

Rachel and Leah

Transition

Abraham's son Isaac had a son named Jacob. Jacob's sons would become the ancestors of the great nation that God had promised Abraham. This is the story of Jacob's marriage to Leah and Rachel. Isaac didn't want Jacob to marry a pagan woman as his brother Esau had done, so he told him to go to his relatives' home—the same home where Isaac had found Rebekah.

Genesis 29:1, 9-13*Jacob left his family's house, and he...finally arrived in another land where his uncle lived... He stopped at a well outside the town and talked to some of the shepherds. As he was talking, his cousin Rachel came with her father's flocks. Jacob greeted her, explained who he was, watered her flocks for her, and went back to her house with her. As soon as Laban, Rachel's father, heard that his nephew Jacob had arrived, he ran out to meet him. He greeted him kindly and brought him home...*

Genesis 29:14-20*...After Jacob had stayed with Laban for about a month, Laban said to him, "You shouldn't work for me without pay just because we are relatives. Tell me how much your wages should be." Now Laban had two daughters. The older daughter was named Leah, and the younger one was Rachel. Leah was pretty, but Rachel was really beautiful. Since Jacob was in love with Rachel, he told her father, "I'll work for you for seven years if you'll give me Rachel, your younger daughter, as my wife." "Agreed!" Laban replied. "I'd rather give her to you than to anyone else. Stay and work with me." So Jacob worked seven years to pay for Rachel. But his love for her was so strong that it seemed like only a few days.*

Genesis 29:21-23*Finally, the time came for him to marry her. "I have fulfilled my agreement," Jacob said to Laban. "Now give me my wife so I can marry her." So Laban invited everyone in the neighborhood and prepared a wedding feast. But that night, when it was dark, Laban took Leah to Jacob instead.*

Genesis 29:25-27*But when Jacob woke up in the morning—it was Leah! "What have you done to me?" Jacob raged at Laban. "I worked seven years for Rachel! Why have you tricked me?" "It's not our custom here to marry off a younger daughter ahead of the firstborn," Laban replied. "But wait until the bridal week is over, then we'll give you Rachel, too—provided you promise to work another seven years for me."*

Genesis 29:28-30*So Jacob agreed to work seven more years. A week after Jacob had married Leah, Laban gave him Rachel, too. So Jacob...loved her much more than Leah. He then stayed and worked for Laban the additional seven years.*

Genesis 29:31-30:3*When God saw that Leah was unloved, he enabled her to have children,...and she had four sons. Each time she got pregnant, she hoped for a boy so that Jacob would finally love her. She even named her fourth son Judah, and said, "Now I will praise God."...However, Rachel was barren, and grew jealous of Leah's children. She and Jacob had an argument where each blamed the other (and God!) for their situation, and it ended in Rachel giving her servant to Jacob in the hopes of having children in that way.*

Deceit and trickery seem to abound in this family! This isn't the last time we see this particular family involved in tricking each other into getting what they want or feel that they need.

1. Laban: He thought he had to follow the cultural norms and marry his oldest daughter first, even though it meant tricking Jacob and submitting his oldest

daughter to a life of being unloved. His deceit caused jealousy and pain for both of his daughters for years to come.

2. Jacob: Jacob was willing to work for 14 years total for Rachel! He was obviously in love. However, he certainly didn't know how to treat women well. ☺ To be fair, he had been hugely disappointed and let down. His marriage wasn't exactly what he had envisioned it to be, but he didn't handle it as well as he could have.
3. Leah: Leah knew she was unloved, and continually wished for more sons, hoping that it would make Jacob love her, but of course it didn't work.
4. Rachel: Rachel grew jealous of Leah's children, and it ended in an argument between her and Jacob, and yet another situation where a woman gives her husband her servant in hopes of getting a son in that way. (Gen. 30:1-3)

None of this is foreign to what happens to us sometimes. All of these people acted in unhealthy ways at times. God was faithful though, and made a beautiful thing (the 12 tribes of Israel) out of a huge mess! But did it have to be that way? Were there different choices that each person could have made? Go through each character and ask yourself the following questions:

1. Am I ever like this? Do I do similar unhealthy things in my relationships with people? Ask God to help you identify those things you do, write them down, and repent or ask God to help you act in a more healthy way.
2. How could this person have made a different decision? What would have been the challenges/benefits of making a good decision? What could have been the outcome? Go back to the unhealthy things you do from #1. How can you change your behaviour? What would healthy behaviour in those situations look like? What would be the challenges/benefits of making those good decisions? What could be the good outcomes from healthy decisions?
3. Is there anything from #2 that you need to commit to changing? Spend some time giving those specific behaviours to God, and envision yourself making good decisions in these areas. Envision those good outcomes! Ask God for help to stay committed to making good decisions on a daily basis.

Do you need to talk to your husband about anything you've worked through here? Do you need to ask forgiveness or expose some things to him that you've been doing? Do you need to ask him to help you stick to your commitment to make some specific, healthy decisions?