

Genesis

Memorize the TRUTH!

Lesson 16 Jacob's Children Genesis 29-30

I know that the LORD secures
justice for the poor and
upholds the cause of the needy.
Psalm 140:12

The Trickster Gets Tricked – Genesis 29:1-30

Day 1

1. Re-read the account of Abraham's servant coming to Haran in Genesis 24:10-30.
 - a. What similarities do you see in these two accounts?
 - b. What one glaring difference is there concerning God?
2. How do you see God at work behind the scenes in Jacob's situation?
3.
 - a. When Laban asked Jacob to name his wages, what did Jacob ask for?
 - b. What happened to Jacob on his wedding night?
 - c. How is this an example of the truth of Galatians 6:7?

Learn the TRUTH!



This week, eleven of Jacob's sons are born. These sons, and one more to be born later, will be the core of the 12 tribes of the new nation promised to Abraham and Isaac. Although God's promises may take time, we can be certain that they will be kept. This week, thank God in advance for keeping His promises to you.

Jacob's Family – Genesis 29:31-35

Day 2

4.
 - a. What do you think Leah's marriage to Jacob was like?
 - b. How did the Lord compensate Leah for Jacob's rejection of her? What does this tell you about God?
5.
 - a. What did Leah say after each of her first three sons were born that reflected a deep desire for her husband's affection?
 - b. What did Leah say after the fourth son was born? How did that indicate a change on her part?

Sibling Rivalry
Genesis 30:1-24

Day 3

6. a. What was the source of Rachel's unhappiness? Whom did she blame?

b. How did she attempt to resolve her problem? What were the results?

7. What did Rachel and Leah say after each son was born? What does that tell you about these two sisters?

8. Leah and Rachel tried to manipulate their situation to have children. Who was really in control? Which verses in this passage support that?

Jacob Plans to Leave
Genesis 30:25-28

Day 4

9. Why did Jacob want to leave?

10. Why did Laban want Jacob to stay?

11. a. Laban said that he "learned by divination" that he had become wealthy because of Jacob. What does Deuteronomy 18:9-11 tell you about divination?

b. What similar sources of insight do people consult today?

c. How does knowing that God forbids these practices affect the way you seek wisdom?

Increasing Wealth
Genesis 30:29-43

Day 5

12. a. What agreement did Jacob and Laban reach about Jacob's wages?

b. How did Laban attempt to cheat on their agreement?

c. How did Jacob respond? What was the result?

13. a. How did God use Laban in Jacob's life?

b. How does this encourage you to trust God when you experience injustice?

Live the TRUTH!

Leah and Rachel gave their servants to Jacob to have children, conforming to a worldly custom. The Bible suggests that God didn't approve. Paul told the Romans, "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Romans 12:2a). A lot goes on around us that does not have God's approval, so weigh your decisions carefully. Don't allow yourself to be squeezed into the world's mold!

Commentary Genesis Lesson 16

Like Abraham's servant, Jacob arrives at a well in Haran and God guides his steps to the family of Laban. Some shepherds point out Laban's daughter, who is approaching. Jacob is so delighted to see Rachel that he kisses her and begins to weep with glad relief. Rachel summons Laban, who greets with warmth the son of the sister he had sent to Canaan (Genesis 24). Laban senses that his nephew may be a vehicle to additional wealth for himself and his household. Jacob may think of himself as clever, but in Laban he has met his match. His uncle is a man with the cunning of a fox and a set of loose principles that flex according to the advantage he seeks.

Soon Jacob finds himself working for his uncle. Laban begins to hatch a clever plan that will guarantee him a free employee for the next 14 years. Leah, his eldest daughter, is not particularly appealing. Her younger sister Rachel — because of her beauty, apparently — is Jacob's great passion. Jacob agrees to work for seven years if he can marry Rachel, and Laban is happy to comply. Jacob finds that the time flies by because he is able to spend time near Rachel, and his love is deep and strong.

They celebrate the wedding feast — the Hebrew word suggests a drinking feast — and Jacob claims his bride. In the morning, however, he discovers that he has been tricked. Leah is beside him, not Rachel. Jacob demands an explanation! Laban replies that he is not to worry; he can have Rachel as well — but it is the custom of the family to marry off the older daughter first. Jacob must allow Leah the dignity of a week's wedding celebration, and he can then marry Rachel. Of course, he will have to pledge another seven years' labor, too!

When Jacob decides merely to tolerate Leah for the sake of his grand passion with Rachel, God finds his attitude offensive and blesses Leah with an early pregnancy. Rachel, however, is barren. Leah's first child is a son that she names *Reuben*, meaning, *See! A son!* The name reflects her belief that God has seen her misery from lacking her husband's affection. She believes the fine son she has borne will stir Jacob to give her the love she longs for. Soon she is pregnant again, and a second son arrives whom she names *Simeon*, meaning *hearing*, a testimony of faith to God's provision and compensation for her unloved condition. She again gives birth to a son. This boy is named *Levi*, meaning *attached, joined*. Though she has borne him three sons, Leah still feels keenly her husband's lack of attachment or affection for her. Her fourth son is *Judah*, *praise*. She resolves not to pine away for Jacob but instead to praise the Lord.

Meanwhile, Jacob discovers that Rachel is not the absolute joy he expected. Watching her sister present Jacob with four fine sons, her jealousy grows and she lashes out at Jacob, demanding that he give her children. Clearly Jacob's fertility is not the problem. Rachel is so desperate that she invokes the practice of giving her maidservant to her husband; any children born from the union would make her (legally, at least) a mother. When Bilhah becomes pregnant, Rachel feels vindicated. She names the boy *Dan*, meaning *judgment, vindication*. This arrangement is continued, and Bilhah has a second son that Rachel names *Naphtali*, *wrestlings, struggles*. Leah adopts Rachel's strategy and offers Jacob her maid Zilpah as a wife. Zilpah bears Jacob two sons, *Gad*, meaning *luck*, and *Asher*, meaning *happy*.

Check It Out:

Jacob was in the "school of hard knocks" for 20 years with Laban as his professor. One of the major lessons he had to learn was that God is in control. Certainly in the matter of human offspring he came to understand that God alone determines the gift of life (30:2).

No matter how much he and Rachel longed for a child, only God could open her womb. Nor did he have any real control over the breeding of his flocks, despite the branches he peeled. Again, God is in control. God drove this point home with a dream. Will we be as thick-headed as Jacob? Will it take us 20 years to really understand that God is in control of the circumstances of our lives? Nothing happens by accident!

Jacob is now the father of eight sons. When Reuben harvests some mandrake plants and brings them to Leah, Rachel asks for them. These plants were believed to be an aphrodisiac. In payment, Rachel grants Leah the privilege of having Jacob sleep with her for the evening. Although Rachel possesses the mandrakes, it is Leah who becomes pregnant. Her new son is named *Issachar*, *wages*, since she had “hired” his father. Then Leah conceives again and names her sixth son *Zebulon*, which may mean *honor* or *dwelling*, because she seems to hope that bearing Jacob so many sons will encourage him to leave Rachel’s tent and move in with her. Her last child is a girl, Dinah. After 10 sons and one daughter are born to her husband’s other wives, God has compassion on Rachel; she becomes pregnant and delivers a son whom she names *Joseph*, meaning *may [the Lord] add*. Discontent rather than thanksgiving seems to dominate Rachel; she wants to catch up with Leah and have more sons.

With 20 years of labor behind him, Jacob at last decides to return to Canaan. Laban, however, is not ready to part with him and invites Jacob to name his price for staying in Paddan Aram. Laban claims to have learned by divination that his prosperity is a consequence of Jacob’s presence. Divination is an occult practice condemned by Scripture (Leviticus 19:26b; Deuteronomy 18:10-11). Laban’s participation in it displays his limited commitment to God.

Jacob agrees to stay, accepting as his wages the speckled and spotted sheep and goats of Laban’s flocks. Immediately Laban carefully and dishonestly segregates these animals from the flock, removing them from Jacob’s access. Jacob then attempts to increase the spotted animals by manipulation. By peeling bark from trees near the watering troughs, he tries to increase the percentage of speckled and spotted animals in his flocks. This action has precisely the same effect as Rachel’s mandrakes — none at all. God is the one who increases the speckled animals and blesses Jacob, a fact that he will later acknowledge.



Jacob’s life illustrates how God blesses and uses people even when that blessing is unearned and undeserved. With all his flaws, Jacob was given 11 sons, a daughter, and great wealth. Through his bloodline, the Messiah would be born.

Do you ever look at someone in an effective ministry and ask yourself, “How would God use her?” Or “Does God realize what he has done?” Do we look at ourselves and ask the same questions? Obviously, God is not looking for perfection, but availability. God uses whom He chooses. Let’s be grateful He can use imperfect people. Isn’t the story of Jacob an encouragement to you?