

Journeying through the scriptures in our Daily Bible Reading at Prevailing Word Church, we have come across some surprising, if not troubling, passages. From time to time, we are going to attempt to answer some of the questions that might arise from these verses. God bless you as you pursue a deeper understanding of God's Word!

Wives Nowhere, Wives Everywhere

#1: Where did Cain get his wife? And #2: Why did many of the Old Testament patriarchs and others have more than one wife?

Reading through Genesis has certainly sparked these questions:

#1: Cain was a son of Adam and Eve, the first couple on Earth. They did have other children, so Cain would have had to choose a sister as his wife. (It is possible that he married a cousin or niece late in life.) As time went on, spouses grew further apart biologically speaking, such as half-sisters, then first cousins, eventually same tribes and so on. (In a way, humans are all related through Adam and Eve.). Hundreds of years later, when God instituted the law through Moses, He clearly prohibited marrying certain close family members – see Leviticus 18. As sin multiplied, so did the need for stricter consequences to that sin in order to help protect and preserve future generations.

#2: We could list a number of great founders of our faith who had multiple wives, men such as Abraham, Jacob, Gideon, David and others. So, how could God establish His covenant through these men, even bring Jesus the Messiah into the world through their lineage? We know from Genesis 2:24 that God created one man and one woman to be married and produce children. Jesus confirmed that truth in Matthew 19:4-6. Until the law was given, marrying more than one wife, and even accepting their handmaids in a wife-like relationship, was something like our marrying, divorcing, and re-marrying today. There was no

divorce at the time and it was considered right and fair to care for and treat women properly as wives instead of sending them off unprotected to fend for themselves when the man chose another wife. In fact, wives were not even to be deprived of their right to bear children – some women offering their handmaids to their husbands for that purpose. However, none of the above was (or is) God’s design or ideal nor did it have His approval. But human beings have a free will. Therefore, God’s grace and forgiveness have always been provided according to the time in which we live—either through simply repentance, the addition of animal sacrifices, and of course, the final sacrifice to replace all others, the cross in the New Testament. By comparing various portions of scripture, including the 7th of the 10 commandments, we can see that God reiterates His ideal for marriage between one man and one woman.

It is important to point out that both before and after the law was given, there were negative, often destructive, sometimes tragic consequences to these choices. Until Jesus came, people experienced God directly and in real time. That might sound glamorous, but they also lived and learned the results of sin directly and in real time. Also, they did not have the benefit of the continual indwelling power of the Holy Spirit. The law itself was good in that it taught right and wrong and put controls on sin; but Jesus’ blood is the only thing that can completely cleanse sin, erase guilt and empower us to overcome temptation—see Galatians 3:19-24.

God has always used the only humans available to Him, imperfect and often self-serving, making poor choices and ever learning. However, we are all going from glory to glory and are responsible to live by the Word of God that has been revealed to us and to grow up spiritually as His children.