

Living by Faith

Lesson 7

Genesis 28-31

July 12, 2020

Anything for Love

Introduction

Today, our story reeks of deception and manipulation. Jacob, who originally manipulated his father and brother, now meets Laban, who seeks to pull strings in Jacob's life to get what he wants. Add in two daughters pitted against one another in a marriage and a child-rearing battle, dragging along their maidservants, and you get the daytime Emmy for the most complicated family ever.

This family, no matter how chaotic, would later become the founders of the 12 tribes of Israel. They are used in the Bible to represent faithfulness and are one of the building blocks of what we believe. However, it is not the individual people we are to look at for our salvation. That is God's role. He alone can take a family as messed-up as this one and make it into the pillar of our religion. He alone can take deceivers and manipulators and turn their story into something beautiful and worth telling. He is the center of this story.

So, what in your life is messed up and out of control? Where have you trusted yourself, using your resources and wits to help you? Can God make something beautiful out of your story? The simple answer is yes. God longs to rescue you from the pit in which you are. Will you take this story to heart and put yourself in the shoes of those in it, learning from it, letting God's redemption change you? Or will you just see it as a story of a messed-up family and move on?

Pray and read Genesis 28-31. What questions or observations do you have about these passages?

Memory verse: “So Jacob served seven years to get Rachel, but they seemed like only a few days to him because of his love for her.”—Genesis 29:20

What does the passage say?

1. What did God tell Jacob in his dream? (Genesis 28:12-15)
2. What did Jacob use to commemorate his encounter with God, and what did he call the place? (Genesis 28:18-19)
3. What directly transpired after Jacob encountered Rachel? (Genesis 29:11-14)
4. Who was the first wife given to Jacob? (Genesis 29:22)
The second? (Genesis 29:28)
5. How many children did Leah bear for Jacob? And her servant Zilpah? (Genesis 29:31-35, 30:9-13, 30:17-21)
6. How many children were born through Rachel? And her servant Bilhah? (Genesis 30:4-8, 30:22-23, 35:16-18)
7. What was God’s command to Jacob after he had separated his sheep from Laban’s? (Genesis 31:3)

8. What was God's charge to Laban as he chased down Jacob? (Genesis 31:24)

9. What was the meaning of the name of the place that held the heap of stones set up between Jacob and Laban? (Genesis 31:49)

What does the passage mean?

1. On this journey, Jacob encountered God for the first time, and his faith became personal to him, no longer based on his ancestors Abraham and Isaac. Why is it important to have our faith in Christ be personal and not based on someone else's belief? (Romans 10:9-10; James 2:24)

2. Between Laban's scheming, and Leah and Rachel's envious battle to have more children than the other, it's no wonder that the children later would be at odds. In Genesis 2:24, God gave the rule that one man shall be married to one wife. Then later added the law in Leviticus 18:18. Why does God give these commands and laws? (Psalm 19:7-14; Galatians 5:14)

3. Jacob, who was known as the deceiver, is now the deceived at the hand of Laban. Jacob had replaced his older brother with himself, the younger. Now Laban had replaced the younger sister, Rachel, with the older, Leah. God would keep the promises he made with Abraham, but Jacob's sin was reaping its consequences. Why does God give us earthly consequences? (Galatians 6:7-8; Hebrews 12:7-11)

4. Though Jacob experienced God at Bethel, He continues to take matters into his own hands by making his quick escape, showing he doesn't fully trust God to get him home safely. We, along with Jacob, often put our trust in our plans and do not keep our end of our promise to God. If we fail on our end, does God abandon His promises made to us? (Numbers 23:19; Joshua 21:45) Why is this important to remember?

Applying the passage

1. Is your faith dependent on the promises God made to your parents, or have these promises become personal to you? What's stopping you from pursuing God and following Him with your whole heart?

2. What is your understanding of God's laws? Do you view them as judgmental ways of keeping you in line, or are they made for your benefit, from a loving God who cares about your life? How can you start to view God's laws in a different light today?

3. God prepared Jacob to go back home to where he was promised land. Jacob was afraid of Esau's reaction to his homecoming, yet God gave Jacob the desire to return and said, "I am with you." Read Joel 2:13. This verse provides a beautiful reminder of God's strength and love for us. He wants us to return to our first love. He wants us to return to what we experienced when we first truly sought Him. Write down a prayer below thanking God for this grace.