



March 24/25, 2012
Genesis 29
“For the Love of Leah”
Pastor Gary Hamrick

In last week’s study we learned that Jacob found a wife in Haran, but he not only got one wife, he ended up with two! In addition to Leah and Rachel, he also got their maidservants in the deal. Jacob ended up with four women living in the same house: two sisters and their servants!

Jacob fathered 12 sons and one daughter by these four women over the next 10 years. Many wonder about God’s view and/or sanction of polygamy when they read accounts like this one in the Bible. It should be understood without question, that polygamy has never been acceptable to God, because God ordained marriage to be between one man and one woman.¹

The truth is that Jacob really wanted only one wife, and he really only loved one woman, and that woman was Rachel. Rachel’s father, Laban, tricked Jacob into marrying her sister, Leah. The idea of adding the maidservants came from the sisters when they had trouble conceiving at different times.

This study will help us know more about the details of God’s work of maturing Jacob and Leah.

Jacob And God

1. Jacob was what some might call a “late bloomer.”
 - a. He moved out of his parents’ home when he was 70 years old, and that was only because he had to flee for his life from his brother, Esau.

¹ [Genesis 2:24](#) - *“For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and be united to his wife.”* Note

- b. He's never had a job, he's never lived on his own, and he's never had a real relationship with God.
- 2. God appeared to Jacob in a dream and reiterated the covenant promise he made with Abraham, Isaac, and now Jacob.
 - a. Jacob called this place "*Bethel*," which means, "House of God."
- 3. God continues the process of maturing Jacob by chipping away at the sinful areas in his life.
 - a. God teaches Jacob about a surrendered life, and Jacob's experiences are found in [Genesis 29-35](#).
- 4. It's one thing to have a "conversion experience" - that moment in time when a person prays and invites Jesus to come into their life and forgive them of their sins - but it's another thing to live that out by making him Lord and allowing him to hammer out the character flaws and sin issues that will foster the maturing process.
- 5. One of the ways God does this kind of life changing work is to bring people into our lives that are just like us, so that we can see ourselves in the mirror of their messed up lives.
 - a. Jacob's greatest character flaw is deception.
 - i. He's a conniving, manipulating deceiver at heart, so God brings him a father-in-law who is a con artist extraordinaire!
 - ii. Jacob meets his match in Laban, and he didn't see it coming.
 - iii. Isn't it odd that the deceiver is going to be deceived!

Jacob And Laban

- 6. Jacob meets his father-in-law to be - his mother's brother - in Haran.
- 7. Laban has two daughters: Rachel and Leah.
- 8. Laban is Jacob's uncle, so that means that Rachel and Leah are Jacob's cousins!
 - a. Marriage to what we would consider close relatives was common in this time.
 - i. One example would be Jacob's grandfather, Abraham, who married his half-sister, Sarai.

Jacob, Leah And Rachel

9. Jacob fell in love with Rachel, and the Bible tells us that she was *“lovely in form, and beautiful,”* which was not the case with her sister, Leah.
10. **Genesis 29:17** - *“Leah had weak eyes...”*
 - a. The KJV uses the words *“tender eyes.”*
 - b. There are three ways to interpret *“tender eyes.”*
 - i. In the Middle East, blue eyes would have been an anomaly, so people would have been considered them to be *“weak.”*
 - ii. Another explanation would be that Leah simply had poor eyesight.
 - iii. Finally, this term would have been used as a nice way to say, *“She was hard on the eyes”!*
 1. Pastor Gary believes this is the correct interpretation because the description of Leah is juxtaposed to the description of Rachel as a contrast.
 2. The name Rachel means, *“ewe,”* and Leah means *“weary”* or *“cow.”*
11. In **Genesis 29:18** we read that Jacob was *“in love with Rachel.”*
12. Jacob made a deal with his Uncle Laban to work for him seven years in exchange for Rachel's (the younger daughter) hand in marriage, which Laban believes to be a good deal, so Jacob worked seven years to get Rachel.
13. **Genesis 29:20** - *“... but they seemed like only a few days to him because of his love for her.”*
14. Their wedding day finally came, and *“Jacob said to Laban, ‘Give me my wife. My time is completed, and I want to lie with her.’ ”* (**Genesis 29:21**)
15. Jacob and Rachel's wedding was a joyful celebration, but Jacob's joy was short-lived because Laban put Leah in the tent instead of Rachel!
 - a. The Bible doesn't tell us how Laban pulled off this deception, but It's likely that Jacob had his fill of wine and, with a dark tent, you don't have to speculate too much to come to the conclusion that it would not have been too difficult to make the switch.
16. Jacob got the surprise of his life when morning came and he found out he had been tricked, and it was Leah he had been with on his wedding night.
 - a. **Genesis 29:25** - *“When morning came, there was Leah! So Jacob said to Laban, ‘What is this you have done to me? I served you for Rachel, didn't I? Why have you deceived me?’ ”*

17. God often highlights our character flaws through the mirror of other people:
 - a. If you are a liar, people will lie to you.
 - b. If you are a cheat, people will cheat you.
 - c. If you are a thief, people will steal from you.
 - d. If you are a gossip, people will gossip about you.

18. We will always reap what we sow, but it's important to know that reaping and sowing works both ways!
 - a. [Galatians 6:7](#) - *"... a man reaps what he sows."*
 - b. [Job 4:8](#) - *"... those who plow evil and those who sow trouble reap it."*
 - c. [Luke 6:38](#) - *"Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."*
 - d. Jacob reaped what he had sown and he got a full-measure taste of his own medicine, but in the process, God brought him into a different level of maturity.

19. [Genesis 29:30](#) - *"Jacob lay with Rachel also, and he loved Rachel more than Leah. And he worked for Laban another seven years."*
 - a. Jacob's love for Rachel, instead of Leah, was a huge source of conflict in his life.
 - b. [Proverbs 30:21, 23](#) - *"Under three things the earth trembles, under four it cannot bear up: an unloved woman who is married..."*

20. [Genesis 29:31](#) - *"When the Lord saw that Leah was not loved, he opened her womb, but Rachel was barren."*
 - a. The Hebrew meaning, found in the KJV translation, is that Leah *"was hated."*
 - b. It wasn't just that Jacob loved Rachel and despised Leah it was that he hated Leah.

21. It's important to remember that Leah was part of her father's plot to deceive Jacob.
 - a. She went along with the wicked scheme, but she could have at any time told Jacob the truth, even though her father may have forced her into Jacob's tent, because after all...
 - b. She knew that Jacob never pursued her.
 - c. She knew that Jacob never said he loved her.
 - d. She knew that Jacob never promised her anything.

22. Many women, like Leah, think that if they can share a sexual relationship or if they can get pregnant with a man's child, he will love them.
- This way of thinking is simply not true, and the evidence can be found in the lives of women in every country and culture in the world.
 - Single women need to understand the need to hold on to their integrity, dignity and purity before God, because if they don't, the guy who seems to be Mr. Perfect, will just move on, leaving them feeling lonely, used, and unloved.

Leah And God

23. God also worked on Leah at the same time he was working on Jacob.
24. **Genesis 29:32-34** - *"Leah became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him Reuben, for she said, 'It is because the Lord has seen my misery. Surely my husband will love me now.' She conceived again, and when she gave birth to a son she said, 'Because the Lord heard that I am not loved, he gave me this one too.' So she named him Simeon. Again she conceived, and when she gave birth to a son she said, 'Now at last my husband will become attached to me, because I have borne him three sons.' So he was named Levi."*²
25. **Genesis 29:35** - *"[Leah] conceived again, and when she gave birth to a son she said, 'This time I will praise the Lord.' So she named him Judah. Then she stopped having children."*³
26. Leah praised the Lord when Judah was born.
- Leah realized that she was in an unloving relationship that started when she tricked a man into marrying her.
 - Leah discovered that since she couldn't convince Jacob to love her, she could know and rely on the love of God.
 - Leah turned her heart to God, took hold of him and praised him.
 - Leah raised her heart and her hurt toward God and he became the satisfaction of her longing soul.
 - Judah, her fourth son's name means, "May God be praised."
 - Judah's birth marked a major turning point in Leah's life.
 - 1 John 4:15-16** - *"If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God. And so we know and rely on the love God has for us."*

² Reuben (Behold a son) - Simeon (To hear) - Levi (Joined) - Judah (May God be praised)

³ Leah actually gave birth to two more sons and a daughter.

27. A nation was born through Jacob and Leah; a nation that would be a blessing to the whole world because of the covenant God made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
28. Judah, the fourth son born to Jacob and Leah, is the one through whom Jesus the Messiah would come!

Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read [Genesis 29:16-35](#) to provide an overview for this study.
3. How has the Lord worked in your life to bring you to a deeper level of maturity?
4. Has there been a time in your life when someone deceived you – like Laban deceived Jacob – and you didn't see it coming?
5. Has it been your experience that God has brought people into your life to be a mirror of your character flaws and sin issues?
6. Read and discuss the Scriptures regarding reaping and sowing.
 - a. [Galatians 6:7](#) – “... a man reaps what he sows.”
 - b. [Job 4:8](#) – “... those who plow evil and those who sow trouble reap it.”
 - c. [Luke 6:38](#) – “Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”
7. Briefly review #19 through #28 above and spend time talking about the way God showed his love for Leah, and how he brought her to a place of knowing and relying on his love.
8. Close your time in prayer by asking the Holy Spirit to help each person: be reminded brings out his master plan through the lives of surrendered people, and that God not only sees the unloved, he loves the unloved; when they turn their hear to the Lord, he will satisfy the greatest longing in their soul, and he will use them for his amazing purposes for his eternal glory!

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984).