

TALKS FOR GROWING CHRISTIANS TRANSCRIPT

Talk Genesis 29:15-30: Jacob Wants to Marry Rachel, but Laban Tricks Him into Marriage with Leah

Lesson 67

"Then Laban said to Jacob, "Because you are my relative, should you therefore serve me for nothing? Tell me, what should your wages be?" 16 Now Laban had two daughters: the name of the elder was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. 17 Leah's eyes were delicate, but Rachel was beautiful of form and appearance.

18 Now Jacob loved Rachel; so he said, "I will serve you seven years for Rachel your younger daughter."

19 And Laban said, "It is better that I give her to you than that I should give her to another man. Stay with me." 20 So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed only a few days to him because of the love he had for her.

21 Then Jacob said to Laban, "Give me my wife, for my days are fulfilled, that I may go in to her." 22 And Laban gathered together all the men of the place and made a feast. 23 Now it came to pass in the evening, that he took Leah his daughter and brought her to Jacob; and he went in to her. 24 And Laban gave his maid Zilpah to his daughter Leah as a maid.

25 So it came to pass in the morning, that behold, it was Leah. And he said to Laban, "What is this you have done to me? Was it not for Rachel that I served you? Why then have you deceived me?"

26 And Laban said, "It must not be done so in our country, to give the younger before the firstborn. 27 Fulfill her week, and we will give you this one also for the service which you will serve with me still another seven years."

28 Then Jacob did so and fulfilled her week. So he gave him his daughter Rachel as wife also. 29 And Laban gave his maid Bilhah to his daughter Rachel as a maid. 30 Then Jacob also went in to Rachel, and he also loved Rachel more than Leah. And he served with Laban still another seven years."

Background Notes

At first it seemed that everything was going well for Jacob in Padam Aram. He was welcomed into Laban's household, and it seems that he was working around the farm for his room and board: *"And Laban said to him, "Surely you are my bone and my flesh." And he stayed with him for a month.*" But after a month, Laban said to Jacob, *"Because you are my relative, should you therefore serve me for nothing? Tell me, what should your wages be?"* (v15). That would be the Bedouin way of saying, "OK, I want you to stay because you are helping out, and I can use a good man around here, but let's come up with a work contract."

Jacob saw this as an opportunity to bargain for Rachel to become his wife. He had fallen in head over heels in love with Rachel, but he had no dowry to give Laban for her. So he agreed to work for seven years for Rachel. *"It's a deal,"* said Laban. *"So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed only a few days to him because of the love he had for her"*(v20). As far as Jacob was concerned, he had gotten a terrific deal!

But Rachel had a sister, Leah, and Leah was not as beautiful as Rachel. "*Leah's eyes were delicate, but Rachel was beautiful of form and appearance*"(v17). The Hebrew word used here to describe Leah's eyes can mean that Leah was slightly cross-eyed, or her eyes lacked luster. They were not like the sparkling eyes of Rachel.

After Jacob had served his seven years, he reminded Laban that he had fulfilled his contract. "*Then Jacob said to Laban, "Give me my wife, for my days are fulfilled, that I may go in to her."* But the crafty Laban came up with a plan to substitute Leah for Rachel. Leah was the older sister and in that culture she should be married first. We pick that up in verse 26.

I have always wondered about this story. How was Laban able to pull this deception off? I think we'll have to wait until we get to heaven and look at the historical videos! Was Jacob deceived because the women were veiled on their wedding day, and didn't take the veil off until it was dark in the bridal tent? Or maybe Laban had Jacob drink a lot of wine at the wedding feast! But how did Laban force his daughters to go along with his plan? It seems that Leah may have been willing, but what about Rachel? In any case, when Jacob woke up the next morning, guess what? Surprise -- his bride was Leah! "*So it came to pass in the morning, that behold, it was Leah. And he said to Laban, "What is this you have done to me? Was it not for Rachel that I served you? Why then have you deceived me?"*"(v25).

Why did God allow something like this to take place? Answer: God was letting Jacob learn some lessons the hard way. This was a class in the school of "hard knocks" in Jacob's life. This was a course that Jacob had to take in the School of God. We, too, must take courses in the School of God.

Doctrinal Points

1. The School of God has a required course in "How to respect the rights of others."

Jacob had never passed this course. When he was younger, Jacob manipulated Esau into selling him his birthright. When he was older, Jacob didn't respect either his brother or his father when he participated in the plot to steal the patriarchal blessing. We have already seen how God's will was being accomplished through all these events, but this in no way condoned Jacob's wrong doing. Jacob had not respected the rights of others, and once again, here in Genesis 29, Jacob did not respect the rights of others.

It was the "cultural right" of the older sister to be married first. After seven years of living in that culture, Jacob certainly would have known that for Rachel to be married before Leah would be a slap in the face for Leah. Jacob should have been willing to wait; true love can always wait. But not Jacob -- he had served his time, and he wanted Rachel, and he wanted her now. He couldn't have cared less about Leah's rights.

So Jacob had to learn a hard lesson. God allowed Laban to trick Jacob. Jacob was forced to take the course "How to Respect the Rights of Others 101." I think Jacob passed the course this time. Although he complained to Laban, he stayed married to Leah. We never read of him blaming Leah for her part in the scheme, and he was willing to work another seven years for Rachel.

After a week with Leah, Jacob was also given Rachel as his wife. However, he was required to work and serve Laban another seven years, which he did. I think Jacob finally realized that he had been wrong in not respecting the rights of others, and I think he passed the course at this point.

How long does it take us to pass this course? Do you respect the rights of others, or do you just care about yourself and your rights? What about in casual conversation, for example? Do you listen to others and earn the right to be heard, or do you just selfishly do all the talking, talking only about yourself? Well, don't be surprised if you have to go to God's school. The School of God has a **required** course in how to respect the rights of others.

2. The School of God has a required course in "How not to deceive others."

Jacob had deceived his father by pretending to be his brother Esau. He had even worn Esau's clothes and put goatskins on his arms so he would smell and feel like Esau to Isaac, who was almost blind. Now the tables were turned! The deceiver was deceived! Jacob had deceived his father; now his father-in-law deceived him. Jacob had pretended to be his brother Esau: now Leah pretended to be her sister Rachel. Jacob even stooped to wearing Esau's clothes to deceive his father Isaac; now, most likely, Leah put on Rachel's wedding garments to deceive Jacob.

The "chickens had come home to roost" in Jacob's life! *"The way of the transgressor is hard (Proverbs 13:15).* And Galatians 6:7: *"Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap."* Jacob had to learn a very hard lesson.

The school of God has a required course in how not to deceive others. Are you deceiving anyone right now? Are you wearing a mask at your church -- pretending to be someone you are not? Are you deceiving your employer in any way? Husbands and wives, are you being honest with each other? Teenagers, are you deceiving your parents in any way? If you are involved in deception, don't be surprised if God puts you into His school! Remember, the school of God has a **required** course in how not to deceive others.

Practical Application

The people around you may be God's mirror and God's sandpaper.

What do we mean by this practical application? Do you think it was by chance that Jacob was brought into relationship with Laban? Of course not! Laban was just as cunning and crafty and deceitful as Jacob was. Every time Jacob looked at Laban, he was forced to see himself -- in God's mirror! For twenty years Jacob would be forced to look at Laban. Laban was God's mirror, and Jacob was forced to see himself as he really was.

Laban was not only God's mirror -- Laban was God's sandpaper as well. You don't smooth rough lumber with oil, but with sandpaper. Laban was God's sandpaper for Jacob. After twenty years of God's "mirror and sandpaper" treatment, Jacob matured considerably as a believer.

What about us? Look around you. The people around you may be God's mirror and God's sandpaper in your life. For example, let's say you have a problem submitting to authority. You always want to take charge and push your weight around. Perhaps you find

it impossible to submit even to **God's** authority in the home or in the church. Well, guess what? Don't be surprised if you find yourself in situations where the people you have to work with turn out to be just like you. They don't want to submit to your authority even when you are in a position of authority. And don't be surprised if you get a tyrant as a boss at work!

That is the way the school of God works. You will find God's mirrors and God's sandpaper in the people with whom you have to live and work. And believe me, God's system works in getting rid of the rough areas in our lives! I once had a boss who was definitely God's sandpaper in my life. He knocked off a few rough edges in my life!

God has His mirrors and His sandpaper out there. Do you have any blind spots or rough edges? Look at the people in your life. The people around you may be God's mirror, showing you who you really are. And the people you have to rub up against every day are very likely God's sandpaper, sanding away the rough places in your life. The people around you are God's mirrors and God's sandpaper!