

LUCY WALKER

(Sealed May 1, 1843)



Born April 30, 1826, in Peacham, Vermont, Lucy was the fourth child of John Walker and Lydia Holmes Walker. In 1832 her father was baptized into the church, and her mother was baptized two years later. Lucy joined in 1835, and the family left three years later for Missouri. Their stay was short. By April of 1839, the Walker family was settled in Nauvoo, Illinois, by the spring of 1841.

Her mother died less than a year later on January 15, 1842. Lucy wrote of the aftermath:

Ten motherless children, and such a Mother. The youngest not yet two years old. What were we to do? My Father's health seemed to give way under this heavy affliction. The Prophet came to our rescue. He said, "If you remain here brother Walker, you will soon follow your wife. You must have a change of scene, a change of climate. You have just such a family as I could love. My house shall be their house. I will adopt them as my own. For the present I would advise you to sell your effects, place the little ones with some kind friends, and the four eldest shall come to my house and be received and treated as my own children, and if I find the others are not content, or not treated right, I will bring them home and keep them until you return." I wrung my hands in the agony of despair at the thought of being broken up as a family, and being separated from the loved ones. But said the Prophet, "My home shall be your home, eternally yours." I understood him not. However my father sought to comfort us by saying two years would soon pass by, then with renewed health he hoped to return and make us a home where we might be together again. ... The Prophet and his wife introduced us as their daughters. Every privilege was accorded us in the home. Every privilege within reach was ours. He often referred to brother Lorin as his "Edwin." He was indeed his confidential and trusted friend. He was every by his side, arm in arm they walked and discussed freely various subjects.¹



It appears that Lucy Walker was one of the first women to learn of the restoration of plural marriage from the Prophet. In 1892, she recalled: "In '42 was the time. That was the time that this principle [of plural marriage] was first taught, but it was revealed to the Prophet in '31, but he did not teach it then, only to a very few in whom he had confidence and felt he could trust absolutely, for he felt the importance and responsibility of the step he was taking."² Since Lucy's father was away on a mission, the Prophet approached her brother William Holmes Walker before proposing. William remembered that in the early 1840s, he rode to Nauvoo to visit his ailing mother. There he was introduced to the subject of plural marriage by the Prophet:

I went to Joseph Smith's, and was made welcome. I learned that mother was living on the island in the Mississippi River, and that it was dangerous to cross because of so much ice running. The next morning the Prophet invited me to hitch up my horse with one of his, in a

buggy, and ride with him. We were riding all day through the city and county making a number of calls on business [and] pleasure combined. On this occasion the subject of celestial, or plural marriage, was introduced to me. As we returned home he remarked, "If there was anything I did not understand, to hold on a little, and I would understand it."

In the spring of 1843, my father, being away on a mission, the Prophet asked my consent, for my sister Lucy in Marriage. I replied that if it was her choice: that if she entered into the Celestial order of marriage of her own free will and choice, I had no objection. This of course was in contrast with my former education and traditions. It also was altogether different from the course to[o] generally pursued by monogamists. Instead of taking a course to deceive and prostitute and bring about her ruin, he took a straight-forward, honorable, and upright course, in no way depriving her of her agency.

When father returned from his mission, the matter being fully explained in connection with the doctrine, received his endorsement and all parties concerned received his approbation.³

In 1902 Lucy summarized her experience:

When the Prophet Joseph Smith first mentioned the principle of plural marriage to me I felt indignant and so expressed myself to him, because my feelings and education were averse to anything [of that] nature. But he assured me that this doctrine had been revealed to him of the Lord, and that I was entitled to receive a testimony of its divine origin for myself. He counselled me to pray to the Lord, which I did, and thereupon received from him a powerful and irresistible testimony of the truthfulness and divinity of plural marriage, which testimony has abided with me ever since.⁴

Lucy's story was also published in 1888:

In the year 1842, President Joseph Smith sought an interview with me, and said: "I have a message for you. I have been commanded of God to take another wife, and you are the woman." My astonishment knew no bounds. This announcement was indeed a thunderbolt to me. He asked me if I believed him to be a prophet of God. "Most assuredly I do," I replied. He fully explained to me the principle of plural or celestial marriage. He said this principle was again to be restored for the benefit of the human family, that it would prove an everlasting blessing to my father's house, and form a chain that could never be broken, worlds without end. "What have you to say?" he asked. "Nothing." How could I speak, or what could I say? He said, "If you will pray sincerely for light and understanding in relation thereto, you shall receive a testimony of the correctness of this principle. I thought I prayed sincerely, but was so unwilling to consider the matter favorably that I fear I did not ask in faith for light. Gross darkness instead of light took possession of my mind. I was tempted and tortured beyond endurance until life was not desirable. Oh that the grave would kindly receive me, that I might find rest on the bosom of my dear mother. Why should I be chosen from among thy daughters, Father, I am only a child in years and experience, no mother to counsel [she died in January, 1842]; no father near to tell me what to do in this trying hour [he was on a mission to a warmer climate to help his health]. Oh, let this bitter cup pass. And thus I prayed in the agony of my soul.

The Prophet discerned my sorrow. He saw how unhappy I was, and sought an opportunity of again speaking to me on this subject, and said: "Although I cannot, under existing circumstances, acknowledge you as my wife, the time is near when we will go beyond the Rocky Mountains and then you will be acknowledged and honored as my wife."⁵ He also said, "This principle will yet be believed in and practiced by the righteous. I have no flattering words to offer. It is a command of God to you. I will give you until tomorrow to decide this matter. If you reject this message the gate will be closed forever against you."

This aroused every drop of Scotch in my veins. For a few moments I stood fearless before him, and looked him in the eye. I felt at this moment that I was called to place myself upon the altar a living sacrifice—perhaps to brook the world in disgrace and incur the displeasure and contempt of my youthful companions; all my dreams of happiness blown to the four winds. This was too much, for as yet no shadow had crossed my path, aside from the death of my dear mother. The future to me had been one bright, cloudless day. I had been speechless, but at last found utterance and said: "Although you are a prophet of God you could not induce me to take a step of so great importance, unless I knew that God approved my course. I would rather die. I have tried to pray but received no comfort, no light," and emphatically forbid him speaking again to me on this subject. Every feeling of my soul revolted against it. Said I, "The same God who has sent this message is the Being I have worshipped from my early childhood and He must manifest His will to me." He walked across the room, returned and stood before me with the most beautiful expression of countenance, and said: "God Almighty bless you. You shall have a manifestation of the will of God concerning you; a testimony that you can never deny. I will tell you what it shall be. It shall be that joy and peace that you never knew."

Oh, how earnestly I prayed for these words to be fulfilled. It was near dawn after another sleepless night when my room was lighted up by a heavenly influence. To me it was, in comparison, like the brilliant sun bursting through the darkest cloud. The words of the Prophet were indeed fulfilled. My soul was filled with a calm, sweet peace that "I never knew." Supreme happiness took possession of me, and I received a powerful and irresistible testimony of the truth of plural marriage, which has been like an anchor to the soul through all the trials of life. I felt that I must go out into the morning air and give vent to the joy and gratitude that filled my soul. As I descended the stairs, President Smith opened the door below, took me by the hand and said: "Thank God, you have the testimony. I too have prayed." He led me to a chair, placed his hands upon my head, and blessed me with every blessing my heart could possibly desire.

The first day of May, 1843, I consented to become the Prophet's wife, and was sealed to him for time and all eternity, at his own house by Elder William Clayton.⁶

A secondhand account speaks of Lucy receiving an angelic appearance to assuage her concerns:

I went to live with Joseph Smith's family as a maid and after I had grown up, Joseph asked me if I would marry him. I felt highly insulted and he said that if I wanted to know whether the principle was true, I could go to God and find out. One night after supper I went out into the orchard and I kneeled down and prayed to God for information. After praying I arose and walked around the orchard and kneeled again and repeated this during the night. Finally as I

was praying the last time, an angel of the Lord appeared to me and told me that the principle was of God and for me to accept it.⁷

Lucy recounted: “He [Joseph Smith] said this principle was again to be restored for the benefit of the human family, that it would prove an everlasting blessing to my father’s house, and form a chain that could never be broken, worlds without end.” Some writers have interpreted this to mean that if Lucy was sealed to Joseph, then her “father’s house” would benefit.⁸

A closer reading shows that the “principle” of sealing the human family into a chain, not Lucy’s marriage to the Prophet, was the actual source of the “blessing to [her] father’s house.” Joseph Smith’s teachings discuss the sealing authority that allows families to be bound together in a “chain” composed of sealings of parents to children back to Adam, which brings eternal blessings (D&C 128:18).

The question of sexuality in her plural marriage to Joseph Smith was broached during Lucy’s deposition in the 1892 Temple Lot litigation. ([See Appendix B below for evidences.](#)) When asked: “Did you live with Joseph Smith as his wife?” She answered: “He was my husband sir.”⁹

This somewhat ambiguous answer is better understood in light of her statement: “I am also able to testify that Emma Smith, the Prophet’s first wife, gave her consent to the marriage of at least four other girls to her husband, and that she was well aware that he associated with them as wives within the meaning of all that word implies.”¹⁰

Several other sources corroborate that Lucy experienced conjugal relations with Joseph Smith. For example, D. H. Morris, quoted her saying: “[I] married Joseph Smith as a plural wife and lived and cohabited with him as such.”¹¹

Theodocia Frances Walker Davis (niece of Lucy Walker) asserted in 1876: “Mrs. Davis daughter of William Walker [Lucy’s brother] at Salt Lake. She says that Lucy Walker told her that she lived with Joseph Smith as a wife.”¹²

Angus Cannon stated that, concerning the lack of offspring born to the Prophet’s plural wives, “All I knew was that which Lucy Walker herself contends. They were so nervous and lived in such constant fear that they could not conceive.”¹³

A fuller version of the statement referred to by Cannon was given in 1888. Lucy reported: “They [Joseph Smith’s sons who had visited her] seem surprised that there was no issue from asserted plural marriages with their father. Could they but realize the hazardous life he lived, after that revelation was given, they would comprehend the reason. He was harassed and hounded and lived in constant fear of being betrayed by those who ought to have been true to him.”¹⁴

Lucy Walker’s recollections are the source of several declarations of Joseph Smith regarding plural marriage. For example, regarding the motives for entering polygamous marriages, she recalled the Prophet’s counsel: “Men did not take polygamous wives because they loved them or fancied them or because they were voluptuous, but because it was a command of God.”¹⁵

She also described the relationship that should exist in plural marriages: “He [Joseph Smith] often referred to the feelings that should exist between husband and wives, that they, his wives, should be his bosom companions, the nearest and dearest objects on earth in every sense of the word.”¹⁶

She also remembered his emphasis that plural wives should not be coerced or manipulated: “A woman would have her choice, this was a privilege that could not be denied her.”¹⁷

Lucy died in 1910 as a faithful member of the church.

[Evidences of Plural Marriage: See Appendix A](#)

[Evidences of Sexuality: See Appendix B](#)

Endnotes:

1. Lucy Walker Kimball, “Statement,” CHL, MS 9827, Typescript, 4; see also Lyman Omer Littlefield, *Reminiscences of Latter-day Saints* (Logan: The Utah Journal Co., 1888), 43–44.
2. Lucy Walker, deposition, Temple Lot transcript, respondent’s testimony, part 3, page 450, question 27.
3. William Holmes Walker, Reminiscence and Diary, 7–10, CHL, Ms 1890.
4. Lucy Walker, Affidavit dated December 17, 1902, MS 3423, CHL; *Journal History*, May 1, 1843; Joseph Fielding Smith, *Blood Atonement and the Origin of Plural Marriage* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1905), 68–69; Joseph F. Smith affidavit books, 1:66; 4:68. This affidavit contains the exact same wording as a second affidavit dated October 24, 1902 entitled: “Oath of Lucy Walker Smith: Wife of Joseph Smith, Jr.,” photocopy in possession of the author.
5. Lucy testified in 1892: “Under the circumstances we could not go by his name there ... [He said eventually] we could be acknowledged as his wives. ... President Smith himself said that day would come. ... He proclaimed repeatedly that we would go beyond the mountains.” (deposition, Temple Lot transcript, respondent’s testimony, part 3, page 467, questions 432, 435, 437, 446.)
6. Lyman Omer Littlefield, *Reminiscences of Latter-day Saints: Giving an Account of Much Individual Suffering Endured for Religious Conscience* (Logan: Utah Journal Co, 1888), 46–48; see also testimony in Andrew Jenson, “Plural Marriage,” *Historical Record* 6 (July 1887): 229–30.
7. Untitled typed sheet “The following was given by Judge D. H. Morris of St. George, Utah...” copy in Vesta P. Crawford Collection, Marriott Library, University of Utah, MS 125, bx 1, fd 5.
8. See for example, Todd Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1997), 463–64; Kathryn Daynes, “Mormon Polygamy: Belief and Practice in Nauvoo,” in *Kingdom on the Mississippi Revisited: Nauvoo in Mormon History*, Roger D. Launius and John E. Hallwas, eds. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 137 (130–46).
9. Lucy Walker, Deposition, Temple Lot Transcript, Respondent’s Testimony, part 3, pages 450–51, 468, 473, questions 29–30, 463–74, 586.

10. Andrew Jenson, "Plural Marriage," *Historical Record* 6 (July 1887): 229–30.
11. D. H. Morris, Untitled typed statement, June 12, 1930.
12. Joseph Smith III, Journal, November 12 [or 18?], 1876.
13. Angus Cannon, Statement reporting an interview with Joseph Smith III, 1905, CHL.
14. Lucy Walker, quoted in Lyman Omer Littlefield, *Reminiscences of Latter-day Saints: Giving an Account of Much Individual Suffering Endured for Religious Conscience*, 50. See also Rodney W. Walker and Noel W. Stevenson, *Ancestry and Descendants of John Walker (1794–1869) of Vermont and Utah, Descendants of Robert Walker, an Emigrant of 1632 from England to Boston, Mass.* (Logan: Utah Journal Co, 1888), 35.
15. Lucy Walker in "Talks of Polygamy," *Salt Lake Tribune*, December 24, 1899.
16. Lyman Omer Littlefield, *Reminiscences of Latter-day Saints: Giving an Account of Much Individual Suffering Endured for Religious Conscience* (Logan: Utah Journal Co, 1888), 45–46.
17. Lucy Walker Kimball, "A Brief Biographical Sketch of the Life and Labors of Lucy Walker Kimball Smith," CHL; quoted in Lyman Omer Littlefield, *Reminiscences of Latter-day Saints: Giving an Account of Much Individual Suffering Endured for Religious Conscience* (Logan: Utah Journal Co, 1888), 46. When arranging a marriage for his brother William Smith, Joseph apparently respected this ideal by inviting the woman, Mary Ann Covington, to participate only if she "felt willing to consent to it." Mary Ann West, deposition, Temple Lot transcript, respondent's testimony, part 3, pages 495–96, 504, questions 13, 272. According to her testimony, this was the only time she discussed plural marriage with the Prophet. See *ibid.*, page 503, questions 264–65.

Appendix A — Evidences of Joseph Smith's Sealing to Lucy Walker

- Lucy Walker, Affidavit, August 9, 1869, Joseph Smith, Affidavit Books, 1:66, 4:68.
- George A. Smith, Letter to Joseph Smith III, October 9, 1869.
- Lucy Walker, Affidavit, December 17, 1902; Joseph Fielding Smith, *Blood Atonement and the Origin of Plural Marriage*, 68–69. This affidavit contains the exact same wording as a second affidavit dated October 24, 1902: AOath of Lucy Walker Smith: Wife of Joseph Smith, Jr.,@ photocopy in my possession.
- Lucy Walker in Lyman Omer Littlefield, *Reminiscences of Latter-day Saints*, 46–48.
- Lucy Walker, Deposition, Temple Lot Transcript, Part 3, p. 451, question 30.
- Lucy Walker, "Talks of Polygamy," *Salt Lake Tribune*, December 24, 1899, 4.
- Jenson, "Plural Marriage," 229–30, 234, 236.
- William Clayton, Journal, May 1, 1843, in George D. Smith, ed. *An Intimate Chronicle: The Journals of William Clayton*, 100.
- William Clayton, Affidavit, February 16, 1874, in Jenson, "Plural Marriage," 225.
- Eliza Partridge, Affidavit, July 1, 1869, MS 3423, copied in Joseph F. Smith, Affidavit Books, 2:30, 3:30.

- Malissa Lott, dictation, “First list of wives,” Document #1, Andrew Jenson Papers, MS 17956, Box 49, fd. 16.
- Theodocia Frances Walker Davis (niece of Lucy Walker), Joseph Smith III, Journal, November 12 [or November 18?], 1876.
- Nauvoo Temple proxy marriage to Joseph Smith, January 15, 1846, in Brown, *Nauvoo Sealings, Adoptions, and Anointings*, 282.
- Orson F. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball*, 418.

Appendix B — Evidences of Sexuality

In the Temple Lot suit, Lucy Walker admitted to conjugal relations with Joseph Smith:

Q. Can you state the circumstances under which he [Joseph Smith] first taught you that principle [of plural marriage]?

A. Well, the circumstances were these, — it was a command from God to me to receive it, and I would rather have laid down my life than disobeyed it, but it was a grand and glorious principle that was to be established, and when I was called upon I stepped forward and gave myself up as a sacrifice to establish that principle, and I did that in the face of prejudice, of course. In this day and age [1892] we are considered fanatics of course, more or less. I gave myself up as a sacrifice, for it was not a love matter, so to speak, in our affairs, at least on my part it was not,—but simply the giving up of myself as a sacrifice to establish that grand and glorious principle that God had revealed to the world.

Q. Did you live with Joseph Smith as his wife?

A. He was my husband sir. ...

Q. How many children did you have by virtue of your marriage with Joseph Smith?

A. I decline to answer that question sir.

Q. Did you have any?

A. I decline to answer the question.

Q. Have you any children by Joseph Smith?

A. I decline to answer the question

Q. Why do you decline to answer it?

A. Well I think that is my business and none of yours. The principle by which we were married is an eternal principle, and will endure forever. ...

Q. Well did you raise a child by him?

A. I decline to answer the question.

Q. Did you ever occupy the same bed with him?

A. I decline to answer the question.

Q. You say you will not answer any of these questions.

A. I do, not on that subject.

Q. Did you ever see a child that you knew was Joseph Smith's outside of David, Alexander, Frederick and Joseph?

A. I decline to answer that question . . .

Q. You know you did not have any children by him [Joseph Smith]?

A. Well now that is something that I did not tell you anything about at all. It is none of your business if we had twenty sons or children, and it is none of your business if we did not have any.¹

In 1888, Lucy also reported: "They [Joseph Smith's sons] seem surprised that there was no issue from asserted plural marriages with their father. Could they but realize the hazardous life he lived, after that revelation was given, they would comprehend the reason. He was harassed and hounded and lived in constant fear of being betrayed by those who ought to have been true to him."²

Several other sources corroborate that Lucy had conjugal relations with Joseph. Theodocia Frances Walker Davis (niece of Lucy Walker) asserted in 1876: "Mrs. Davis daughter of Wm Walker [Lucy's brother] at Salt Lake. She says that Lucy Walker told her that she lived with Joseph Smith as a wife."³ Angus Cannon stated that, concerning the lack of offspring born to the Prophet's plural wives, "All I knew was that which Lucy Walker herself contends. They were so nervous and lived in such constant fear that they could not conceive."⁴ An acquaintance of Lucy, D. H. Morris, quoted her saying: "I ... married Joseph Smith as a plural wife and lived and cohabited with him as such."⁵

Endnotes to Appendix B:

1. Lucy Walker, Deposition, Temple Lot Transcript, Respondent's Testimony, Part 3, pp. 450–51, 468, 473, questions 29–30, 463–74, 586.
2. Lucy Walker, quoted in Lyman Omer Littlefield, *Reminiscences of Latter-day Saints: Giving an Account of Much Individual Suffering Endured for Religious Conscience*, 50. See also Rodney W. Walker and Noel W. Stevenson, *Ancestry and Descendants of John Walker (1794-1869) of Vermont and Utah, Descendants of Robert Walker, an Emigrant of 1632 from England to Boston, Mass.*, 35.

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