

Jacob and Rachel - Gen 29

"7 years labor seem only like a few days because of his Love for her."

Introduction:

Jacob - Heel Grabber (deceiver). This story illustrates many truths but Jacob is clearly a textbook example for sowing and reaping and also provides a story of an amazing love that overcomes all.

Jacob is one of my favorite characters in the bible. Jacob is in the rarified air of being mentioned in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Yet, by all standards today, we would call him "a hot mess." He was a total screw-up for most of his life which in part qualified him to be used by God greatly. That is encouraging to me, because much of my life was a hot mess.

This story starts with our lead character on the run. Left town in a hurry under the threat of death. The mama's boy who hung around the tents finds himself scared and alone in the desert, then reality starts to hit. At that very point, God meets him and gives him a dream.

Yet, Jacob is still negotiating with God. Later, he wrestles with God, but in the end. He is humbled, receives a new name and walks with a limp a visual reminder of God's encounter.

Genesis 29:1-3 So Jacob went on his journey and came to the land of the people of the East. And he looked, and saw a well in the field; and behold, there were three flocks of sheep lying by it; for out of that well they watered the flocks. A large stone was on the well's mouth. Now all the flocks would be gathered there; and they would roll the stone from the well's mouth, water the sheep, and put the stone back in its place on the well's mouth.

We see here the importance of water in that country. It still is a very important item because there is a shortage of it in many places. It must be husbanded and protected; that is why at a certain time during the day the stone was removed from the top of the well, and then everybody watered their sheep—everybody got the water he needed. Then the stone was put back on to close the well.

Now Jacob arrives on the scene before they take the stone away from the well. Believe me, he is as cocky as ever. - McGee

Why is the description of the well and the customs in the passage?

Genesis 29:4-6 And Jacob said to them, "My brethren, where are you from?" And they said, "We are from Haran." Then he said to them, "Do you know Laban the son of Nahor?" And they said, "We know him." So he said to them, "Is he well?" And they said, "He is well. And look, his daughter Rachel is coming with the sheep."

vv. 4-6 How do you think Jacob felt when he heard they were from Haran and they knew Laban?

Oh yes, they knew him. But Jacob didn't know him—yet. But, oh my, Jacob is going to get acquainted with him. - McGee

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Genesis 29:7-8 Then he said, "Look, it is still [a]high day; it is not time for the cattle to be gathered together. Water the sheep, and go and feed them." But they said, "We cannot until all the flocks are gathered together, and they have rolled the stone from the well's mouth; then we water the sheep."

Here Jacob has just arrived in the land and he is telling them how to water their sheep and what they should do! This is typical of him, by the way. - McGee

What words would you use to describe the guy who comes out of nowhere with no sheep and tells you and all of your fellow shepherds how to take care of sheep?

Genesis 29:9-12 Now while he was still speaking with them, Rachel came with her father's sheep, for she was a shepherdess. And it came to pass, when Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of Laban his mother's brother, and the sheep of Laban his mother's brother, that Jacob went near and rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the flock of Laban his mother's brother. Then Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted up his voice and wept. And Jacob told Rachel that he was her father's relative and that he was Rebekah's son. So she ran and told her father.

Who told Jacob he could roll away the stone? What drove him to do it? What is the significance of her being a daughter of Laban? Gen 28:2 (Isaac's words to Jacob)

Who kisses a girl and cries aloud? Talking about giving up your man card!

Genesis 29:13-14 Then it came to pass, when Laban heard the report about Jacob his sister's son, that he ran to meet him, and embraced him and kissed him, and brought him to his house. So he told Laban all these things. And Laban said to him, "Surely you are my bone and my flesh." And he stayed with him for a month.

Old Laban is back...What do you think Laban is thinking about when he hears Rebekah son is coming? Can you imagine being at the dinner table with Jacob in full cocky mode telling all things?

You can see the prelude to contest coming up. Youth and skill vs. old age and treachery. You see all of his sowing of trickery and deceit with his brother and his father is about to come back and haunt him. Little Jacob is about to go to the Uncle Laban school of hard knocks.

I imagine that Jacob had quite a bit to talk about. I wouldn't be surprised to find that he entertained them at dinner with his story of how he tricked his brother to get his birthright, and how he used trickery to get the blessing, and how clever he was. Probably he told about that night at Bethel, too. "He told Laban all these things." - McGee

Do you see any difference in the approach of Abraham's servant vs. Jacob at the well? Do you think the approach taken influences the outcome for us?

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What differences do you see in the reaction of Rebekah vs Rachel?

Genesis 29:15 Then Laban said to Jacob, "Because you are my relative, should you therefore serve me for nothing? Tell me, what should your wages be?"

Read this carefully. What does this say about Laban? What does this say about Jacob?

Genesis 29:16-17 Now Laban had two daughters: the name of the elder was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. Leah's eyes were delicate, but Rachel was beautiful of form and appearance.

What do you think about the descriptions of Leah and Rachel? In early Greek literature, if a lady was beautiful it was a common complement to say she was cow-eyed. Likewise, we can only assume what weak-eyed meant.

Genesis 29:18-19 Now Jacob loved Rachel; so he said, "I will serve you seven years for Rachel your younger daughter." And Laban said, "It is better that I give her to you than that I should give her to another man. Stay with me."

Young Jacob was in love, and proposes seven years service for the hand of Rachel. Later, in Exodus God commands that Hebrew Servants work six years and in the seventh year that they be freed. In essence, Jacob was agreeing to be a slave as payment for Rachel dowry. Love and Fear are some of the strongest motivations. Laban has the girls so he is holding all the cards, and he knows it. Laban of course accepts this. It is free labor for 7 years and the payment is only on completion of the work. Laban, I am sure is thinking this 7 years is going to give him time to figure how to make even more money. He is likely licking his chops and remembering the camels and gold and jewelry from Abraham's house last time. **Consider Jacob's bargain with Laban. What does it tell you about Rachel's worth in Jacob's eyes?**

The traditional rule of thumb for engagement rings has been between 1-3 months salary, yet we see Jacob laying out 7 years salary for Rachel. Wow!

When you dated or courted your wife did you communicate to her how valuable she was to you in the same way? What are some ways you can show how highly you value each other?

Gen 29:20 So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed only a few days to him because of the love he had for her.

This is one of the high points of Jacob's early life that his love for her was so true and strong that 7 years working for Laban was but a few days. **Do you think working for Laban was a picnic? How important is for you to have that kind of love and joy during courtship and demonstrate it?**

What is the role of hope in marriage (generally)? What is the hope in a Christian Marriage?

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Genesis 29:21-25 Then Jacob said to Laban, "Give me my wife, for my days are fulfilled, that I may go in to her." And Laban gathered together all the men of the place and made a feast. 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. And Laban gave his maid Zilpah to his daughter Leah as a maid. 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?"

Jacob ask for the hand of Rachel now that he has served his 7 years, and Laban has a plan. By this time, Uncle Laban has figured out his herds have grown extensively and he is not about to let the golden goose fly away. Can't you just see Laban order extra wine and insisting on a big production. Probably, everyone else knew old Laban was up to something, but Jacob still with goo goo eyes for Rachel, he never saw it coming!

Sow and Reaping: Gen 27 describes how Jacob steals his father's blessing meant for the first born son by pretending to be his older brother. God does not condone deceit and the tables are turned on Jacob. The older daughter now pretends to be the younger and he does not figure it out until after the consummation of the very public marriage.

Genesis 29:26-27 And Laban said, "It must not be done so in our country, to give the younger before the firstborn. Fulfill her week, and we will give you this one also for the service which you will serve with me still another seven years."

Laban is smooth. Now on top of the sowing a reaping, Laban is going to inform of the customs that he violated. But no fear, this time Laban proposes solution - seven more years!

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

Jacob ends up with two wives. Does this mean God condones polygamy? Does God approve of everything in the bible?

1. When Jacob discovered the deception, what do you think were his possible choices of action? What can you learn from Jacob and his dysfunctional marriages?
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2. Which did he choose and why? (vs 27-30)
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3. Even in the face of Laban's deception, God worked out a way for Jacob and Rachel to be together. When has God overcome an obstacle in your marriage (or in some other important relationship)?
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4. This story is full of imperfect people, but the Lord cared enough to meet their needs of love. Where do you need to trust the Lord to meet your needs?
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Genesis 29:31-35 When the Lord saw that Leah was unloved, He opened her womb; but Rachel was barren. So Leah conceived and bore a son, and she called his name Reuben; for she said, "The Lord has surely looked on my affliction. Now therefore, my husband will love me." Then she conceived again and bore a son, and said, "Because the Lord has heard that I am unloved, He has therefore given me this son also." And she called his name Simeon. She conceived again and bore a son, and said, "Now this time my husband will become attached to me, because I have borne him three sons." Therefore his name was called Levi. And she conceived again and bore a son, and said, "Now I will praise the Lord." Therefore she called his name Judah. Then she stopped bearing.

God seems to always work through the unlikely. Leah the one who is unloved in the story. She is the one that God honors and puts in the line of Christ. You see she is loved greatly by God who chooses to work through her because of her humble obedience.

Does it give you peace to know that God loves you and will reward your humble obedience?

Do you really trust in that peace? Would your actions say you are confident staying the course in humble obedience?

It is easy to say, but hard to do. **What areas in our marriages/relationships do we need to act in humble obedience?**

1. _____

3. _____

2. _____

4. _____