

GENESIS

RockPointe Church Small Groups

Patriarchs of Scripture • Leah • Genesis 29-30 • Fall 2018

Main Point

God is sovereign even when others hurt us.

Background

Video: <https://www.rightnowmedia.org/Content/VideoElement/182904>

Note: Requires Access to Right Now Media; if you have issues with accessing the link, copy and paste directly in your browser

Video: <https://youtu.be/W8jLmZnstHs>

Introduction

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Why do you think that peer pressure is such a powerful influence in people's lives? How deep is our need to fit in and be liked by others?

What can happen to someone who feels rejected by their peers or by people that they love?

We were made by God to live in community with others. It was not good for Adam to be alone, and it is not good for us to be completely alone either. This doesn't mean that we all need to be married, it simply means that we need others to share our lives with. We all need fellowship and the love of others to thrive.

In this lesson, we will see that because of Laban's selfishness, Jacob, Leah, Rachel, and even Laban will suffer much strife in their relationships. Jealousy, strife, and deception would plague each of these relationships throughout their lives. Through it all, the Lord was faithful to her and cared for her when others mistreated her. We, too, can count on the Lord to be with us when we are mistreated by others as well.

Understanding

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| have a volunteer read Genesis 29:16-28.

What do you think of Laban's deception of Jacob? Why do you think Laban did this?

What difficulties has Laban caused in the lives of his family through this deception?

Marriage can be a challenge. Any time you put two sinners together, selfishness, pride, and all sorts of other unpleasant character traits will inevitably rise. Even under the best of conditions, it takes a lot of humility to maintain relationships and grow as a person. Laban didn't give Jacob, Leah, and Rachel a chance. It appears

that Laban tricked Jacob just to con him into another seven years of service. Imagine how Jacob felt towards his new father-in-law. Imagine how Leah and Rachel would now feel about one another as they had to share the same husband. Because of his selfishness, Laban's trick doomed both himself and sentenced his daughters and son-in-law to lives of tremendous relationship difficulty.

While our culture does not practice polygamy, there are many family situations that are difficult like this one. When people get divorced and remarry, there is often the challenge of dealing with child custody, ex-spouses and their new spouse, and even your children excepting new step-brothers and sisters. Only the Holy Spirit can guide us in such situations to live with the kind of patience, humility, and understanding we need to make those relationships healthy.

| have a volunteer read Genesis 29:31-35.

Why do you think that the Lord intervened for Leah?

What do you think about Leah's hope that more children would win Jacob's affection?

What do you think about Leah's statement after she had Judah?

Leah's words indicate that she spent time in petition for children from the Lord. She hoped that through them, by being the perfect wife in her culture, she would finally be loved and honored by her husband. Many men and women can relate to Leah's predicament. How many people have tried to be "perfect" for their significant other, only to find that they could never measure up? How many have fallen into the trap of asking the Lord for things to win their spouse's favor when really they would have been better served by simply seeking the Lord Himself?

The Lord was loving to Leah. He gave her strong sons to comfort her in her distress. The Lord did not give Leah children to win Jacob's approval, He gave her children for her. By the time Judah was born, she was past hoping her children would win Jacob's affection. By then, she was content simply to thank the Lord for another son, at least for a little while.

| have a volunteer read Genesis 30:14-21.

What do you think about this episode between Leah and Rachel? What does it tell us about their relationship?

Why do you think Leah continues to want her husband to honor her? Why is Rachel jealous if it is obvious that Jacob loves her the most?

Leah and Rachel had a contentious relationship. How could they not? Leah accuses Rachel of 'taking her husband', and Rachel does not even try to deny it. Rachel "rents" Jacob out to Leah for a night in exchange for Reuben's mandrakes!

Leah continues to hope that having children will win Jacob over to her, and unfortunately, we never know if Jacob ever honors her as he should. What we do know for certain that the Lord was with Leah, and that He gave her children. We know that even if Jacob, Rachel, and Laban mistreated her, the Lord Himself loved her and watched over her through her years of loneliness and mistreatment.

We also know that even if Leah probably suffered the most rejection and family alienation, everyone suffered because of Laban's selfishness. Including Laban, eventually! Because of his scheming, Jacob would leave Laban, and Laban would never see his daughters or grandchildren again (Gen. 31:43-55). But God never abandoned anyone in the family. We know that throughout these two chapters, the Bible was with Leah and gave her children. We know that He remembered Rachel and gave her children as well. As for Jacob, God kept His promises to him as well. God brought Jacob back home, and He kept Laban from harming him.

We know that our Lord Jesus Himself suffered much rejection and alienation from His own people. In John 1:11, we see that Jesus "came to His own, and His own people did not receive Him." Isaiah wrote that "He was despised and rejected by men, a man of suffering...He was despised, and we didn't value Him" (Isaiah 53:3). Like Leah, Jesus knew the pain of being rejected. We have the hope that God will be with us even when others reject us.

Application

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

How might we comfort and help others who are going through family or other relationship troubles?

How easy it is for us to forget the Lord's kindnesses to us when we are rejected by others?

How can our love for others, as a church body, help others understand that God loves them when they have been rejected by others?

Pray

In a time of group prayer, ask the Father to be with those who have suffered alienation and rejection by others. Pray that we will be sensitive to those who have suffered this way. Ask that God will help us to welcoming and loving to other so that they may see how much God loves them through our love.

Commentary

| Genesis 29:16-28

29:15-20. Laban called Jacob my own flesh and blood and gave him the right to stay in the home permanently. Jacob was neither a son nor a slave, so it was appropriate to work out a suitable arrangement

that compensated Laban for his provisions and Jacob for his labor. It was not appropriate for Jacob to work for nothing, so it was agreed that Jacob would work for seven years for the right to marry Rachel.

This arrangement is reminiscent of a provision in the law of Moses that permitted certain slaves to work seven years for their freedom (Ex 21:2). Men did not buy wives in the strict sense of the word; however, they did customarily pay a bride-price (Gen 34:12; Ex 22:17; 1Sam 18:25) to their future wife's family to compensate them for the care and protection provided to the woman prior to her marriage.

29:21-23. Jacob, now almost 50 years old (25:24-26; 26:34-35; 27:46) after working for Laban seven years, informed Laban that it was time for him to sleep with Rachel. Arranging a weeklong wedding feast, Laban proceeded to cheat the family member who had cheated other people in the past (27:12-25,36). Instead of the expected younger daughter Rachel, Laban gave Leah to Jacob. In the darkness of the evening and with his bride concealed behind a veil (24:65), Jacob did not realize what had been done to him. Accordingly, he slept with Leah.

| Genesis 29:31-35

29:31-35. The Lord, who had seen and provided for Hagar previously in her time of need (16:13-14), now saw that Leah was “unloved” (lit “hated”) and opened her womb. In a society where a woman's prestige depended almost entirely on her success in bearing sons, the Lord gave Leah four sons before she temporarily (31:17) stopped having children. Three themes are present in Leah's remarks: her conviction that God provided these children in response to her affliction and unloved condition, her hope that the births would cause her husband to love her, and her praise to the Lord for what He had done. The explanations connected with each son's name are not linguistic etymologies, but explanations of wordplays.

| Genesis 30:14-21

30:14-21. During the late springtime harvest, Leah's oldest son Reuben found some wild “mandrakes.” A plant possessing tuberous roots resembling human torsos, the mandrake was thought to enhance one's sexual powers and fertility. Leah, still lonely and desperate for her husband's affection, bartered some of the mandrakes with Jacob's favorite wife Rachel for the right to sleep with Jacob for a night. Because God listened to Leah—and not because of the mandrakes—she conceived and bore a fifth son, Issachar. When Leah bore Jacob a sixth son... Zebulun—her last—she gave God the credit. Jacob's only named daughter, Dinah, would play a tragic role in chapter 34.