

MONOGAMY

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Monogamy (from Gr. *monos*, “one,” and *gamos*, “marriage”) refers to marriage to one marriage partner. Monogamy is firmly embedded in the Old Testament teaching regarding God’s plan for marriage. According to [Gen. 2:24](#), “A man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” This clearly stipulates a heterosexual, monogamous relationship as the norm for God’s people across both covenant periods.

After the Fall, it took only six generations until monogamy began to be compromised. Barely after Adam had died, Lamech “took two wives” ([Gen. 4:19](#)). During the course of Old Testament history, prominent men such as Abraham ([Gen. 16:3](#)), Esau ([Gen. 26:34](#); [28:9](#)), Jacob ([Gen. 29:30](#)), Gideon ([Judg. 8:30](#)), David ([2 Sam. 3:2–5](#); [5:13](#)), Solomon ([1 Kgs. 11:3](#)), and others practiced polygamy. Nevertheless, the Old Testament never approves of polygamy.

In the New Testament, both Jesus and Paul upheld the biblical ideal of monogamy. When asked about the permissibility of divorce, Jesus reiterated God’s original plan for marriage as stated in [Gen. 2:24](#) ([Matt. 19:4–6](#) pars.). Paul, likewise, assumed monogamous, heterosexual marriage as the norm, even relating it to Christ’s relationship with the Church ([Eph. 5:21–33](#); cf. [Col. 3:18–19](#)). Peter did likewise ([1 Pet. 3:1–7](#); cf. [1 Cor. 9:5](#)).

Scripture proscribes any form of extra-marital sexual intercourse, calling it sexual immorality (*porneia*), whether adultery, incest, or other forms of illicit sexual relationships ([1 Cor. 6:9](#); [1 Thess. 4:3–6](#)). Jesus even taught that adultery is committed in a person’s heart ([Matt. 5:32](#); cf. [Heb. 13:4](#)). In the Greco-Roman world, too, marriage was viewed as monogamous and lifelong (Modestinus, *Digesta* 23.2.1), though divorce often disrupted the marital bond.

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