



## 'It saddens me that polygamy hasn't connected with him': Father with three wives on heartache over son, 21, who only wants to be with one woman

By [Deborah Arthurs](#)

A fundamentalist Mormon living in a polygamist family has revealed that one of his 24 biological sons does not intend on creating his own polygamist family.

Joe Darger, from Salt Lake City, Utah, has taken to his blog to express his heartache over 21-year-old Caleb Darger's decision to join a mainstream Mormon Church, the Church of Latter Day Saints, which does not support polygamy.

The father, who has three wives that all live in the same house as him, wrote: 'It saddened my heart to think one of the most sacred and important parts of my lives was not fully connected with my son'.



A different path: A polygamist father with three wives has told of how his 21-year-old son Caleb (right) has chosen to shun the controversial lifestyle choice. Caleb is seen above with one of his 23 siblings (left)



Heartbreak: Joe Darger, above, is married to twin sisters as well as their cousin. They all live in the same house

Caleb joined the church, which disavowed the controversial lifestyle choice more than a century ago, earlier this year.

He is the son of 42-year-old Vicki Darger, who lives with her twin sister Valerie - also married to Joe - and their 43-year-old cousin Alina - also married to Joe.

Joe also wrote: 'Such is the consequence of choice. I was both happy for him and sad for me.'

He continued: 'Choice by its nature means our children will not choose right all the time, or certainly will not choose what I think is right. Yet I believe that is God's plan as well.'



Family: Just some of the enormous Darger clan are pictured above. The loving father stands in the centre

Joe's polygamous marriage is illegal in 50 American states - and has resulted in him being excommunicated from the Mormon church.

He is a fifth generation polygamist and said in May that he wants to fight to have his plural marriage officially recognised by society.

He appeared the breakfast television show This Morning alongside his wives.

But while Caleb is not so approving, his sister Amanda, who is Valerie's biological daughter, has stuck to her parents' desired path.

The 20-year-old, who is engaged to be married herself, has joined a traditional fundamentalist Mormon group in Arizona and has begun wearing longer dresses and a bundled hairstyle to suit her religion.



Alone: Unlike his siblings, Caleb, above, has chosen a unique lifestyle. Several sisters have chosen polygamy

Last year, Laura, their 19-year-old sister, became the first of the siblings to marry. She had her first child just last month.

She has chosen a polygamist path, telling [ABC](#): 'It's really hard when you actually fall in love and you love somebody so much to think of sharing them with somebody else. God changes people's hearts. You know sometimes there are things you don't think you can do but when God asks you, you do it.'

### **MORMON POLYGAMY: A 180-YEAR BATTLE FOR 'RELIGIOUS RIGHTS'**

Polygamy among Mormons began with the founder of the Latter Day Saint movement Joseph Smith when he declared in upstate New York in 1831 that he had seen visions telling him that 'plural marriage' should be practiced.

After his death in 1844, followers took polygamy to Utah, where it was practiced publicly until 1890 when it was renounced by the LDS church to win statehood for the territory.

During that time, Congress issued the Morrill Anti-Bigamy Act in 1862 which re-asserted that polygamy was illegal in all US territories.

The LDS argued that such laws infringed their right to religiously-based practice under the U.S. Constitution.

But a ruling by the Supreme Court in 1878 stated that they were not protected based on the long-standing legal principle that while government cannot interfere with religious beliefs, it can with practices.

Various splinter groups left the church after the 1890 Manifesto in order to continue polygamy.

Nowadays, there are said to be more than 30,000 people practicing polygamy in Utah, Idaho, Montana and Arizona.

States occasionally take action against polygamists, notably Tom Green, who was sentenced to five years in prison for bigamy in Utah in August 2001.

Vicki and Alina have been married to Joe for 22 years after dating Joe simultaneously when they were just 18.

Vicki's twin sister Valerie was married to Joe 12 years ago after her own polygamous union - with a man who had six other wives - broke down.

Joe told the breakfast show in May: 'Originally polygamy was part of the Mormon history, and that's what we still believe. Our story is about faith and family and freedom. In today's culture where family is being looked at, ours is one of the oldest forms of family out there.'

Alina added: 'By being public we risk being prosecuted by the State. Things have got to change. We have a great family life and want the same civil rights as everyone else.'

The Dargers were investigated by state authorities several years ago for their beliefs and attempted to keep their plural marriage secret for many years.

But two years ago, they decided to talk about their relationship to raise awareness, and to try to overcome prejudices against their religion and lifestyle.

Practitioners are almost never prosecuted unless there is evidence of abuse, statutory rape, welfare fraud or tax evasion.

The three wives and their husband co-wrote a book titled Love Times Three and some of their adult children also contributed to the story.

Joe's wives say the situation suits them perfectly too.

When asked if they would swap their current situation to have Joe to themselves, all replied that they would not.

'Our marriage is fulfilling and wonderful,' said Vicki, while Valerie said she was 'grateful.'

'The others learned a lot before I came along, they helped to shape Joe into the man he is today, so I'm forever grateful for that,' she says.