is guilty of these charges, not only is he disqualified from leadership in God's church, but he should be

"silenced, since [he] is upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what [he] out not to teach" (Titus 3:10-11 [L](#)).

So what's the point?

Even if we were to exclude all the other parts of his lifestyle and teaching on this point alone, Joseph Smith is Biblically disqualified as a leader in the church. Anyone, then who desires

to love and follow God is firmly commanded to reject Joseph Smith's teachings.

And that's why Joseph Smith's polygamy is such a big deal.

VERSE REFERENCES



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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Ritch was born and raised in the western suburbs of Chicago. He served as a U.S. Marine in the Iraq War before returning to Illinois where he met and married his wife (Laura) and served a local church as a pastor for 7 years. In September of 2013, the Sandfords moved to South Jordan, where they planted The Mission Church and created GodLovesMormons.com. They host a weekly Bible study for ex-Mormon Christians, and are actively involved in evangelism in their community.