

THE WHOLE STORY

From Genesis to Revelation

Genesis 29

Introduction:

As you read through the book of Genesis in *The Whole Story* reading plan, you probably noticed these two things: 1) step by step, God is fulfilling his promise to Abraham, 2) the people that God uses to fulfill that plan are anything but perfect and pure. The story of Jacob, Leah, and Rachel is a perfect example. God eventually changes Jacob's name to Israel, the father of the 12 Israelite tribes. But before that, Jacob had a messy home life and a penchant for thievery and favoritism.

Every person God uses to fulfill his mission goes through a process of almost total character transformation. The credit for this is completely because of God's faithfulness, which they eventually come to trust. Even at the end of their stories, they are not complete and perfect. It was highly unusual for an Ancient people to regard and remember flawed individuals as their nation's founders. The Bible is unique in this regard.

This Week's Main Focus:
Human schemes can never carry out the plans of God.

In Genesis 28, God reveals to Jacob that he is included in the same promise God made to Abraham saying, "I am the LORD...I will give this land to you and to your offspring.", and chapters 29 and 30 show a large part of how that promise becomes fulfilled. Leah, Rachel, and their servants become the mothers of the twelve tribes of Israel. But this is nothing close to an ideal home life. There is envy, bitterness, jealousy, favoritism, and idolatry throughout these chapters. As you read later in Genesis, the dysfunction of this family spills over into the next generation, where the brothers hate Joseph for being the favorite.

The sin of these characters should have derailed God's promise. But he remains faithful to his promise in an imperfect family, helping it to grow despite its faults. God's long-term plan for their lives was never thrown off course, though their sin created agony and misfortune in the short-run.

Sermon Response Question:

1) What did you learn from the sermon about Jacob and his family that you did not know, or had not thought about before? What stood out to you most from the sermon?

Bible Study Questions:

2) Jacob experiences God's sovereignty and blessing very circumstantially in this passage (different than God verbally speaking to him). How does Jacob experience God's provision through his circumstances in Genesis 29?

3) In chapter 29:31-35, we see Leah give her sons names that are very rich with meaning. What does she name each of her sons and how do they show the present condition of her faith?

4) Compare and contrast Leah and Rachel, specifically the desires they both have in this passage.

5) What do we learn about God and his character and purpose from narratives like this in the Bible?

Group Application Questions:

6) Tim Keller says, "We always think we go to bed with Rachel, and in the morning we always find Leah." What idols in your life do you currently view as "Rachel" and know that God's word proves to be a "Leah"?

7) In this passage we see Jacob so consumed with desire for Rachel that he hurts Leah. What in your life now is or has the potential to consume you so much that you love it to the extent that others are hurt?

Prayer:

Read Psalm 119:33-40.

- Each of these eight verses begins with an action verb.
- Have one person in your group pray each verb for your group in this passage.