

The question: Can a person involved in polygamy be baptized?

God's design for the husband-wife relationship is one man and one woman. Gen 2:24 (For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.)

When polygamy exists, the man is to care for each wife equally. Ex 21:10 (If he takes to himself another woman, he may not reduce her food, her clothing, or her conjugal rights.) God's Word addresses polygamy. Some of the patriarchs had more than one wife, but God did not instruct any of them to be polygamous. The discipline for that situation is internally built into the social structure, trying to keep everyone happy is an almost impossible situation.

When a man is polygamous and becomes a Christian, he is to remain in that condition. 1 Cor 7:20 (Each man must remain in that condition in which he was called.)

One of the most important parts of a Christian witness to have is to keep one's promises. A man has promised to care for an additional wife and even if it was a promise that should not have been made it is still a promise and needs to be kept. For a man to remove his care and protection from a wife dependent upon him would not be an act of love in any regard. 1 Cor 16:14 (Let all that you do be done in love. )

Salvation is by grace through faith alone in Jesus Christ (Eph 2:8-9). Salvation is not a matter of stopping something other than not believing in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Baptism is an act that pictures our acceptance of the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ as the payment for our sins. Rom 6:3-7

Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, 6 knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; 7 for he who has died is freed from sin.

Baptism refers to the fact that we have been saved. It is not done to be saved. It is done by a person who has chosen to be a disciple of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, in answer to the above question. Yes. He can be baptized and become a member of a church.

Can the person serve as a pastor/overseer/elder? No. 1 Tim 3:2

An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife,

Although it is not directly stated, it is probably wise to not permit that person to be a deacon either.

The person should be instructed that he should take no more wives.

In some cultures there is also an issue of whether or not a second, third or fourth wife can be baptized. Grace should also be extended to them by permitting them to be baptized.

There are some things we should not do. Taking more than one wife is one of those things.

There are also some things we have the ability to reverse but should not. This is the situation here. The evidence indicates that sending away a wife, thus disgracing her for another's mistake, is not an act of love, and therefore should not be done.