

UPWARD THOUGHT

SEARCH



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Polygamy: Almost always a bad idea, but not always

By Rob • July 09, 2018

Polygamy is a divisive issue. Some people believe it is required to go to heaven,

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others believe it will take you straight to hell. I once wrote this [post](#) on the topic, which covers many relevant scriptures. At this point in my life, I feel it is necessary to write out my current understanding of this topic.

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My own journey with the idea of polygamy began as a young Latter-day Saint, when I came across the stories of Joseph Smith practicing polygamy. The question of whether he did or didn't is its own divisive issue, and not important for our purposes here. Nevertheless, being a believing Latter-day Saint, I was faced with the narrative that he did, and it bothered me. At that time, like most people, I felt the idea of polygamy was reprehensible. Because I believed in the scriptures, I believed that the best way to resolve my angst on the issue was to ask God

about it. Instead of resting in my own ideas on the topic, I suspended my preconceived notions and sought God out to instruct me. He did.

Over the subsequent years (that may have been as many as 10 years ago), I have been taught quite a bit on the topic. What I present here is not meant to be a guide on the topic. I don't pretend to have the answers you or others seek. Instead, what follows are merely the notes of things as I presently understand them.

I don't expect to convince anyone to move from their present position with this post. This is one topic where the strength of one's feelings on the topic is not typically proportional to the amount of knowledge one has on it. This is unfortunate because one's ability to receive revelation is

usually inversely proportional to the strength of one's feelings on the issue about which they are asking. The Holy Ghost is informational, and strong feelings cloud the channels through which information flows. They can block information. Strong feelings preclude the fair consideration of undesirable possibilities.

Thus, if one does not believe what I am about to say already, I highly doubt that they would be convinced should a heavenly messenger appear and tell them the same. As Jesus taught with the parable of Lazarus and the rich man, if someone is unable to recognize the truth of an issue when it is told them plainly in the scriptures in multiple instances, they would not believe it even if an angel appeared to tell them.

As with anything of import, what others present to you is merely something that might be helpful in your own journey. Though, if true, you will be held accountable for what it teaches you, it doesn't absolve you of the full responsibility you bear for your own actions. You and you alone must figure out for yourself what is true, and live it knowing you will bear the full consequences of your own action or lack of action.

When is polygamy a good idea

Almost never. Polygamy is only a good idea when it is in the best interest of the women involved. This is rarely the case because almost all men are not where they need to be to make that the case, and most women are in a place where monogamy is the best relationship for

them.

That said, here are some cases where it might be a good idea.

1. If the woman has high spiritual intelligence.

To understand this, it is necessary to understand the Pareto distribution. A distribution is a function that measures how a certain property is shared across a population. Most people are familiar with the Normal distribution, or Bell curve. IQ follows the Normal distribution, meaning most people are close to the average IQ, and those who have a lower or higher than normal IQ are both equally likely and less abundant.

The Pareto is a way of visualizing human

outputs. It is extremely different than the Normal curve. As you can see from the image below, the vast majority of the Pareto distribution (gray) is below the mean of the Normal curve (black). Also, the "tail," or thin part of the Pareto distribution's upper end, goes on much further than the Normal curve.

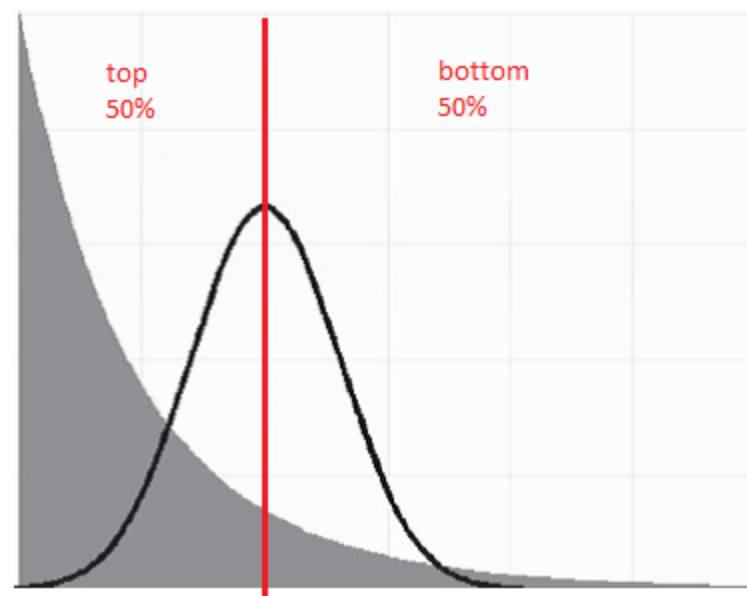


Figure 1: A Normal Distribution (Black) Overlaying a Paretian Distribution (Grey).

While IQ is Normally distributed, spiritual

intelligence is Pareto distributed. What is spiritual intelligence? It is what explains and drives personal output. It is how much alike one's character is to God's. If you want a really "good" husband or wife, you want someone who falls on the right side of the Pareto distribution.

Now, it is important to understand how improbable it is to find someone in that tail (a really "good" person). In the Normal distribution, if you split the whole x axis into 10 equally spaced bins, you will find that half the people are in the bottom half of bins, half the top, most in the middle, and very few in the tails. This means your average person, on the normal distribution, will be in the middle. If you are thinking of height, which is distributed on a Normal curve, the average person is not 8 ft tall

or 4 ft tall, but (if a man) around 5'8".

In the Pareto, if you do the same thing, more than 50% of people are in the lowest bin. If height were Pareto distributed, something like 80% of people would be 4 ft tall! In the Pareto, bins 1 and 2 together contain 80% of people. Think about that. There is only a 20% chance of a randomly selected person being in bins 3-10, ~10% for bins 4-10, ~5% for bins 5-10, ~2% for bins 6-10 (remember, in a Normal curve, 50% would be in bins 6-10, but in Pareto it is only 2% in bins 6-10).

What does this mean for male/female matching?

If spiritual intelligence is Pareto distributed as I claim (and as your experience probably validates), the better the catch you are, the

smaller the pool (by far) of potential mates who are similar to you in spiritual intelligence.

Why does this matter? It comes down to ideal matches. The fact is that the more you to the right a person is, the rarer they are, and the fewer suitable matches there will be for that person.

Why will there be fewer suitable matches?

Wherever someone is on the spiritual intelligence curve, you could draw a window around that point to show the types of people they can help. I explained this idea of truth windows (with pictures!) [here](#). They won't contribute much if anything to those above them, and they could help anyone below them. However, their unique contribution would be to

those who are only slightly less spiritually intelligent than themselves. Those below the window will not be able to recognize that they are much different than their peers.

Our discussion thus far has addressed men and women equally. Now we will introduce one difference between them. Women tend to marry up, men tend to marry down. Women are very focused on interpersonal production. There are good, biological and logical reasons for that. They prefer to find men who are better than they are. Men tend to marry down because a) men tend to be intimidated by women who are spiritually more intelligent than them, b) women prefer to marry up, leaving them with what is left, and c) they are more focused on physical qualities (which are Normal distributed).

Putting all of this into the mix, you develop a model for marriage matching. Men who are at the bottom of the spiritual curve are not going to get married, or at least they shouldn't. They will lack the character and other attributes necessary to provide an environment for women that is better than being single. They cost more than they are worth to a woman. Meanwhile, because many men end up with women of lower level of spiritual intelligence, the women at the top end of the curve are more likely to end up without a match--at least under monogamy.

In this scenario, it is likely that for any given woman of high spiritual intelligence, the only way to marry up is through polygamy: the high

quality men will already be taken.

Most women and some men bristle at the idea that it is better for a woman to share a very high quality husband than have a low-quality man to herself. And, in fact, history bears out this analysis. A study of DNA shows that, over the history of the human race, twice as many women had children as men. On the scale of human history, polygamy is the norm, not the exception.

However, I'm not making a case that it should be the norm. According to what we've discussed, polygamy makes no sense unless you are (or are considering partnering with) a much-better-than-average male, and there are very few of those. How few? At best, 1 or 2 in 100. In my personal opinion, far less than that.

A man's spiritual intelligence being higher than a set of women is insufficient to motivate polygamy. To truly be in the best interest of the women involved, a man must have the resources (godly character, temporal, emotional, spiritual) necessary to provide two women with a situation better than what they could have without him. These resources are much greater than what is needed in monogamy (more than 2x). If a man has these resources, he is rare indeed.

Under these constraints--which are factual not hypothetical--the oft-repeated "polygamy can't be good because if we practiced it there wouldn't be enough women" is repudiated.

Even in the rare case of a male on the right side of the Pareto, this scenario still only makes sense under a few limited situations regarding the woman. One we've discussed here is with women on who are also on the right side of the Pareto. Now we turn to one other case.

2. In the case of widowhood or divorce.

There are two cases that make it even harder for a woman to marry up. These are widowhood and divorce. The difficulty seems to increase with the woman's spiritual intelligence, which makes sense in the context of the Pareto distribution.

In this case, polygamy may be appropriate.

Because the baseline experience of the woman is lower than a never-married and/or childless woman, it may be appropriate even if the man is

not on the rightmost side of the Pareto. At the same time, in many ways this situation can require even more from a man than the first discussed, and therefore may require an even better man than the previously discussed case.

Why does any of this matter

Some people think that polygamy is necessary to go to heaven. With some simple math, you can quickly figure out that were this the case, and if everyone kept that commandment, many people could not go to heaven. God does not give commandments that are not livable. It would be unjust for God to require someone to be a polygamist to go to heaven, because the obedience of others to this commandment would rob them of the opportunity to do the

same.

More importantly, as I've shown above, the overwhelming majority of men and women are unsuited for living under this arrangement.

So why does this matter? Well for two reasons.

1. If you think polygamy is a good idea, you should probably think again. Suppose you are a man considering entering into a polygamous relationship. Think of the Pareto curve. What is the probability that you have the resources (godly character, temporal, emotional, spiritual) necessary to provide two women with a situation better than what they could have without you? The answer is near zero. The odds are that you are not only *not* that kind of man,

but that you have never even met that kind of man. If what you are considering is not motivated by what would be ideal for your potential wife/wives, you ought to realize that your motivation is from the flesh, and not the spirit. Not only is this a sin, but were you to be successful in your wish, I can guarantee you would consign yourself to living hell. Those who are not prepared to endure the fire will be consumed by it. Marriage to even one woman is a task that most men can't handle well. Adding another woman to that mix is not going to fulfill your unanswered desires. Instead, it will more than double the "cost" you currently feel in a monogamous marriage. Polygamy is not for the man. It is a net cost for him. It is for the women.

2. If you think polygamy is a bad idea, you should

investigate your heart. If you feel that this is something you would never do, ask yourself why. Keep asking yourself why until you get to the root of the issue. If you are honest, you will find that this line of thinking will uncover some deep seated sin that you manage to keep well hidden under the "normal" demands of life. This could include covetousness ("I can't stand the idea of sharing my husband"), weakness ("I don't think I could be strong enough to have two wives"), selfishness ("Why would I ever want more than one wife, one is hard enough"), unbelief ("God would never tell me to do this"), and, the biggest one, distrust in God ("Why would God ever want me to do something so 'bad'"). The point of this exercise is not to convince you to come to the point where you practice polygamy. As I've shown, this is a very

bad idea for almost everyone. The point is to use this as a vehicle to help you uncover sins that will keep you from heaven, independent of whether or not you practice polygamy. To be plain in what I am saying, neither a man who would not sacrifice himself for a second wife nor a woman who can't imagine God asking her to be a polygamous wife is worthy of heaven. Whether they end up monogamous or polygamous does not matter, but the topic can uncover a multitude of sins.

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