

# Christianity and the Polyamorous Identity

By Julia Delisi

“It is a sin...if you were real Christians you’d know this. Smh. God has nothing to do with this. This is all Satan!” These are comments currently under a video by BarcroftTv posted in October of 2019. The subject? Polyamorous Christians.

Romantic love is traditionally represented in the media in the form of a monogamous couple. Hand in hand they navigate through life, possibly growing into a family, making it official and getting married, doing regular “couple” things. But what if love could exist ethically outside of the traditional couple? With the absence of monogamy as a custom, romantic love loses its spokesperson. Polyamory looks like anything and everything as long as it’s consensual. It can share the same values as monogamy like honesty, intimacy, communication, and even the presence of a belief system. Within the realm of polyamory exists a sector that defies its stereotype; Christianity. Polyamorous Christians are a part of a progressive culture that is queer, open and religious. This is not to be confused with Mormon polygamists who have multiple wives known as “sister wives”, polyamorous Christians do not root their romantic tendencies in traditional religious values, they do quite the opposite. Removing this stigma involves pushing past stereotypes and actively listening to a community that is rarely ever heard.

It’s important to define the appropriate terminology when discussing these complex topics. Relationship therapist Dr. Sandy Peace described polyamorous behavior as a part of human nature “We learn new things about ourselves when we interact with other people a Polyamory, a lot of polyamorous people like the freedom to connect with people.” She said. “In my research one of the women said, why am I setting an arbitrary limit on how I connect with someone? what is that limit?”.

Ari Greene, a 22 year old polyamorous New Yorker is in a modern relationship that exemplifies the openness that is consensual non monogamy. Over the phone, Ari said “I can’t lie polyamory is pretty fun, I have my boyfriend that I can always talk to and support and be with emotionally, and physically. I also get to explore dating life and learn about new people even if it leads to friendships, because I’m so open to building new relationships. I don’t feel like my boyfriend will get jealous.” She took second to gather her thoughts, “That was something that I struggled with in high school. Why can I talk to this person and not that one? The jealousy triggers are just too much for me and sometimes I think there’s jealousy because there’s no honesty. It can be kind of hard to find someone who would be interested in dating me even with a boyfriend. But it happens! Usually those people are polyamorous too, they have other partners and I don’t need to know about them but I know we all respect each other.” she said proudly. Respect and honesty are the major players that make polyamory work.

Psychology today defined polyamory in simple terms, it is open love, consensual non monogamy, their website states that “Polyamory is the practice of having multiple intimate relationships, whether sexual or just romantic, with the full knowledge and consent of all parties involved. Polyamory is not gender-specific and rejects the idea of exclusivity; anyone can have multiple partners of any gender”. This could look like a group of people in a closed relationship, like a quad or a triad who are all emotionally intimate with each other, on the opposite spectrum, it could like an individual with multiple relationships that only engage in emotional intimacy with the individual and not the others, like a woman with a boyfriend and husband that are separate. The degree of openness in a relationship cannot be defined since it is unique to the situation. Psychology today notes that polyamory is very often confused with polygamy, an exclusively religious practice of being married to more than one person at the same time. Although similar sounding, the two are very different. Polygamy is rooted in the marriage to

multiple people of the opposite gender. Polygamy is the most represented form of non monogamy in the main stream media, even going as far as having its own reality shows on TLC, centered around the life of Mormon sister wives.

Open relationships and polyamory are continuously becoming more popular and accepted than in previous years. In a 2016 government survey on relationships, 34% of people surveyed reported that their ideal relationship is not completely monogamous, and 44% of those people are under 30. More recently, in a 2017 survey by the National center for Biotechnology Information, out of 8,700 US single adults it was found that more than one in five engaged in consensual non-monogamy at some point in their lives. The presence of consensual non monogamy is becoming more noticeable, and with that comes a whole spectrum of individuals that may have cultures or belief systems that demonize their existence. When it comes to Christianity, room for acceptance has significantly grown especially in the context of the LGBTQ+ community, but there are still strides to be made. In a 2014 religious landscape study that surveyed over 35,000 Christian American's, 43% stated they look to religion for guidance on right and wrong, while 41% use common sense. This percentage breeds hope that polyamory can one day comfortably exist within Christianity in a positive light.

A simple google search reveals the low level of unbiased reporting on this topic. There are articles on Christian sites that advocate for polyamory, and there are also some that direct you to your pastor to "fix your marriage" because polyamory is off the table. A website centered on family values and Christianity, Focusonthefamily.com, firmly states that "we think it might be a good idea for you to sit down and have a serious discussion with someone about the personal motives behind your "polyamorous" designs. With that in mind, we invite you to call and speak to one of our pastoral counselors." The Church views polyamorous tendencies as fixable with the right guidance, the "serious discussion" that a polyamorous person should have with their pastor is to guide one away from polyamory, not to make peace with it. One reddit user criticizes the Church's judgement, they firmly state that "many churches are not very Christ-like these days. I think the biggest challenge in Christianity right now is to be Christian without getting caught up in all those hateful, judgemental shenanigans."

Opinions, stories & polyamorous love

**Brian Murphy**, founder of Queer Theology, a successful online community service that provides a safe space for queer christians and straight supporters. Through online based focus groups, seminars and open discussions, Queer Theology aims to empower the LGBTQ+ community by celebrating the uniqueness that they bring to the Church, and the world, and in Brian's words, "explores the ways in which Christianity has always been queer." Brian identifies as a gay polyamorous man who renounces traditional christian views on humanity. Brian spoke with confidence on his views of the church and their stance on sexuality and polyamory. The next sentence out of Brian's mouth was in a stern tone, he took a long breath before saying "The idea that there is a traditional Christian understanding of marriage, relationships, or sexual ethics is a myth -depending on how gracious you want to be-that's perpetuated by a certain type of Christianity that seeks to dominate the political and cultural discourse and seeks power and control." He took a pause, his voice growing louder "Because you know," he continued, "the Bible itself presents a number of different sexual ethics and relationship models. So if the Bible says a lot of different things about sex and relationships. How do you figure out what is right and good and just? That's the work that we do. In exploring whether you're monogamous or polyamorous or single, How do you live?" Specifically in terms of polyamory, Brian hosted a webinar in may as a tool kit for polyamorous or exploring Christians. "I was bringing a

polyamorous lens to Christianity to uncover the deeper meaning, to have you understand the Divine better and see how Christianity can help you live a more integrated life as a polyamorous person. The two sort of compliment.” he said. There was this video, Jesus is polyamorous, that kind of broke the Christian internet, but Brian was grateful that it sparked conversation, it allowed for some light to be shed on such a taboo topic that was never spoken on. He opened the floodgates, and although he received angry threats, some more aggressive than others, like “This heretic should be burned at the stake!” Brian knew not to be discouraged, he put his fear aside because the emotional well being of many depended on him and his teams support.

Against this lifestyle is young Christian **Mikaela Paik**, A 21 year old college student in New York City. Mikaela goes to church every Sunday despite her course load, she is a committed Christian. Even though she is young, polyamory is not a progressive view in her book. Over a hot cup of coffee on a rainy afternoon, Mikaela shook her head when asked about polyamorous Christians. “It’s just not right!” she said with emphasis on the word “not”. Part of being Christian to Mikaela is commitment. “How can you love someone with the strength of Christ, but then decide you also love someone else? That is cheating. Marriage is between two, not three.” She said. When asked what she would do if she were to see a throuple at Church, Mikaela took a pause. “Pray, that’s the best thing I can offer” she took a sip, her eyes lingering on the coffee cup. “Polyamory just isn’t Christian.” Mikaela would not go to the extent of persecuting a polyamorous Christian, but cannot stand with the idea that Jesus is polyamory, and that its a Christian value to love more than one person. “I mean of course you can love a lot of people, but are you married to them? It is a sacred bond in the presence of God, and you can’t go against God as a Christian.”

A Christian polyamorous throuple can be found on Instagram under the username of **TheTriadFam**. Their short bio includes a bible excerpt from Ecclesiastes 4:12 “Two are better than one, three are better, for a triple braided cord is not easily broken.” Their love for each other and God is proudly displayed across their highly curated posts and in depth blog. The triad consists of Louis, Katie and Raquel and their son Lukas. They all live in Baltimore in a traditional brick house with a white fence, under the same roof and have been since 2017. From the outside looking in, the Triad Fam can be misconstrued as a man using the word of God to justify having multiple wives at his beck and call. Louis is none of that, and was actually the last person in the relationship to commit to polyamory. Louis and Katie got married years ago and were open and emotionally intimate with each other from the get go, honesty was always a silent member of their marriage. Katie came out to Louis as bisexual before marriage, something Louis was not phased by. They married and lived as a monogamous couple for years. Katie worked in the Church and as a freelance photographer at the time. She was hired to photograph a baby shower, and ended up capturing more than just some photos. There she found Raquel, her energy exuded warmth and Katie was so drawn in that they quickly became inseparable. Emotional intimacy came first, Katie and Raquel were close friends until a drunken night and a secret kiss revealed there was more than just friendship. Louis encouraged Katie to explore her sexuality and go for it, but she was not having it. “I wanted her to be herself.” He said simply. Katie recalled “I got so upset at him for it because I was like, are you kidding me right now? Let me go like like it's nothing? So I didn't do anything with it. I just left it. I decided it was just drunken night and I didn't even bring it up.” But fate had to do its thing, and in this story, fate was the truth serum that we all know as alcohol. Katie giggled as she recalled that one night, giddy like a teenager in love, “like a month later we go out, and we're all drinking having a good time and we had to go to the bathroom together, because well, we always went to the bathroom together, but this time she pinned me against the wall.” Katie cheeks flush, she doesn’t like telling this story. Katie acknowledged that in this moment she realized that she was brought to Raquel by God, and thus to polyamory by God as well. “It is no coincidence that we met at a baby shower, that we had so many mutual friends and that everything played

out naturally. I was called to this poly thing.” At this point the essence of their love was written all over Raquel, Katie and Louis face, in their small smiles and impermeable gazing in Katie’s eyes as they let her tell their story, their hands rested the whole time on Katie’s thighs.

The Triad Fam had to go through tough times too, when they came out to Raquel’s family, they completely isolated her and have not spoken since then. “It was hard. It still is” Raquel said. “My mom doesn’t come around at all and yet she feels like a victim, She’s never been asked to come around, she’s doing this to herself.” Hate is a normal part of the polyamorous Christian lifestyle, even online. In a recent interview that The Triad Fam did with Barcroft TV, the comments are filled with negativity and hate. From the short and sweet comments such as “This shit’s f\*cked up” to a more complex “There is nothing Christian about this or Godly about it either, don’t put me in your crap.” The Triad Fam does not reply back with anger, but rather explains the theology behind their remarks, or in the last case, a simple “Don’t call my family crap.”

While all members of the triad are Christians, Katie is the most active within the Church. Katie works in the Bishops office of the DC senate, and is a recently converted Lutheran. She grew up Pentecostal, and was a worship pastor for the Church for several years until she was abruptly fired for coming out as polyamorous. Katie respectfully spoke on that part of her life with a grain of disappointment but genuine respect. “I was let down, I was sad. I was broken. I was all these things... I was so upset at the church, frustrated that I had to excommunicate myself from my community because they can't see me anymore. They can't see this version of myself. It's too hurtful for them.” The expression on Katie’s face changed, her eyes looked away, the tone of the Instagram video call had changed. She took a pause, and in a low tone said “You know they have their ideas. They have this certain way that they viewed me for many years. I was their spiritual leader, It was like a personal hurt for them in a sense. It's very hard and I have to see that for what it is because a lot of them felt like I was a liar”. Katie’s firing ended up coming as a blessing, she now has found the Lutheran church and is able to be herself while still processing the word of God. “We're trying to just be be be the people that we wish we had when we were younger, that's it. We work and practice in the church, and we're trying to make a difference.” They said.

There are other active polyamorous Christians such as **Jennifer Martin**, who is a writer and avid tweeter on this very topic. “I go to church every Sunday, my husband and nine year old next to me, and sometimes my boyfriend who listens because I make him,” she laughed. “That’s crazy right? People know but they don’t ask, and that’s enough for me to exist.” Jennifer is a proudly liberal woman who coins herself as “dirtbag Christian” reclaiming some of the colorful offensive rhetoric that is seen in the replies of her tweets everyday, such as “You’re Bi, You are no Christian in my eyes or God’s.” Jennifer does not let anyone take away her faith, that is something she firmly claims is “hers”, and her polyamory identity does not exist independently of her faith. “I have friends that aren’t out, and I’ve contemplated staying quiet, but I can’t, it’s not in my nature.” She said. Jennifer tried to build a community with her twitter and articles that take apart Christianity as a construct, and advocate for respect.

The simple notion of respect does not exist within the vocabulary of the hateful, whether they protectively masked themselves as Christians or not, just being polyamorous is not easy. It is not accepted everywhere. Sure, there are progressive cities like there are progressive churches, but location can be a privilege. Online communities strive to offer support, and are a serious contender in lending understanding to the misunderstood, but this is still not a topic that harbors enough attention for change. Is polyamory in the cards of Christian acceptance? Raquel put her answer eloquently “I doubt I’ll see it, but I don't know, at least I play a role in

helping something to get started towards change. As for what the future of love looks like, I hope that it goes hand-in-hand with transparency and honesty. I would love to see what that would look like, you know if you just were honest, and that there was just a clear understanding of humanity and feelings most people don't even understand why they feel what they feel, so why judge?