

# Polygamy

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## Common Questions and Misconceptions



Compiled for:  
Crime Victims Trainings

### Containing:

- ◆ Building trust with women in these societies
- ◆ Greatest fears of women who consider leaving
- ◆ Major misconceptions related to polygamous families and communities including:
  - Sex & self gratification is the purpose
  - Underage girls are forced into plural marriages
  - Young men are ostracized/cast out
  - Women want to be rescued
  - The outside world is inaccessible
  - Education is not valued
  - Crime is prevalent
  - Abuse is tolerated
  - Tax fraud is the norm
  - All polygamous families are on welfare

## “What are some ways to build trust with women in these communities?”

- ◆ Begin to see women in our culture not as victims but as individuals who have chosen their way of life.
- ◆ Understand that her children are raised in a stable, loving environment with many loving adults to address their needs.

Plural Societies and even their members are all different; we speak only for our selves.

- ◆ Respect that even if our culture is not for everyone the vast majority of us are deeply committed to our beliefs and are happy.
- ◆ Know that she is not looking to be rescued.

Unfortunately, when it comes to polygamy, the dysfunctional are examined and sensationalized, and the successfully fulfilled go unnoticed.

When a woman finds herself in an abusive situation, she will seek help first as a human being.

We are a culture of choice.

**Empathy is more powerful than sympathy.** Preconceived notions of plural marriage will only alienate her. It does not follow that her neighbor, or the other women she meets and prays with, also need help. Nor does it follow that, because a woman from a polygamous culture is dealing with the issue of abuse, she wants to abandon

her culture or her religion.

As any member of society, members of our society do not welcome being blanketed with stereotypes.

She is seeking help because of abuse and she

needs help; not because she is living plural marriage.

Do not take a troubled woman’s issues and paint everyone with her brush. This gives us the assurance that if we go to you for help we will not be met with

preconceived ideas about what we are dealing with or what our individual needs are. There is

“Of course, you have this problem. You live in a polygamous culture, don’t you?”

no universal treatment for dysfunction.

**MISCONCEPTION:** The polygamous culture is filled with crime, and all people in that culture deal with abuse, violence and coercion.

**FACT:** As in any society we have dysfunctional members, but it is a misconception that abuse of any kind is accepted or condoned. Plural marriage does not create that dysfunction any more than monogamy would.

**MISCONCEPTION:** There is no one to whom to turn for help within our culture.

**FACT:** In Centennial Park there is a network of helps provided for those in need. These include:

- Clergy
- Nurses
- Teachers
- Other Members (who are involved in plural marriages and understand the needs)
- Other professionals who are educated and trained to see the signs of abuse and how to deal with them.
- State agencies when a situation requires it. We have invited those agencies to help and to provide training.

**MISCONCEPTION:** Children in the polygamous culture have no exposure to the world around them and are deprived of a good education.

**FACT:** Education is very important to us. The majority of our children complete their high school education and many go on to earn degrees in colleges and universities. Women are able to do this, even after marriage, because of the support provided in plural families.

(See our other pamphlets for statistics.)

**MISCONCEPTION:** Polygamists don't pay taxes and expect to be supported by the taxes of the public at large.

**FACT:** The property taxes in Centennial Park are as high as any in the state. If we neglected to pay our taxes the government would not be any more lenient with us than with any other citizens of the state.

**MISCONCEPTION:** All polygamist families are on welfare.

**FACT:** The service that is most used in our area is health insurance which, as in the rest of the nation, is a real concern. In a recent panel discussion with state agencies, we were told that we are under-using the services available to us in Arizona and Utah.

**“What are some of the biggest fears women face in leaving besides breaking ties with family members?”**

- ◆ A major fear is that bigamy charges will be brought against a loved one when a woman comes forward with other issues. Bigamy charges should not be brought to bear in connection with issues of a different nature. The right of privacy of confidential information should be respected.
- ◆ The fear that the good things in their lives will be torn apart may prevent them seeking help for the things that need repair.
- ◆ Most women who choose to leave would want to keep their children and be able to provide for them. Being unable to do this is a fear. Even if employment were made available, fear of having to leave the children in the care of a stranger who is unfamiliar with their experience and with their outlook on life would be a great concern.
- ◆ Being alone and without someone you feel a deep connection with is a fear.
- ◆ Because our lives are filled with activity and interaction with many individuals, when a woman leaves this society she needs something to fill that void.
- ◆ A woman having come from plural marriage is as worthwhile as one coming from any other society. She will still have many of the same values with which she was reared. She may have fears related to religious beliefs. She may fear that others will scorn her past and her prior decisions rather than recognize any worthwhile upbringing.

Principles of love, trust, respect and willingness to sacrifice for the good of others are elements we prize in marriage.

Self-abnegation and service to others is also a vital working part of our view of Christianity.

## “What are the major misconceptions the general public has about polygamous families and communities?”

**MISCONCEPTION:** Relationships are seen through the love-sex self-gratification paradigm.

**FACT:** The whole idea of polygamous living arouses the sexual curiosity of the average

We hold to a tighter moral code or standard, which we are taught from infancy. As anywhere in America, we have the right to choose whether or not to follow these standards. The choice to live by those standards places a personal responsibility upon us.

individual, and he thinks of it as a sort of a fantasy within which he might indulge his sexual desires, but he doesn't think about the responsibilities accepted by those in polygamous cultures to support and rear families. In polygamous relationships, people's lives are driven by natural familial ties.

**MISCONCEPTION:** Underage girls are forced into plural marriage.

**FACT:** Children reared in this culture learn to value family relationships. We encourage our girls to wait until they are of age before they marry.

**MISCONCEPTION:** Girls are abused before they reach marriageable age.

**FACT:** We are taught to defend virtue. An abusive situation would be treated as such.

Self-discipline is the watchword of our society.

**MISCONCEPTION:** When a young woman wishes to marry, her chances for happiness are greater with a young man than with a more mature man.

**FACT:** It is often thought that only older men take plural wives and that those wives are very young brides. There are many couples who have not entered plural marriage. Marriage is instigated at the request of the girl. It could involve either a young man or one who is more mature. A girl may

decide on a mature family because she perceives that her chances for a successful, secure marriage are better with more stable, mature individuals.

**MISCONCEPTION:** We send our young men away in order to save the girls for older men.

**FACT:** Our sons are as great a treasure

to us as our daughters are. Plural marriage naturally puts a far greater burden of responsibility upon men than the average man is willing to bear, therefore plural marriage can appeal to females more than to males. Parental role modeling is very important to us. We strive to teach that responsibility goes with individual choice, so that our children will learn to own the consequences of their choices as their own ultimate free will.

Our involvement in polygamy is the result of sincere and deeply held religious faith. Marital decisions are made in this context.

**MISCONCEPTION:** Women want to be rescued from the polygamous culture.

**FACT:** A woman in this culture has as much choice to leave as one in any other culture.

**MISCONCEPTION:** If polygamists were educated about general society they would not choose plural marriage.

**FACT:** Very often, as we observe the problems of the monogamous society, we are able to appreciate the strengths and support found in our culture. The standard of living is enhanced by the combined efforts of multiple adults in the family working together to provide for the needs of the family.

**MISCONCEPTION:** People in our society are cut off from the outside world.

**FACT:** In the circumstances where help is needed, we have access to phones, cell phones, computers, internet, postal service, automobiles, etc., and we know how to use them. Our children are taught how to use computers, the internet, and other forms of communication in our schools.